Embedded: The Australian Red Cross in the Second World War

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Abstract

This thesis will demonstrate that the Australian Red Cross was embedded with the Australian government, military and civilian ‘home front’ during the Second World War. The legal basis, structure, leadership and administration of the Society were closely integrated with the official war effort of the Australian government and military. The Red Cross societies of other combatant nations were similarly organised to contribute to the logistical firepower of their respective governments and militaries. The Second World War revitalised the Australian Red Cross and caused the Society to forge even stronger links with the Australian government. The Society was integrated as a paramilitary branch of the Australian military forces and provided logistical support to the military in Australia and overseas by means of its Field Force. The pervasive presence of the Red Cross resulted in the embedding of the Society on the Australian civilian ‘home front’. The integration of the Australian Red Cross with the Australian government was for the purpose of supporting the war effort of the Allies in Australia and overseas. However, the active participation of national Red Cross societies in the war efforts of nation-states came at a cost to prisoners of war, Allied governments and the international Red Cross movement. The successful delivery of humanitarian relief to prisoners of war could only occur if the national governments involved recognised a reciprocal benefit in doing so. The extremely close relationship between the national Red Cross societies and their governments resulted in the interests and actions of national Societies being aligned with those of governments. When this alignment was combined with practical challenges and the lack of a practical incentive to humanely treat prisoners of war, the Red Cross principle of reciprocal treatment foundered. This thesis will establish that while the integration of the Australian Red Cross with the military power of the nation was of tangible benefit to the Australian government, the Society’s fundamental principles and humanitarian objectives were undermined by political and logistical imperatives.
Declaration

This is to certify that

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD.
(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.
(iii) this thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, inclusive of tables, maps, footnotes, bibliographies and appendices.
Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to Kate Darian-Smith, Charles Schencking and John Lack, of the University of Melbourne’s History Department and Australian Centre, who have provided critical counsel in the planning and execution of this thesis. Sharon Pimm and Noel Barrow, of the Australian Red Cross National Office, provided me with unprecedented access to the Society’s National Archives. Without such access and the assistance of Sharon and Noel, this thesis would not have been possible. Fabrizio Bensi and the staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross Archives in Geneva provided similarly helpful access and assistance. The University of Melbourne’s History Department and Arts Faculty provided financial grants which allowed me to travel to Geneva. The Melbourne universities War History and Military Studies Group provided me with constructive comments and inspiration. My employers, Slater & Gordon Lawyers and the Victorian Department of Justice, have provided me with the time necessary to conduct archival research. My family, in particular Lilian, Laetitia and Luelle have consistently supported me throughout this project.
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## Abbreviations

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<td>AIF</td>
<td>Australian Imperial Force</td>
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<td>Australian Red Cross</td>
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<td>ARCAR</td>
<td>Australian Red Cross Annual Report, Series NO13, ARCNA.</td>
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<td>ARCNA</td>
<td>Australian Red Cross National Archives, Melbourne</td>
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<td>AWM</td>
<td>Australian War Memorial, Canberra</td>
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<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
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<td>ICRCA</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross Archives, Geneva.</td>
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<td>MCC</td>
<td>Minutes of Australian Red Cross Central Council, Series NO14, ARCNA.</td>
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<td>MCCEC</td>
<td>Minutes of Australian Red Cross Central Council Emergency Committee, Series NO14, ARCNA.</td>
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<td>Minutes of Australian Red Cross National Council, Series NO14, ARCNA.</td>
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<td>MNE</td>
<td>Minutes of Australian Red Cross National Executive, Series NO14, ARCNA.</td>
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<td>NAA</td>
<td>National Archives of Australia</td>
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<td>POW</td>
<td>Prisoner of War</td>
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<td>Second AIF</td>
<td>Second Australian Imperial Force</td>
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Indigenous New Guinea stretcher bearers (popularly known as ‘fuzzy wuzzy angels’) carry a wounded soldier from 2/7th Infantry Battalion on a stretcher down a muddy track through the jungle to Wau. The 2nd Field Ambulance was situated at Wau. The Battalion had been attacking a Japanese stronghold between Wau and Mubo when the soldier was wounded. The stretcher bearers are escorted by John Nimmo (later Sir John) who was a searcher for the Australian Red Cross, left, and Corporal Alf Bray, probably from the Australian Army Medical Corps (AAMC). (New Guinea, 1943, P02110.001, AWM).
As he reached the Australian Army 2/7th Infantry Battalion’s position at the top of a mountain ridge, John Nimmo collapsed. He was covered in mud and exhausted after a long climb through jungle in the Mubo area of New Guinea. It was 1943 and Japanese forces were close. In fact, they were closer than John Nimmo realised. As he attempted to recover his breath, an officer of the Battalion grabbed him and pulled him over the crest of a nearby hill. The officer explained that Nimmo’s chosen place of rest may well have been his last. The same location was the target of frequent Japanese machinegun crossfire. Grateful for this timely advice, Nimmo rested. His rescuer was shot dead the next day.1

Given John Nimmo’s location at the front line of combat and his muddy Australian Army uniform, one could be forgiven for assuming that he was an Army officer. Close inspection of Nimmo’s uniform, following a thorough wash, would have revealed a number of badges emblazoned with a red cross on a white background.2 He was not a regular Army officer. In fact, Nimmo was one of the most successful Field Force officers of the Australian Red Cross. His role in New Guinea was to search for missing soldiers and provide comfort to the sick or wounded. While embedded with Australian military forces. Nimmo’s motivations in volunteering for service and his wartime experiences, however, were similar to many of the 600,000 Australians who undertook voluntary duties with the Australian Red Cross during the Second World War.3

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2 Sir John Nimmo Interview, 6-7.
The son of a railway engine driver, John Nimmo was born in Ballarat, Australia, on 15 January 1909.\(^4\) Nimmo attempted to abandon his successful legal practice and enlist in the Australian Army shortly after France capitulated to Germany in June 1940.\(^5\) His motivation for doing so was simple. Nimmo explained that:

It was a matter of patriotism. I felt that the Allied cause was a very genuine and real cause and that every man who could make a contribution should be in it.\(^6\)

Nimmo was disappointed when he was rejected for active service due to his blindness in the left eye – the legacy of an air rifle accident as a boy.\(^7\) Undeterred, he then sought employment as an Army legal officer. Before he could finalise negotiations with the Army, Nimmo became aware that the Australian Red Cross required men to establish the fate of personnel missing in action while embedded with the 6\(^{th}\) Division of the Second Australian Imperial Force (Second AIF) in the Middle East.\(^8\) Intrigued by the opportunity for service in the Australian Red Cross’ Field Force units as a searcher for missing men, Nimmo made inquiries with the Society and was immediately accepted.\(^9\) With little training other than his skills as a legal practitioner, Nimmo contributed to the Allied war effort by serving with the Australian Red Cross in the Middle East, United Kingdom, Europe, Australia and New Guinea.\(^10\)

Like Nimmo, the Australian Red Cross was embedded within the Australian government and military during the Second World War. The Society was organised to support the government’s war effort, integrated into the Australian
military and entwined with the Australian social establishment. The legal basis, structure, leadership and administration of the Society were closely connected with the official war effort of the Australian government and military. The Society was embedded as a paramilitary branch of the Australian military forces and provided logistical support to the military in Australia and overseas by means of the Field Force. The Red Cross societies of other combatant nations were similarly embedded to contribute to the logistical firepower of their respective governments and militaries. The integration of the Australian Red Cross with the Australian government, military and social establishment was for the purpose of supporting the war effort of the Allies in Australia and overseas.

The Second World War was a period of transformation in Australian politics, society and culture that profoundly influenced the development of the nation. The Australian Army enlisted a total of 726,543 personnel over the course of the war, which was equivalent to 10.28 per cent of the Australian population of 7,065,000 in 1940.\textsuperscript{11} The total membership of all branches of the Australian defence forces throughout the war amounted to 990,900 personnel.\textsuperscript{12} Of these service personnel, 557,799 served outside Australia during the conflict.\textsuperscript{13} Australian military forces were committed to a variety of theatres, including the Middle East, Greece, South-East Asia, the Pacific, Northern Australia and the air war in Europe.\textsuperscript{14} The conflict had three distinct stages from an Australian perspective. Firstly, there was a ‘phony war’ between the British Empire’s declaration of war with Germany on 3 September 1939 and the swift fall of France in June 1940. During this period, there were few tangible connections between Australia and the war. Secondly, the involvement of the Second AIF in the British Empire’s struggle against German and Italian forces in the Middle East between February 1940 and November 1942 brought direct but distant Australian involvement in the war. Thirdly, Japan’s entry into the war in the Asia-Pacific on 7 December 1941 resulted in the fall of Singapore and the recall

\textsuperscript{11}Beaumont, ed., \textit{Australian Defence - Sources & Statistics}, 306; Gavin Long, \textit{Australia in the War of 1939-45, Series 1, Volume I - To Benghazi} (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1952).
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13}Beaumont, ed., \textit{Australian Defence - Sources & Statistics}, 306.
of the majority of the Second AIF to defend South-East Asia and Australia between January 1943 and the conclusion of the war on 14 August 1945. This phase of the war directly affected the integrity and interests of Australia, particularly as Northern Australian towns were bombed and Australian forces struggled against Japanese troops in New Guinea. As each phase of the conflict resulted in a more tangible threat to Australian interests, the extent of social and economic changes on the Australian ‘home front’ in support of the war effort increased. Each phase of the war also resulted in distinct developments in the organisation and operations of the Australian Red Cross.

Conceptions of the Red Cross

At the Australian Red Cross Annual General Meeting of 1942 JJ Maloney, the President of the Trades & Labor Council of New South Wales, remarked that:

The Red Cross is more than an organisation, it represents everything good in life. It is the one Society in the whole world that recognises no creeds, colours, castes or nationalities. If the whole of humanity would conform and subscribe to the principles of the Red Cross, it would mean the end of carnage and the end of wars.

Indeed, by the time of the Second World War, the Red Cross movement held worldwide appeal. The British Empire and its Dominions, the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, China and Japan all developed strong national

\[\text{\ref{footnote}}\]

\[\text{\ref{footnote1}}\]

\[\text{\ref{footnote2}}\]
Red Cross societies despite their social, cultural and religious differences. The widespread adoption of the concept of the Red Cross by the belligerents of the Second World War did not, however, result in an end to carnage and war. There was a dichotomy between Maloney’s benevolent characterisation of the Red Cross and the military utility of national Red Cross Societies to the protagonists of the Second World War.

Max Huber, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, was not convinced that characterisation of the Red Cross as an internationally understood benevolent movement was universally accepted. Writing at the conclusion of the Second World War, Huber noted that:

Nothing could be vaguer than the ideas which the name of ‘Red Cross’ evokes in the public mind, and even in our own circles it often connotes something strangely nebulous.

Huber’s comments still resonate in the twenty-first century, as the Australian Red Cross seeks to tread carefully between its public persona as a neutral provider of humanitarian relief and its legal status as an auxiliary to the Australian military forces. As the nation’s oldest and most prestigious humanitarian organisation, the Red Cross is part of the Australian philanthropic landscape. While the Australian Red Cross has been characterised by an emphasis upon relief of natural disasters since the Second World War, the Society was born of, and remains relevant to, warfare. The challenges that the Red Cross movement faces in the twenty-first century were faced during the Second World War. The tensions between militarism, nationalism and imperialism on one hand and the strictures of humanitarianism, neutrality and impartiality on the other remain omnipresent for the Australian Red Cross.

18 Hans Haug, ed., Humanity For All - The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Berne: Henry Dunant Institute/Paul Haupt Publishers, 1993), 163-351.
19 MNC 22 May 1945, 1.
These tensions contribute to the nebulous conceptions of the Red Cross that so troubled Huber.

**The Problem Addressed by this Thesis**

Beneath the ‘Red Cross myth’ of independence and impartiality lies a complex and sometimes contradictory web of charitable work, humanitarian themes, political manoeuvring, legal and moral influence, social and cultural values, and lurking militaristic impulses. The complex interaction between the ideological foundations of the Red Cross movement, the exigencies of war, and the response of societies to conflict provides the basis of historical inquiry for this thesis. This thesis poses and answers the following three questions:

1. How was the Australian Red Cross organised and operated in the Second World War?
2. What was the Society’s relationship with the Australian government and military?
3. What do the answers to the previous questions tell us about national Red Cross societies and the international Red Cross movement more broadly?

The proper role of international organisations, and whether they have a right to intervene in humanitarian crises, has become a matter of contemporary debate. A perennial challenge is the use of humanitarian aid as a political and military instrument. During the Second World War, the Cold War and the contemporary conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, governments have utilised humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross to further their objectives. This integration of humanitarian efforts with political and military objectives

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23 Ibid.
provides both opportunities for constructive action and tangible threats to the security of operations conducted by humanitarian aid agencies. In addition, the question of whose interests organisations such as the Red Cross are responsible for, and accountable to, has become a matter of public concern – particularly in the realm of fundraising and expenditure.  

The Australian Red Cross was subject to allegations of failure in communication and accountability relating to expenditure of funds raised following bombings in Bali on 12 October 2002. Similarly, the American Red Cross’ Liberty Fund, which was established in the aftermath of terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, suffered criticism from members of the public and the United States Congress Energy and Commerce Committee’s oversight panel. The controversy surrounding the methods by which money for the Liberty Fund was raised and expended contributed to the resignation of the President of the American Red Cross, Dr Bernadine Healey. This thesis examines the historical context of these pressing contemporary debates to enable an understanding of the challenges faced by humanitarian organisations today.

Historians have previously made very limited efforts to analyse the role of Australia’s most important non-governmental international organisation, the Australian Red Cross, at the time of Australia’s most critical military and humanitarian challenge, the Second World War. The activities and development of the Australian Red Cross are of interest as this unique organisation is an integral part of the Australian community’s response to challenges such as wars and natural disasters. The structure, activities and personnel of the Australian Red Cross are examined by this thesis in order to analyse why the Society developed and behaved in the manner in which it did during the Second World War. The symbiotic relationship between the Australian Red Cross and government institutions, in particular the military, is analysed to examine the


Society’s role in the development of Australian military capability, public governance and popular culture. This thesis utilises archival material in Australia and Switzerland in unprecedented ways. A framework pioneered by John Hutchinson for the examination of humanitarian organisations is used to analyse the Australian Red Cross within the broader historiography of Australian military and social history.\(^{27}\)

While this study focuses upon the Australian Red Cross, it engages in selected comparative examination of the national societies of Britain, the United States and Japan. This work attempts to explore issues and draw conclusions regarding the Australian Society that have broader relevance to the Red Cross movement. The Australian Society had a relatively compact leadership group and was organised on a smaller and simpler scale than its counterparts in Britain, the United States and Japan during the Second World War.\(^{28}\) Similarly, the government, military, economy and society of Australia was relatively smaller and less complex than that of Britain, the United States and Japan during the conflict.\(^{29}\) The smaller scale of the Australian Red Cross, government, military, economy and society readily enable identification of the connections between them.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to exhaustively document and narrate the activities of the Australian Red Cross’ many divisions and departments during the Second World War. The works of Melanie Oppenheimer\(^{30}\) and Rupert


Goodman\textsuperscript{31} have contributed enormously to the documentation and analysis of the activities of Australian Red Cross volunteers. The publicly available Annual Reports and ‘Notes on Activities’ published by the Society also effectively detail the activities of the Australian Red Cross during the 1939-45 period. The enormous amount of archival material available would render an attempt to comprehensively document all activities of the Australian Red Cross during the Second World War voluminous without necessarily contributing to an understanding of the organisation’s behaviour and development. While the scope and logistics of many Australian Red Cross activities during the Second World War are considered in this thesis, these activities are examined in accordance with their relevance to the examination of the Society’s broader policies and expansion during the conflict.

Use of Archival Sources

This thesis is one of the first attempts to engage in an analysis of the Australian Red Cross by utilising previously underutilised Australian Red Cross and International Committee of the Red Cross archives in conjunction with Australian government and military sources. Until recently, Red Cross organisations throughout the world have been reluctant to provide researchers with access to their archives.\textsuperscript{32} While the Australian and International Red Cross have become more willing to provide information in response to historical enquiries by members of the public in recent years, the Australian Red Cross’ National Office does not usually allow researchers to range throughout its holdings. Instead, particular information is usually presented in response to a public inquiry by the Society’s archivist. In undertaking research for this thesis, I was provided with access to the extensive archives of the Australian Red Cross.


\textsuperscript{32}This reluctance was probably based in a desire to control access to potentially sensitive information about the Red Cross, other aid agencies, governments, military belligerents and victims of conflict. There remains, however, a protective embargo on personal information and other sensitive documents applies for 40 or 60 years after creation - ICRC, \textit{Rules Governing Access to the Archives of the ICRC} (Geneva: ICRC, 2004).
National Office. I was provided a full list of archival holdings, permitted to browse throughout and copy archival records relating to the Second World War, and provided with the opportunity to work at the National Office of the Red Cross with their archivist for many months. This access was provided to me due to my existing relationship with the Australian Red Cross as a volunteer with the Victorian Division’s international humanitarian law unit. In addition, the Society appreciated the potential value of my research to the organisation and the necessity for extensive access to archival holdings for the problems of the thesis to be satisfactorily addressed. My use of Australian Red Cross archival material was only limited by an agreement that I would not publish the personal details of individuals, unless those details are already a matter of public record, without the permission of the individual (or their family) and the Society. I also examined the Red Cross archives in Geneva, in accordance with the researcher access policy of the International Committee. While it is not possible to freely browse amongst the International Committee of the Red Cross’ archives in Geneva, I was provided with access to a wide range of Red Cross documents that detailed the activities of the movement during the Second World War.

The Annual Reports and Financial Statements of the Australian Red Cross provide an insight into the organisation’s culture, activities and mode of organisation. In addition, the minutes of the various Committees and Councils of the Australian Red Cross provide a depth of detail that allows an understanding of the process, personalities and concerns that drove the behaviour of the Society. However, these documents must be read in light of the audience for which they were intended. Obviously, the Annual Reports and Financial Statements represent the official public image which the Australian Red Cross wished to portray, rather than providing a ‘private view’ of the machinations of the organisation. Similarly, the publicity-sensitive Society did not allow the minutes of its decision making bodies to reflect a full and frank account of critical debates and disagreements. While the Annual Reports, Financial

33 Research and privacy agreement between Jonathan Spear and the Australian Red Cross National Archives dated 4 April 2002.
Statements and minutes of the Australian Red Cross are an extremely useful resource, their quasi-public nature requires a cautious interpretative approach.

The private papers of the Society’s wartime leadership are also a rich archival source. The correspondence and diaries of key National Red Cross leaders such as John Newman Morris, Dudley Turner and John Roxburgh provide a level of insight into critical debates and disagreements that is inversely proportional to the scant details provided in the official minutes on such matters. While rich in detail, much of the personal correspondence that has been retained in archives was written for the purposes of persuading others to the viewpoint of the author in relation to a contentious matter.

The fact that the Australian Red Cross has determined which documents to retain in its own archives through both selection and the random exigencies of organisational change presents a challenge. This filtering reduces the need to search through many irrelevant documents, but removes the opportunity to make an independent judgement as to the relevance of documents that have been destroyed by the organisation. One of the few means available to determine whether relevant documents have been destroyed is to cross-reference the possibility of such documents existing with those sources that have been retained. This is not ideal, however, as knowledge of the destruction of a potentially relevant document can only provide an inference, rather than certainty, as to its relevance and contents.

In addition to the unprecedented examination of Red Cross sources, this thesis utilises archival sources from the Australian Archives and Australian War Memorial, newspapers such as *The Argus* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*,

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35 For example, the Society’s Honorary Treasurer John Roxburgh maintained a candid gossip and venom-filled correspondence with his business associate Wilfred Johnson, who was the New South Wales Red Cross Chairman until September 1944. Roxburgh worked for Johnson’s accounting firm Smith, Johnson and Co. – “ARC Outgoing Correspondence 1939-41,” Box 2.77, ARCNA. Roxburgh’s detailed and partisan account of John Newman Morris’ struggle for leadership of the Society stands in stark contrast to the official minutes which are unenlightening on this matter - MCE 29 February 1944, 1; MNC 26 September 1944, 4; “Letters from John Roxburgh to Wilfred Johnson, 25 February 1944, 25 August 1944, 13 December 1944,” Box 2.58, ARCNA.
contemporary studies and memoirs, and relevant legal documents.\textsuperscript{36} These sources are applied for the first time to an analysis of the Australian Red Cross’ organisation and operations in the Second World War.

The drawing on inferences is critical when analysing novel Red Cross sources in conjunction with Australian government and military archival sources. The National Archives of Australia and Australian War Memorial hold extensive archival material regarding the relationship between the Australian Red Cross, the Australian government and the military. Despite the great number of these government and military sources, it is often necessary to draw inferences from these documents to discern the exact nature of the relationship between the Red Cross and the government. The government and military archives do not contain a document which effectively states that the Australian Red Cross was a paramilitary branch of the Australian government that was used, under the cloak of ‘humanitarian assistance’, as a tool to defeat the enemy. These archives do, however, contain documents that articulate the relationship between philanthropic organisations such the Australian Red Cross and the Australian Army.\textsuperscript{37}

When the sum of Red Cross, government and military archival material is analysed, however, it is difficult to reach any other conclusion. As this thesis demonstrates, it was assumed by government, military and Red Cross leaders that the role of the Australian Red Cross was to assist the Australian government and military with the war effort. As everyone involved in Red Cross operations knew this, it is unsurprising that no government policy record was created to state something so obvious and universally agreed.

\textsuperscript{36} See the bibliography to this thesis.

\textsuperscript{37} “AHQ Instructions for War – Philanthropic Activities,” AWM54, 495/1/6, NAA, “AGH Instructions for War (Philanthropic Activities”, MP 742/1, 282/1/902, NAA.
Analysis Within A Broader Historiographical Context

Historians such as Melanie Oppenheimer, Rupert Goodman and Jan Bassett have attempted to contextualise the Australian Red Cross within the historiographical fields of volunteerism and the military medical services. Oppenheimer’s Red Cross VAs - A History of the VAD Movement in New South Wales, All Work, No Pay - Australian Civilian Volunteers in War, PhD thesis and published articles examine the Australian Red Cross in the wider context of volunteerism and Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs). All Work, No Pay is the only volume that comprehensively examines the role of the Australian Red Cross within the field of wartime volunteer work, contrasting the organisation with other voluntary aid movements such as the YMCA, Salvation Army, Order of St John and Australian Comforts Fund. Oppenheimer’s works take particular care to place and explain the role and motivations of Red Cross volunteers within their social and cultural context. She charts the rise of the Red Cross to the status of Australia’s premier volunteer organisations with strong links to the social and political establishment, emphasising that the relationship between voluntary organisations that governments shifted and

38 Oppenheimer, Red Cross VAs; Oppenheimer, All Work, No Pay.
39 Goodman, Voluntary Aid Detachments in Peace and War.
40 Jan Bassett, Guns and Brooches – Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992).
41 Oppenheimer, Red Cross VAs.
42 Oppenheimer, All Work, No Pay.
43 Oppenheimer, "Volunteers in Action".
44 Oppenheimer, "Control of Wartime Patriotic Funds in Australia"; Oppenheimer, "The Best PM for the Empire in War?"; Oppenheimer, “Controlling Civilian Volunteering”;
45 See also Ian Howie-Willis, A Century for Australia – St John Ambulance in Australia 1883-1983 (Canberra: Priory of the Order of St John in Australia, 1983).
46 Oppenheimer’s PhD thesis engages in a similar analysis, focusing upon the Second World War period. In relation to the Australian Comforts Fund, see C.O. Badham Jackson, Proud Story - The Official History of the Australian Comforts Fund (Sydney: F.H. Johnston, 1949); C.O. Badham Jackson, The State at War – An Official History of the Lord Mayor’s Patriotic Fund & War Fund of New South Wales & Australian Comforts Fund (Sydney: John Sands, 1947); Australian Comforts Fund, History of the Australian Comforts Fund - Being the Official Record of a Voluntary Civilian Organisation (Sydney: Scotow & Presswell, 1922). Another wartime volunteer organisation that is not extensively considered by Oppenheimer, the Volunteer Defence Corps, is chronicled in the Australian War Memorial’s On Guard With The Volunteer Defence Corps (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1944).
47 Norma Davis’ self-published Newcastle Central Detachment, Red Cross V.A.D., 1939-1960 (Newcastle: Norma Davis, 1960) is a memoir that provides some sense of the social and cultural context of Red Cross volunteers, but does not attempt to engage in an analysis of this issue.
changed during the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{48} In doing so, Oppenheimer extends and adapts the work of Geoffrey Finlayson, who argues that the relationship between voluntary organisations and the state is a shifting frontier.\textsuperscript{49} While acknowledging the influence of socially-sanctioned militarism as a motivating factor to the recruitment of Voluntary Aids, Oppenheimer does not explicitly link militarism to the activities of the Red Cross. The focus of her volume on volunteerism, however, does not allow Oppenheimer to address in more detail fundamental issues of the Australian Red Cross' policy formation, structure, leadership struggles, relationships with other organisations, or the application of fundamental Red Cross principles in a total war environment.\textsuperscript{50} This thesis examines the distinctive changes in these aspects of the Australian Red Cross' relationship with the state during the Second World War.

Goodman's \textit{Voluntary Aid Detachments in Peace and War}\textsuperscript{51} and Bassett's \textit{Guns and Brooches – Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War}\textsuperscript{52} operate as adjuncts to Oppenheimer's work on Australian volunteerism and the military. Having served as a nursing orderly with the 2/4\textsuperscript{th} Australian General Hospital between 1940 and 1946, Goodman draws upon his experiences to craft a history of Voluntary Aid Detachments and their relationship with the military medical and nursing services. Bassett surveys the Australian Army Nursing Corps throughout its history, noting the role played by the Red Cross as a supply and recruiting pool for the Nursing Corps. While these works differentiate the roles of military nurses and Red Cross volunteers, they do not investigate in any depth the Australian Red Cross organisation that underpinned much of the work of the VADs and Army nurses.

\textsuperscript{48} Oppenheimer, "Volunteers in Action"; Oppenheimer, \textit{All Work, No Pay}.  
\textsuperscript{50} Oppenheimer's PhD thesis does, however, engage in a more significant analysis of the Australian Red Cross' relationship with the state in the context of volunteerism - Oppenheimer, 'Volunteers in Action'.  
\textsuperscript{52} Jan Bassett, \textit{Guns and Brooches}.  

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The works of Oppenheimer, Goodman and Bassett do not explicitly link the Australian Red Cross’ place in the historiography of voluntary organisations with an examination of the Society’s relevance within the broader historiography of Australian and international military, social, political, economic, literary, legal, humanitarian and organisational history. This thesis links the work relating to voluntary organisations before and after the Second World War to the Australian Red Cross’ importance within a broader military, social, political, legal and organisational historiography. This enables the study to be placed within, and make an important contribution to, the existing historiography.

Application of an Interpretative Framework

This thesis inquires into the Australian Red Cross using a comparative interpretative framework for the critical examination of humanitarian organisations pioneered by John Hutchinson. His *Champions of Charity - War and the Rise of the Red Cross* focuses upon the international Red Cross movement’s activities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe and the United States. Hutchinson’s work is significant due to its critical approach to the Red Cross movement and his controversial thesis that the Red Cross has aided and abetted the militarisation of charity. *Champions of Charity*, far from championing the Red Cross movement, argues that the original intentions of the organisation’s Swiss founders were warped for the militaristic purposes of governments in an era when the conduct war became increasingly demanding upon the resources of nations. Hutchinson’s work does not extend to the period of the Second World War or consider the Australian Red Cross. This study utilises Hutchinson’s comparative interpretative framework by contrasting the Australian society with other national Red Cross societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The thesis applies Hutchinson’s critical approach to the Red Cross movement in the context of the Australian Red Cross between 1939 and 1945.

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53 Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity*. 
Hutchinson’s argument that the original humanitarian spirit of the Red Cross movement was subverted by the pragmatic interests of nation-states is complemented by the works of Charles Hurd, Nicholas Berry and Philip Bobbitt. Hurd’s *A Compact History of the American Red Cross* concludes that the American Red Cross’ extremely close relationship with the national government and Army resulted in the organisation’s use as an instrument of foreign policy before and during the Second World War. Hurd’s conclusion, while less explicit than the arguments of John Hutchinson, generally accords with Hutchinson’s view that the Red Cross movement has been used by nation states to assist the winning of wars. An examination of the applicability of this argument to the Australian Red Cross forms the basis of this thesis.

Berry’s *War & The Red Cross - The Unspoken Mission* argues that the International Committee of the Red Cross is generally cognisant of the issue Hutchinson raised. He asserts that the International Committee now seeks to undermine the institution of war rather than pursue its traditional role of humanising war and providing relief in a manner that may, in fact, serve to legitimise or prolong conflict. By examining the Australian Red Cross in the Second World War from the perspective of the twenty first century, this thesis inquires into whether Berry’s argument relating to the International Committee may be applied to the Australian national society.

Bobbitt’s *The Shield of Achilles - War, Peace and the Course of History* argues, among wider themes, that the major international military conflicts between 1914 and 1990 entailed a struggle to determine which constitutional

54 Hurd, *A Compact History of the American Red Cross.*
55 Nicholas Berry, *War & the Red Cross - The Unspoken Mission* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997).
58 Nicholas Berry, *War & the Red Cross.*
59 Ibid., 3-4.
60 Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles.*
form should govern modern nation-states. The three ideological belligerents who sought to establish the primacy of their particular constitutional form were fascism, communism and parliamentarianism.61 This thesis considers the significance of Bobbitt’s argument, in conjunction with that of Hutchinson, when examining the manner in which the Red Cross was adopted to aid the struggle of each of these competing constitutional forms. Bobbitt argues that the growth of international law and organisations such as the Red Cross has contributed to a decline in the relevance and power of the nation-state. This study makes some examination of the validity of Bobbitt's argument today in comparison to the Second World War period.

An alternative interpretative framework to that of Hutchinson has been postulated by an historian of both the International Committee and the German Red Cross, Dieter Riesenberger. In his Für Humanität in Krieg unter Frieden - Das Internationale Rote Kreuz 1863-197762 and Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz – Eine Geschichte 1864-199063, Riesenberger argues that the militarisation of the Red Cross movement was a consequence of a pragmatic approach by the International Committee’s early leaders rather than a deliberate promotion of the culture of militarism.64 Riesenberger asserts that, with the partial exception of Henri Dunant, the early leaders of the International Committee pragmatically expected that national Red Cross societies would be embedded with their respective government and militaries to enable the delivery of humanitarian aid.65 In this view, the embedding of national societies in the Second World War was a natural consequence of the pragmatic manner in which the International Committee originally intended that the principles of the Red Cross be practically implemented. This thesis examines the relevance of Riesenberger’s approach to the Australian Red Cross in the Second World War and compares is with Hutchinson’s contrasting interpretative framework.

61 Ibid., 24-64.
64 Riesenberger, Für Humanität in Krieg und Frieden, 14-50.
65 Ibid.
Historiography of the Australian Red Cross

The Australian Red Cross was extensively involved in supporting the Australian Imperial Force in the First World War. Volume XI of Charles Bean’s *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 - 1918* provides a narration of the Australian Red Cross’ activities in the First World War, but does not include an extensive analysis of the Australian Society’s relationship with the government and military. Arthur Butler’s three volume *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914 -1918* only refers to the Australian Red Cross briefly when discussing the Australian Army’s medical services.

More recent general histories that survey Australia’s involvement in the First World War and the development of the ANZAC spirit, such as Joan Beaumont’s *Australia’s War 1914-18* and Alistair Thompson’s *ANZAC Memories* only mention the Red Cross tangentially. The substantial literature regarding the experiences of Australian soldiers during the First World War, such as Bill Gammage’s *The Broken Years*, includes occasional references to Red Cross services provided during campaigns and in hospitals. Michael McKernan’s account of Australian Society during the First World War, *The Australian People*

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66 See Chapter 1 of this thesis.
69 See, for example, Butler, *The Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-18 Volume I*, 548-549.
& *The Great War*[^73], deals with the role of patriotic fundraising organisations on the ‘home front’ but does not critically analyse the relationship of the Australian Red Cross with the government.[^74] The repatriation and care of wounded soldiers in the aftermath of the First World War has been examined in Stephen Garton’s *The Cost of War – Australians Return*[^75] and Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees’ *The Last Shilling*.[^76] These works on repatriation and rehabilitation explain the Australian Red Cross’ ongoing but unglamorous role between the wars and the manner in which the Society sought to discharge its obligations in a peacetime environment. The role of Lady Helen Munro Ferguson in the foundation and initial management of the Australian Red Cross has been analysed by Melanie Oppenheimer in her article “The Best PM for the Empire in War? Lady Helen Munro Ferguson and the Australian Red Cross Society 1914-1920”.[^77]

The Australian War Memorial holds extensive records regarding the Australian Red Cross which focus upon the First World War. The majority of Second World War Australian Red Cross records, including Searcher Bureau prisoner of war tracing records, are held by the Society’s National Headquarters. Many of the Second World War artefacts displayed by the War Memorial that relate to the Red Cross, such as the Changi Quilt,[^78] are relics created or retained by prisoners of war. While these artefacts reflect the importance of the Red Cross to the prisoner of war experience, the War Memorial’s archival holdings do not enable an exploration of the Society’s transformation during the Second World War or its integration into the Australian war effort.

[^77]: Oppenheimer, “The Best PM for the Empire in War?”.
[^78]: The Changi Quilt was made for the Australian Red Cross by women interned in the Changi prison, Singapore, in 1942. It is likely that a quilt was made for the Australian Red Cross not because there were many Australian internees, but because it was assumed that the Australian Red Cross would play a major part in supplying aid to Singapore and POWs in Asia - REL/14325, AWM.
While attempts were made by the Central Executive of the Australian Red Cross during the Second World War to document and publish a history of the organisation’s activities, this project never came to fruition.\textsuperscript{79} An attempt to form a History Committee of the Australian Red Cross to guide the writing of a history of the Society also withered under the pressures the organisation faced at the height of the war in 1943.\textsuperscript{80} A similar project by a Research Officer at the National Headquarters of the Australian Red Cross, Mr Stanley Addison, made considerable progress between 1941 and 1946 in writing a history that documented the activities of the organisation in detail.\textsuperscript{81} This history by Addison was intended as an internal reference work rather than one suitable for publication. Addison’s work was never completed due to concerns of the Australian Red Cross National Executive about the cost and lack of practical utility of the proposed history.\textsuperscript{82}

There are two extant general histories of the Australian Red Cross that encompass the Second World War period. Leon Stubbings’ quaintly titled ‘\textit{Look What You Started Henry! A History of the Australian Red Cross 1914-1991}’\textsuperscript{83} is a narrative account of the organisation’s exploits. Drawing on his experience as Secretary-General of the Australian Red Cross from 1955 to 1998, Stubbings utilises a wide range of oral historical sources but provides no substantive references in relation to most of his assertions. Noreen Minogue’s \textit{The More Things Change… The Australian Red Cross 1914-1989}\textsuperscript{84} is another general narrative history which demonstrates the organisation’s penchant for strangely titled historical works written by former senior office holders.\textsuperscript{85} In both volumes the Second World War is dealt with in a superficial and cursory manner. The histories by former Secretaries General of the Society were commissioned and published by the Australian Red Cross. These institutional histories are

\textsuperscript{79} MCE 28 December 1939, 3.
\textsuperscript{80} MCE 14 September 1943, 4.
\textsuperscript{81} “Summary of History of ARC,” AWM54, 837/1/5, AWM; “War of 1949-45 Correspondence Regarding the History of the Australian Red Cross,” AWM93, 50/9/34, AWM.
\textsuperscript{82} “Letter from Alfred Brown to John Newman Morris, 24 February 1946,” Box 2.58, ARCNA.
\textsuperscript{85} Minogue was Deputy Secretary-General of the Australian Red Cross from 1963 to 1989.
uncritical works that rarely reveal their primary sources, lack analysis, and are largely concerned with praising the work of the Australian Red Cross.\textsuperscript{86}

Matthew Klugman’s \textit{Blood Matters – A Social History of the Victorian Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service}\textsuperscript{87} and Mark Cortuila’s \textit{Banking on Blood}\textsuperscript{88} are an excellent chronicles of the scientific development of Red Cross blood services. Klugman’s work examines the social and cultural implications of advances in Red Cross blood transfusion technology, including crucial progress made during the Second World War. Due to the very specific focus of these volumes, however, they do not attempt to analyse the more general policy implications of the Australian Red Cross’ relationship with the government and military.

The absence of a comprehensive narrative or analytical history of the Australian Red Cross is rendered more notable by the British Red Cross’ \textit{Red Cross and St John - The Official Record of the Humanitarian Services of the War Organisation of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem 1939-1947}.\textsuperscript{89} This overwhelmingly detailed narration of the work of the British Red Cross in conjunction with the Order of St. John is largely based upon voluminous statistics and official records of the combined War Organisation. Unfortunately, the nature of this volume is that of a catalogue of officially recognised good works and statistics.

In the wake of the conflict, the International Committee of the Red Cross published three volumes entitled \textit{Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross on its Activities during the Second World War 1 September 1939 to 30 June 1947}.\textsuperscript{90} In contrast to the British Red Cross’ Official Record, the

\textsuperscript{86}The Australian Red Cross also published works in praise of the Society during the early years of the Second World War, such as: Joan Lindsay, \textit{The Story of the Red Cross} (Melbourne: ARCS, Melbourne, 1941) and John Newman Morris, \textit{The Origin & Growth of Voluntary Aid to the Medical Services in Time of War} (Melbourne: ARCS, 1940).


\textsuperscript{88}Mark Cortuila, \textit{Banking on Blood} (Walcha: Ohio Productions, 2001).

\textsuperscript{89}Cambray & Briggs, \textit{Red Cross and St John}.

International Committee’s report successfully balances statistics with narrative and analysis. Published in May 1948, the Report of the International Committee was written in an atmosphere where it was necessary to explain and vindicate the shortcomings of Red Cross service to civilian internees in Europe and prisoners in the Asia-Pacific. Nevertheless, the Geneva report remains fundamental to comprehending the flow of events and the International Committee’s contemporaneous explanation for its actions.

One of the few general histories of the Red Cross that has not been published by the movement is Caroline Moorhead’s popular history Dunant’s Dream - War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross. Moorhead’s volume largely draws upon source material from the International Committee of the Red Cross’ archives in Switzerland and the national archives of the British, American, French and German national societies. The analysis of the International Committee of the Red Cross’ policies, particularly during the Second World War, is often critical. Of note is Moorhead’s criticism of the movement’s inability to prevent the German and Japanese national societies from derogating from the fundamental principles of the Red Cross. Moorhead is also critical of the International Committee’s failure to assist Jewish civilians in the Third Reich and internees or prisoners of war in Japanese captivity. Moorhead concedes, however, that her work is focused upon the International Committee of the Red Cross and the British and American national societies, barely mentioning the Australian Red Cross.

Moorhead’s work is complemented by that of David Forsythe, who has written on the subjects of the Red Cross and human rights for several decades. Forsythe’s most recent work, The Humanitarians - The International Committee

91 Moorhead, Dunant’s Dream.
92 On this subject, see also Jean-Claude Favez, The Red Cross and the Holocaust (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
93 David Forsythe, Present Role of the Red Cross in Protection (Geneva: Joint Committee for the Reappraisal of the Role of the Red Cross, 1975); David Forsythe, Humanitarian Politics - The International Committee of the Red Cross (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977); David Forsythe, Human Rights & World Politics (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).
of the Red Cross,\(^{94}\) concentrates on the development of the International Committee and its attempts to practically apply the fundamental principles of the Red Cross in the context of challenging conflicts. While Forsythe's studies of the application of humanitarian principles are relevant to the activities of national societies, his focus is upon the International Committee rather than the national representatives of the Red Cross movement.

Specific histories of the British and New Zealand Red Cross Societies were published some decades ago. Beryl Oliver's *The British Red Cross in Action*\(^{95}\) and Meryl Lowrie's *The Geneva Connection: Red Cross in New Zealand*\(^{96}\) clearly fall into the familiar mould of laudatory narrative histories of the national societies which provide little analysis or critique.

Within the wider Australian historiography of the Second World War, Patsy Adam-Smith’s *Prisoners of War - From Gallipoli to Korea*\(^{97}\) and *Australian Women at War*\(^{98}\) are two examples of numerous oral histories that mention the importance of Red Cross work or relief services to individual combatants or civilians. The participation of Australian women in the Second World War is of relevance to the Australian Red Cross, the majority of whose membership was comprised of women.\(^{99}\) Numerous memoirs and studies have been published by, and about, Australian women who were involved in the Second World War.\(^{100}\) An extensive body of work exists regarding the history and experiences


\(^{97}\) Patsy Adam-Smith, *Prisoners of War - From Gallipoli to Korea* (Melbourne: Viking, 1992).


\(^{99}\) On the subject of gender and war see Joy Damousi & Marilyn Lake, eds., *Gender & War – Australians At War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

of Australian prisoners of war, particularly those held by the Japanese. These works generally utilise individual narratives to analyse the significance of the individual’s experiences in the prisoner of war, military medical, or volunteer auxiliary context. In the instances when these works consider the Australian Red Cross, however, they provide a superficial view of the Society and its role in the war efforts of belligerent nations.

There are also numerous memoirs and stories of Australians relating to service in the Second World War. Robin Gerster’s *Big Noting – The Heroic Theme in...*  

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Australian War Writing examines such Australian literature and its themes of heroism in war. A consistent feature of Australian memoirs of the Second World War is a focus upon the personal experience of wartime service, in contrast to the strategic focus of many works of history. As much of the work of the Australian Red Cross was of a strategic and logistical nature, the activities of the Society do not feature strongly in wartime memoirs. An exception to this pattern is the role of the Australian and International Red Cross in providing mail and personal comforts to Australian prisoners of war. Those memoirs that do accord a place to the Australian Red Cross focus upon the immediate personal effect of Red Cross services and do not delve into the relationship between the Society and the government.

Various authors have examined the ‘home front’ experience in Australia during the Second World War. Of the official history’s Civil Series, Hasluck’s The Government & The People and Butlin’s The War Economy rarely mention the Red Cross and do not engage in an analysis of the Australian Society’s relationship with the government and military. More recent works, such as Kate Darian Smith’s social history of Melbourne during the Second World War or more general political and social surveys by Michael McKernan and John Robertson, do not include any significant consideration of the Red Cross.

Press, 2000); Thomas Wood, Cobbers Campaigning (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1940); Peter Ryan, Fear Drive My Feet (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1959); Australian War Memorial, Soldiering On – The Australian Army At Home & Overseas (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1942); Lawson Glassop, We Were The Rats (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1944); Charles Jager, Escape from Crete (Floradale Productions, 2004); Ray Parkin, Ray Parkin’s Wartime Trilogy (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003); T.A.G. Hungerford, The Ridge & the River – A Taut Account of Jungle Warfare (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1952); Charles Robinson, Journey to Captivity (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1991).


S J Butlin, War Economy 1939-45.

Kate Darian-Smith, On the Home Front.

Michael McKernan, All In!.

John Robertson, Australia At War 1939-45.

Regarding the Australian ‘home front’ see also the following works, which generally gloss over the role of the Australian Red Cross and its relationship with the government: Andrew Bolt, ed., Our Home Front 1939-45 (Melbourne: Wilkinson Books, 1995); Libby Connors, Remembering the 1939-45 War (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992); Joanna Penglase & David Horner, When the War Came to Australia – Memories of the Second World War (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1992); Peter Charlton, South Queensland WWII, 1941-1945 (Bowen Hills: Boolarong Publications, 1991); Daniel Connell, The War at Home: Australia 1939-
As is the case with the historiography of the war of 1914-18, general histories of the Second World War, such as David Horner’s *High Command* and the works edited by Joan Beaumont, only mention the Red Cross tangentially. The twenty two volume official history *Australia in the War of 1939-45* provides the most comprehensive available narrative of the war’s events and contemporary analysis of the policies pursued by the Australian government and military. Of particular relevance to this thesis are the authoritative and wide-ranging studies of the Australian military medical services during the Second World War by Allan Walker. The Medical Series of the official history, however, only touches briefly upon the role of the Australian Red Cross. In doing so, it perpetuated the tangential treatment of the Society that had begun with Butler’s *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-18*. In the Second World War Medical History, Walker noted, following his overview of the Society’s relationship with the military medical

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112 Gavin Long (ed.), *Australia in the War of 1939-45, Series 1 - 5* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1950’s).


services, that ‘the story of the Australian Red Cross will be told more fully in another place’.\textsuperscript{115} This is that other place.

**Embedded**

This study will demonstrate that the Australian Red Cross was embedded with the Australian government, military and civilian ‘home front’ during the Second World War. Chapter One will demonstrate that the origins of the Red Cross movement are intertwined with the interests and actions of governments. The legal basis, structure, leadership and administration of the Society were closely integrated with the official efforts of the Australian government and military in the Second World War. The pervasive presence of the Red Cross resulted in the embedding of the Society on the Australian civilian ‘home front’. The Red Cross societies of other combatant nations were similarly operated and organised to contribute to the logistical firepower of their respective governments and militaries.

The Second World War revitalised the Australian Red Cross and caused the organisation to forge even stronger links with the Australian government, military and civilian society. Chapter Two will demonstrate that the integration of the Australian Red Cross with the Australian government and ‘home front’ was for the purpose of supporting the war effort of the Allies in Australia and overseas. It will be argued in Chapter Three that the Society was integrated as a paramilitary branch of the Australian military forces and provided logistical support to the military in Australia and overseas by means of the Field Force. This chapter will demonstrate that the operations of the Field Force increased in scope and complexity as the war progressed, reflecting the lessons learned by the Society as it operated with the military in a variety of theatres.

The embedding of each national Red Cross society with its respective government and military in the Second World War came at a cost to prisoners of war, Allied governments and the international Red Cross movement. Chapter

\textsuperscript{115} Allan S. Walker, *Australia in the War of 1939-45, Series 5 Medical, Volume II Middle East and Far East* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1956) 50.
Four will contend that the successful delivery of humanitarian relief to prisoners of war could only occur if the national governments involved recognised a reciprocal benefit in doing so. The extremely close relationship between the national Red Cross societies and their governments resulted in the interests and actions of national Societies being equated with those of governments. When this perception was combined with practical challenges and the lack of a practical incentive to humanely treat prisoners of war, the Red Cross principle of reciprocal treatment foundered. This thesis will conclude that while the integration of the Australian Red Cross with the military power of the nation was of tangible benefit to the Australian government, the Society’s fundamental principles and humanitarian objectives were undermined by political and logistical imperatives.
Chapter One

The Embedding of the Australian Red Cross within the Australian Government and Society

Australian Red Cross Recruitment Poster 1939-45
(ARTV00790, AWM)
This Society has complete freedom of action as a private institution, but on account of the nature of Red Cross activity, particularly during wartime, the most direct liaison is maintained with the Department of Defence.¹

- Australian Red Cross report to the Seventeenth International Red Cross Conference, Stockholm, 1948.

Over the course of the Second World War the legal basis, structure, leadership and administration of the Australian Red Cross were closely integrated with the Australian government’s war effort. This chapter will demonstrate that the origins of the Red Cross movement are intertwined with the interests and actions of governments. The Australian Red Cross was founded in response to the Australian government’s need to harness civilian efforts in support of the British Empire during the First World War. While the 1914-18 conflict provided an impetus for the founding of the Australian Red Cross and the basis for a close relationship with the Australian government, the popularity of the Society waned between the wars. It is argued in this chapter that the Second World War revitalised the Australian Red Cross and caused the Society to forge even stronger links with the Australian government. These links took the form of legally codifying the historical relationship between the Red Cross, government and military. Legal bonds were reinforced by the integration of the Society’s leadership and structure with that of the Australian government. At an organisational level, the increasingly professional administration and management of the Australian Red Cross emulated that of the government. At a social level, the pervasive presence of the Red Cross resulted in the embedding of the Society within the Australian civilian ‘home front’. These historical, legal, organisational and social connections enabled the Australian Red Cross to play an active role in the Australian government’s war effort.

The Foundation of the Red Cross Movement

To comprehend the Australian Red Cross’ relationship with the Australian government during the Second World War, it is necessary to understand the origins and scope of the Red Cross movement. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement is historically, and remains today, the world’s largest volunteer organisation that provides relief to victims of warfare and natural disasters.² The foundational text of the Red Cross is Henri Dunant’s polemical *A Memory of Solferino*, published in 1862.³ As a 31 year old Swiss businessman, Dunant stumbled across the battle of Solferino in Northern Italy on 24 June 1859 between Austrian forces and French-Italian allies. Fighting in hot and dry conditions followed by heavy rain, around 40,000 soldiers were wounded and perished as a result of the battle of Solferino. Dunant regarded the terrible suffering of the wounded and dying soldiers with horror. Acting as the leader of the local villagers who attempted to provide medical attention and relief to the suffering soldiers of all nationalities in the three days after the battle, Dunant attempted to fill the void left by inadequate military medical services.⁴

Horrified by the gross inadequacy of resources available to assist the wounded and dying at Solferino, Dunant returned to Geneva and spent most of 1861 writing *A Memory of Solferino*. Dunant’s moving memoir was not a volume that advocated pacifism or the abolition of war, despite the human suffering he witnessed at Solferino. Concluding that a call to outlaw war would be fruitless, Dunant appealed for volunteer relief societies to be established in times of peace for the purposes of providing care to the wounded in wartime.⁵

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A Memory of Solferino struck a chord with European statesmen grappling with the challenge of balancing the increasing costs and casualties of nineteenth century warfare with the widespread development of a popular view that humanity and compassion should be shown to the victims of warfare.⁶ In an era of burgeoning nationalism and militarism, the sovereigns of Europe recognised the philosophical appeal, and practical military and political advantages, inherent in Dunant’s suggestion that volunteer relief societies be established to care for the victims of war.⁷

A committee of five Genevan citizens who shared Dunant’s views was determined to take advantage of the prevailing mood of statesmen and formed the ‘International Committee for Aid to Wounded Soldiers’ on 17 February 1863.⁸ The Committee convened a conference of major European powers in Geneva in October 1863 to debate the means by which military medical services could be helped in the field. The conference agreed on ten resolutions on this subject and the International Red Cross movement was formed.⁹ The symbol of a Red Cross on a white background was adopted as the name and protective symbol of the new movement. National Red Cross societies were to be formed for the purposes of assisting military medical services in times of war and developing a voluntary medical relief infrastructure in times of peace. The Red Cross volunteers were to serve as an auxiliary to the military medical services. While not actually part of each nation’s army, any Red Cross members on the battlefield were to fall under military command. It was agreed that military medical personnel, Red Cross volunteers, hospitals, ambulances and the wounded themselves were to be regarded as neutral bodies that were not legitimate targets of offensive military action. The distinctive Red Cross emblem would be used to identify neutral medical personnel and facilities. The Geneva Committee of Five became known as the International Committee of the Red Cross and was appointed as the body with responsibility for

⁶ Hutchinson, Champions of Charity, 347-351; Moorhead, Dunant’s Dream, 8.
⁷ Hutchinson, Champions of Charity, 347-351.
coordinating the Red Cross movement and efforts to further develop international humanitarian law.¹⁰

As Hutchinson has demonstrated, governments were quick to realise the utility of the Red Cross movement and the associated development of international humanitarian law. Hutchinson argues that:

Cannons and gunners were too important to leave to contingent charity, but governments were happy to permit Red Cross societies and personnel to assume much of the work and expense associated with caring for the sick and wounded. In the name of humanitarianism, state after state smoothed the way for the Red Cross.¹¹

From the International Committee’s perspective, the enthusiasm for utilisation of the Red Cross movement by national governments within their military frameworks provided a pragmatic means of implementing the principles of the Red Cross.¹²

The International Committee organised a further meeting, the International Conference for the Neutralisation of Military Medical Services in the Field, which was held in Geneva in August 1864. As a result, the Geneva Convention of 1864 for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded Armies in the Field was by signed by twelve states.¹³ The adoption of the Geneva Convention of 1864 by major military powers was a critical development in international law and the conduct of warfare. The Geneva Convention was the first multilateral agreement open to all states that attempted to practically implement humanitarian principles to provide for protection and care of wounded military personnel. While ancient laws and customs of war had provided for a measure of respect for the wounded and medical personnel within the otherwise barbaric context of

¹¹ Hutchinson, Champions of Charity, 350.
¹² Riesenberger, Für Humanität in Krieg und Frieden, 14-50.
¹³ All states who attended the Conference eventually signed and ratified the Geneva Convention of 1864, as did many other powers who were invited to accede to the Convention despite the absence of their representatives at the Geneva Conference in 1864 - Haug (ed.), 32-34.
warfare, the *Geneva Convention of 1864* codified, reaffirmed, modernised and extended these traditional principles.\textsuperscript{14} The European wars of the nineteenth century, the American Civil War and the First World War contributed to the growth of the international Red Cross movement. This growth was accompanied by revisions of the *Geneva Convention of 1864* and a broadening of the scope of protection provided by international humanitarian law, under the stewardship of the International Committee of the Red Cross, to include the victims of naval conflict and prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{15}

**The Structure of the International Red Cross Movement**

To speak of the ‘Red Cross’ is to attribute a cohesion and unity to this movement that has never existed in practice. The international Red Cross movement is fragmented into a number of largely autonomous bodies, namely the various national societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of the Red Cross.\textsuperscript{16}

The national societies form the core of the membership and organisation of the Red Cross movement. They are responsible for much of the fundraising and local provision of diverse forms of relief and social services for which the movement is known. Each national society has its own peculiar history, structure and defining characteristics that differentiate it from other national societies.\textsuperscript{17} The International Committee of the Red Cross retains its original role as a neutral body that co-ordinates the activities of the movement but does not possess powers of control over the national societies. The International Committee acts as a neutral intermediary between parties during times of war and attempts to provide protection and relief to the victims of war. Founded in 1919 and originally known as the League of Red Cross Societies, the

\textsuperscript{16} Haug, *Humanity for All*, 405-440.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 163-199.
International Federation of the Red Cross was created in the wake of the First World War to provide a union of national societies. The Federation is primarily concerned with assisting the co-operation of national societies in providing relief in times of peace, particularly in the case of natural disasters. An attempt to clarify the structure and define the roles of the various fragments of the movement was made in 1928 with the adoption of the International Red Cross Statutes. The various bodies that constitute the movement, as well as the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions, determine major policy issues at irregularly convened International Red Cross and Red Crescent Conferences.

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18 Ibid., 73-97, 163-199, 352-372.
19 Ibid., 421-442.
The Lexicon of the Red Cross

The Red Cross movement has developed its own particular vocabulary and peculiar definitions of terms that vary from their everyday understanding. The Red Cross, in all its forms, has often been described as a ‘humanitarian’ organisation that focuses upon the provision of ‘relief’ to ‘victims’ of war. In fact, the movement’s interpretation of these terms is deliberately constructed and peculiarly constricted.23

John Hutchinson’s *Champions of Charity*24 is critical in this regard. Hutchinson notes that what is implicit in any picture of the early period of the Red Cross’ history:

> Is an unquestioning belief that what was created and carried out in the name of the Red Cross faithfully reflected the charitable aspirations of the founders. Implicit also is an assumption that the seed Dunant planted was indeed the seed of humanitarianism and that the growth of the Red Cross since 1863 is, before all else, evidence of a continuing and deepening commitment to humanitarian principles on the part of the countries that have signed the *Geneva Conventions* and officially recognised their national Red Cross (or Red Crescent) society.25

Hutchinson identifies four objectives of the international Red Cross movement that were formulated so that the organisation’s ‘humanitarian’ commitment could be fulfilled. These objectives were to:

1. Send bands of volunteers with Christian charitable motives to battlefields to supplement the presumed insufficiency of army medical personnel.
2. Extend the ideals of civilised society to warfare.
3. Signing of an international Convention to protect the wounded.

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23 Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity*.
24 Ibid., 346.
4. Creation of a vast charitable army that would put themselves at the disposal of the belligerents.26

In examining the early work of the Red Cross in Europe and North America until 1921, Hutchinson argues that only the third objective, that of creating the *Geneva Convention*, was achieved. The other objectives were swept aside by the objections of contemporary governments who were driven more by self-interest than any notion of ‘humanitarianism’. Hutchinson argues that the nation-state embraced the Red Cross and began to define the movement during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He contends that the involvement of self-interested governments in the development of the Red Cross and the *Geneva Convention* corrupted the idealistic conception of the organisation that was held by its founders. Governments selectively defined the ‘humanitarian’ scope of the Red Cross in accordance with their military priorities and practical needs, rather than by means of any philosophical or religious notion. Hutchinson is of the view that governments granted the Red Cross:

> Exemptions from taxes and duties, free use of the post and telegraph, and free or reduced charges on the railways. However, governments also heeded [Florence] Nightingale’s warning that voluntary charitable effort would be an evil unless it were completely incorporated into the official military medical structure. Therefore, the condition that they attached to these privileges was an unreserved and prior agreement by the aid societies that in the event of war they would put themselves entirely under military control and subordinate their personnel to military discipline.28

Thus, Hutchinson argues that while the work of the Red Cross may be characterised as having a charitable ‘humanitarian’ or Christian foundation, the scope of the ‘humanitarian’ work that the Red Cross was permitted to undertake was narrowly defined by the influence of governments who warped the original

26 Ibid., 347.
28 Ibid., 350.
conception of the founders of the movement. This resulted in the Red Cross becoming an auxiliary that was strictly controlled and limited in its range of work by the military. This argument may be contrasted with Riesenberger’s view that the early leaders of the International Committee were fundamentally pragmatic and expected that the movement’s principles would apply by national governments in a self-serving, yet generally benevolent, manner.20

While Hutchinson and Reisenberger’s works focus upon the development of the Red Cross movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this thesis will demonstrate that many of their conclusions in relation to scope and function of the Red Cross within a nation-state remain relevant to the Australian Red Cross during the Second World War.

The Foundation of the Australian Red Cross

The Australian Red Cross Society is one of the nation’s oldest and most active community-based organisations.30 A number of voluntary aid organisations and patriotic funds were active in Australia prior to the foundation of the National Red Cross Society as a result of the Crimean War of 1854-1856, the British engagement in the Sudan of 1885, and the Boer War of 1899-1902.31 These organisations effectively ceased operating at the conclusion of each conflict. Other voluntary organisations of a more permanent nature operated in a similar field to the Australian Red Cross, including the Salvation Army, Order of St John and the Australian Comforts Fund.32

The Australian Red Cross was formed on 13 August 1914, as an overseas branch of the British Red Cross, in response to the outbreak of the First World War. From the outset, the Australian Red Cross maintained a very close practical and symbolic relationship with the Australian government. The Society

20 Riesenberger, Für Humanität in Krieg und Frieden, 14-50.
30 Oppenheimer, All Work No Pay.
31 Ibid., 11-25.
32 Ibid., passim; Ian Howie-Willis, A Century for Australia – St John Ambulance in Australia 1883-1983 (Canberra: Priory of the Order of St John in Australia, 1983); Badham Jackson, Proud Story; Badham Jackson, The State at War; Australian Comforts Fund, History of the Australian Comforts Fund.
was founded by the politically-astute and organisationally-gifted wife of the Governor-General of Australia, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson.\footnote{33 \cite{Bean:1941} \cite{Nairn & Searle}} Lady Helen acted as the President and administrator of the Society from 1914 to 1920, taking a very active role in the growth and management of the organisation. Operating from Government House in Melbourne (then the capital of Australia) Lady Helen arranged the founding of State Divisions throughout Australia under the patronage of each State Governor’s wife.\footnote{34 \cite{Oppenheimer:2004}} The Australian Red Cross rapidly grew in membership and prestige, attracting the elite of society, government and the military to leadership roles in the organisation.\footnote{35 \cite{Oppenheimer:2004} \cite{Bean:1941} \cite{Brown:2001} \cite{McKernan:2001} \cite{Bassett:2001} \cite{Adam-Smith:2001} \cite{Damosi & Lake:2001} \cite{Goodman:2001} \cite{Goodman:2004} \cite{Bassett:2001} \cite{Bruce Scates:2001}}

The Australian Red Cross attracted around £5 million in donations from civilians between 1914 and 1918. The Society was largely successful in providing relief, comforts and medical supplies for the benefit of sick and wounded soldiers at home or abroad and their for dependents. The First World War saw the establishment of large formations of Red Cross Voluntary Aids, thousands of mainly young women who acted as the public face of Red Cross relief activity and patriotically ‘did their bit’ for the war effort.\footnote{36 \cite{Oppenheimer:2004} \cite{Bean:1941} \cite{Brown:2001} \cite{McKernan:2001} \cite{Bassett:2001} \cite{Adam-Smith:2001} \cite{Damosi & Lake:2001} \cite{Goodman:2001} \cite{Goodman:2004} \cite{Bassett:2001} \cite{Bruce Scates:2001}} In addition, the Australian Red Cross attempted to provide direct relief to Australian soldiers by means of establishing Overseas Bureaus in the Middle East, the United Kingdom and on the Western Front under the supervision of Red Cross Commissioners who were based in London.\footnote{37 \cite{Bean:1941} \cite{Brown:2001} \cite{McKernan:2001} \cite{Bassett:2001} \cite{Adam-Smith:2001} \cite{Damosi & Lake:2001} \cite{Goodman:2001} \cite{Goodman:2004} \cite{Bassett:2001} \cite{Bruce Scates:2001}} These Bureaus were responsible for co-ordinating the
delivery of Red Cross supplies to the soldiers and Army medical services and tracing the fate of sick, wounded or missing soldiers.\textsuperscript{38}

The experiences of the First World War, which involved unprecedented numbers of captured soldiers, affected the international Red Cross movement by swelling the ranks and coffers of both national societies and the International Committee.\textsuperscript{39} The massive scale of fighting and number of prisoners of war resulted in widespread participation in, and support of, the Red Cross by the civilian population of belligerents.\textsuperscript{40} As the Red Cross was useful in bolstering the war effort, it was attractive to the Australian government and people. The use of the Australian Red Cross to harness the resources of the ‘home front’ for the war effort was to be further refined during the Second World War.

The First World War had a profound impact upon Australian society and the nation’s view of its place in the world.\textsuperscript{41} The work of the Australian Red Cross in this nation-forging conflict caused the organisation’s reputation to be linked with notions of good works and patriotism that the government promoted during the war.\textsuperscript{42} The development of a civilian spirit of patriotism as a result of contributing to the war on the ‘Home Front’ by means of patriotic funds may be compared to the development of the ‘ANZAC spirit’ of those who fought on the front line.\textsuperscript{43} By supporting the government’s war effort, the Australian Red Cross developed a reputation and social cachet from which to draw in future conflicts. At the conclusion of the First World War, the Australian Red Cross had achieved national recognition and pre-eminence as the organisation which dominated the field of humanitarian relief.\textsuperscript{44} Unlike the voluntary aid organisations and patriotic funds that had come and gone with previous wars, the Australian Red Cross

\textsuperscript{38} Oppenheimer, \textit{All Work, No Pay}, 54-57; Bean, \textit{Australia in the War of 1914-18 Volume XI}, 702-714.

\textsuperscript{39} Moorhead, \textit{Dunant’s Dream}, 175-257.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} See, for example, Beaumont, \textit{Australia’s War 1914-18}; McKerman, \textit{The Australian People and the Great War}; Thomson, \textit{Anzac Memories}; Lack, \textit{ANZAC Remembered}; Robertson, \textit{ANZAC and Empire}.

\textsuperscript{42} Bean, \textit{Australia in the War of 1914-18 Volume XI}, 702-714.

\textsuperscript{43} Thomson, \textit{Anzac Memories}; Lack, \textit{ANZAC Remembered}; Robertson, \textit{ANZAC and Empire}.

\textsuperscript{44} Oppenheimer, \textit{All Work, No Pay}; Bean, \textit{Australia in the War of 1914-18 Volume XI}, 702-714.
remained a permanent fixture on the Australian governmental, military and social landscape.\textsuperscript{45}

Despite this enhanced profile, the conclusion of the First World War resulted in a dramatic decrease in the membership and resources of the Australian Red Cross.\textsuperscript{46} Remaining supporters were largely concerned with the repatriation and care of wounded soldiers in the aftermath of the First World War.\textsuperscript{47} This entailed innovative developments in the fields of social work, blood banking, tuberculosis management, rehabilitation and expansion of the Junior Red Cross.\textsuperscript{48} Despite these innovations, in the absence of a pressing and immediate use for the Red Cross in winning the war, support by governments and the broader community melted away in the aftermath of the conflict and the onset of the economic Depression from 1929.\textsuperscript{49} Between the wars, the Australian Red Cross remained primarily concerned with the convalescence and rehabilitation of veteran soldiers from The Great War by operating repatriation hospitals and convalescent homes.\textsuperscript{50} Other national societies, such as those of Britain, France, the United States, Germany, Italy and Japan suffered lesser decreases in membership due to the more significant legacy of the First World War and, in the case of the Axis powers, increasing militarisation of their populations.\textsuperscript{51}

The Embedding of the Red Cross on the Home Front

The Australian Red Cross was embedded within the ‘total war’ attitudes and activities of the Australian civilian ‘home front’ during the Second World War. Due to its close connections with the Australian government, military and social elite, the Red Cross was premier amongst those organisations that were

\begin{footnotes}
\item[45] Ibid.
\item[46] Ibid.; MCCEC 25 September 1939, 2.
\item[47] Garton, \emph{The Cost of War}; Lloyd & Rees, \emph{The Last Shilling}.
\item[48] Ibid; Oppenheimer, \emph{All Work, No Pay}; Klugman, \emph{Blood Matters}; Cortuila, \emph{Banking on Blood}; Lucy Bryce, \emph{An Abiding Gladness – The Background of Contemporary Blood Transfusion and Its Story During the Years 1929-1959 in the Victorian Division of the Australian Red Cross Society} (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1965).
\item[49] ARCAR 1935-36, passim; Lloyd & Rees, \emph{The Last Shilling}.
\item[50] ARCAR 1935-36, 11-13, 22-25, 34-35, 64; Garton, \emph{The Cost of War}; Moorhead, \emph{Dunant's Dream}, 292-370.
\item[51] Moorhead, \emph{Dunant's Dream}, 258-370; Haug, \emph{Humanity for All}, 56-59.
\end{footnotes}
dedicated to supporting the Allied war effort. The outbreak of war greatly stimulated the formation of Red Cross branches and the recruitment of both adult and junior members.\textsuperscript{52} The membership of the Society continued to grow throughout the war, particularly when war commenced with Japan and a more tangible threat was felt by the Australian public. By the conclusion of the war, the Australian Red Cross boasted an active membership of 600,000 volunteers, which amounted to around 8½ per cent of the Australian population.\textsuperscript{53} In comparison, the total membership of all branches of the Australian defence forces throughout the war amounted to 990,900 personnel, which amounted to around 14 per cent of the Australian population.\textsuperscript{54}

There was a variety of means of involvement in the Australian Red Cross. The Anglophile social elite of Australia, particularly leading members of Melbourne’s medical and legal professions, dominated the leadership of the Society.\textsuperscript{55} Salaried and volunteer administrators were employed in the National and State Divisions of the Australian Society. Men who desired to play an active part in the war effort but were unfit for full military service, such as John Nimmo, formed the core of the Field Force personnel who operated alongside the military.\textsuperscript{56} Thousands of women, and some men, formed Red Cross and Voluntary Aid Detachment companies who were available for service in Australia.\textsuperscript{57} These Red Cross members engaged in Emergency Services training is areas such as transport, air raid precautions, anti-gas relief and blood

\textsuperscript{52} The New South Wales Division’s branches increased from 340 to 605 within the last months of 1939, while the Victorian Division’s branches increased from 178 to 570, Queensland’s from 44 to 164, and South Australia’s from 54 to 473. The Victorian Division enrolled 28,000 new members by November 1939, and continued to enroll around 100 new members per day after November. Enrolments of Junior Red Cross members also soared as 188, 263 junior members enrolled in 1939 in New South Wales alone – ARCAR 1939-1940; 14-15; “Enrolment and Training of a Civilian Reserve of Red Cross Aids for Service in a National Emergency,” B1535, 827/6/156, NAA; “The Red Cross Way: Growth of Activity,” The Argus, 24 November 1939, 4; “New Branch as Red Cross Model,” The Argus, 4 November 1939, 14; “Junior Red Cross as Peace Factor,” The Argus, 28 February 1940, 6.

\textsuperscript{53} “Minutes of 31\textsuperscript{st} Annual General Meeting 19 November 1945,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 6. The population of Australia in 1940 was 7,065,000 - Beaumont, Australian Defence - Sources & Statistics, 306

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{55} Prominent leadership of national Red Cross societies by members of the social elite was common – see Riesenberger, Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz; Cambray & Briggs, Red Cross and St John; Hurd, A Compact History of the American Red Cross; Lowrie, The Geneva Connection - Red Cross in New Zealand; Moorehead, Dunant’s Dream.

\textsuperscript{56} For a more detailed discussion of the Field Force, see Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{57} “ARC Voluntary Aid Detachments” AWM61, 411/1/225, NAA.
transfusions.\textsuperscript{58} Many adult volunteers took part in Red Cross activities outside the Field Force and Voluntary Aid Detachment structures. Thousands more children formed the nucleus of the Society’s future as the Junior Red Cross. Finally, many Australian individuals, companies and unions participated indirectly in the Red Cross by making substantial donations to the Society.\textsuperscript{59}

By 1942, the Australian economy and labour-pool were both relatively small and heavily regulated by the government to support the war effort.\textsuperscript{60} The activities of Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachments (better known as ‘VADs’) were co-coordinated between the various service departments of the Society, in conjunction with the government and military.\textsuperscript{61} As the greatest proportion of VADs comprised women performing relief duties, reflecting the growth of the role of women in the workforce during the war, the Women Personnel Department played a large role in the organisation of VADs.\textsuperscript{62} By 1940, 55,778 VAD Red Cross Emergency Service volunteers were available throughout Australia.\textsuperscript{63} In peacetime, the Australian Red Cross was responsible for the recruitment and training of VADs. The VADs were trained in first aid, civil defence and disaster assistance, transport and paramedical duties. The Directors of Medical Services of the armed forces were empowered to call upon the services of Red Cross VADs in times of war.\textsuperscript{64}

In practice, the Australian Red Cross retained control over the recruitment, training and participation of VADs in Red Cross activities throughout the war, but allowed the VADs to serve as a recruiting ground for the government when they sought skilled support personnel to join the military or Civil Defence

\textsuperscript{58} ARCAR 1939-1940; 14-15.
\textsuperscript{59} “Minutes of 31\textsuperscript{st} Annual General Meeting 19 November 1945,” Series NO14, ARNCA, 1-11.
\textsuperscript{60} Hasluck, \textit{The Government and the People (Volumes I & II) 1939-45}; Butlin, \textit{War Economy (Volumes I & II) 1939-45}; Darian-Smith, \textit{On the Home Front}; McKernan, \textit{All In!}; Robertson, \textit{Australia At War 1939-45}; Beaumont, \textit{Australia’s War 1939-45}.
\textsuperscript{61} Walker, \textit{The Middle East & Far East}, 49-50.
\textsuperscript{63} ARCAR 1939-40, 27.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
Authorities. Similarly, the Australian Red Cross rarely applied for exemptions from military service or wartime industrial work on behalf of its members when the government introduced the Manpower Regulations in 1941 to cope with labour shortages. Thus, members of the Australian Red Cross could be used by the government either in their role with the Society or by direct recruitment to the military or wartime industry.

The National Headquarters of the Australian Red Cross provided civilian volunteers, regardless of whether they were committed to a VAD, with the opportunity to participate in specific activities that supported the wartime efforts of the government and military. A Prisoners of War Bureau, which was formally approved under the federal government’s National Security Regulations, was established by the National Headquarters in co-operation with the Divisions. A Blood Transfusion Service, Stores Service, Transport Service, Medical Services Department and Women Personnel Department were established. The organisation of the National body was reflected, with some regional differences, by the State Divisions. For example, the Victorian Division operated bureaus responsible for Emergency Services, Stores, Refugee Clothing, Social Services, Transport, Voluntary Workers, Waste Products, Wood Workers, and Wounded, Missing and Prisoners of War. These bureaus, services and departments of the Red Cross acted as auxiliaries to the military medical services by attempting to make up for the shortcomings in personnel and equipment of the official military establishment.

65 ARCAR 1941-42, 19.
66 Butlin, War Economy 1939-1942, 475-487; ARCAR 1940-41, 25.
67 ARCAR 1939-40, 22-25.
69 ARCAR 1939-40, 77; “Fine Work is Done by Social Service Branch,” The Argus, 10 January 1941, 7.
The significant proportion of civilians who were members of the Australian Red Cross or VAD companies was complemented by financial contributions made to the Society by the broader Australian public. As will be further discussed in Chapter 2, the Red Cross raised funds by means of both national and local campaigns. Local fundraising efforts often involved the harnessing of unions, professions, workplaces, neighbourhoods and streets to engage the Australian civilian population in the war effort.\(^70\)

The Australian Red Cross’ high profile, large membership, diverse activities and broad fundraising efforts led to a pervasive presence of the Society in civilian life during the Second World War. The Society’s embedding within the attitudes and activities of the Australian civilian ‘home front’ served to support the official war effort and the associated development of the Australian Red Cross.

**The Legal Integration of the Red Cross with the Government & Military**

The Australian Red Cross was legally created for the benefit of, and at the whim of, the Australian government. The legal foundations of the Society’s existence were rooted in its approval by the government. As an overseas branch of the British Red Cross, the Australian society was recognised by the British Parliament’s *Geneva Convention Act* 1911. As the Australian Parliament gained more independence from Britain as a result of the *Statute of Westminster* (UK) 1931, it passed the *Geneva Convention Act* 1938 and Australia became a party to the *Geneva Convention*.\(^71\)

The Australian Red Cross was recognised as an auxiliary to the Defence Forces pursuant to the *Geneva Convention Act* 1938.\(^72\) It was not until 26

\(^70\) “Letter from Dr Victor Hurley to Chairmen of Divisions 6 September 1939,” Series NO14, ARCNA; “Extract from Draft Finance Chapter of the Red Cross War Book, Series NO14, ARCNA; “Early Response to Red Cross Appeal: Firm to Give £10 per Month,” *The Argus*, 12 September 1939, 4

\(^71\) “*Geneva Convention Act* 1938,” A263/1, NAA.

\(^72\) ARCAR 1938-39, 8; MCE 21 April 1939, 1; “Auxiliary Status of Australian Red Cross,” MP151/1, 552/201/1401, NAA. Frantic efforts were made to prior to the outbreak of war for the Australian Society to be reincorporated by Royal Charter after gaining independence from the British Red Cross. The reincorporated Society then required formal recognition by the
January 1942, after the war in the Asia-Pacific had commenced, that formal agreement was obtained from the Army that the Australian Red Cross would be operationally recognised as an auxiliary to the Army Medical Services under the control of the Medical Directorate.\(^{73}\) In January 1943 military control over, and communication with, the Society was formally placed in the hands of the Medical Directorates of the Australian military services.\(^{74}\) It took until August 1944 for the Australian Red Cross to be officially recognised as an auxiliary to the Navy and Air Force.\(^{75}\) These delays in formal recognition may have been caused by the government’s prioritisation of the extensive development of the military medical services. In any case, formal recognition of the Australian Red Cross’ auxiliary status merely entailed endorsement of the practical role that the Society had adopted at the commencement of the war.

In addition to the legislative basis for cooperation, formal and informal agreements were made between the Society and the Army regarding the scope of Red Cross service. One such agreement was concluded at a meeting held at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, between the national leadership of the Society, Army officers and members of the Defence Department on 24 May 1939. The role of the Australian Red Cross in the event of hostilities commencing was discussed.\(^{76}\) The Acting Director-General of Medical Services, Colonel Johnson, made it clear at this meeting that the Defence Department expected the Australian Red Cross to be principally concerned with the following matters in the event of war:
Comfort and transport of the sick and wounded;
Supplementary ambulance transport and facilities for early casualties;
Supplementary hospitals, convalescent homes and hospitals in later stages of a conflict;
Canteen services for the sick and wounded in military hospitals and depots;
A service in respect of missing persons and prisoners of war;
An emergency blood transfusion service;
Fundraising in order to financially provide for these services.\footnote{77}{Notes by Stanley Addison on a Conference Between Officers of the Defence Department and Members of the Mobilisation Committee of the ARC Society, Held in the Office of the DGMS Victoria Barracks, St Kilda Road, Melbourne on Wednesday 24\textsuperscript{th} May 1939 at 12 Noon,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1-2; “Mr McCahon’s Notes on Conference on Wednesday 24\textsuperscript{th} May 1939 at Victoria Barracks,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 2; “Organisation of ARC for War,” AWM54, 837/2/1, AWM, 2.}

The Society’s plans to assist the Defence Department were developed in detail within each military district. As such, senior Australian Red Cross personnel within each military district were required to be approved by, and co-operate with, the Army and its Medical Services. Co-operation and integration with the Army structure was expected and accepted to enable the Australian Red Cross was to carry out its defined roles.\footnote{78}{Ibid.}

In addition to formal agreements with the Army, an Australian Red Cross War Book and a Mobilisation Plan were prepared by the Society’s leadership in consultation with the Department of Defence as the war loomed.\footnote{79}{“Plan for the Mobilisation of the ARC Society in the Event of War - Plan No.1, Melbourne, 1.5.1939,” Series NO 14, ARCNA, 1; “ARC Emergency Organisation Memorandum from the Deputy Chairman to Members of the Mobilisation Committee,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1-2; MCE 21 April 1939, 2; “Minutes of Mobilisation Committee 1 May 1939,”, Series NO14, ARCNA, 1; Walker, The Middle East & Far East, 50.} The War Book was intended as a universally applicable manual to cover any national emergency, while the Mobilisation Plan detailed the manner in which the Society would respond upon the outbreak of war.\footnote{80}{ARCAR 1938-39, 13-14.} When the war commenced in September 1939, the Australian Red Cross implemented the provisions of the
War Book and the Mobilisation Plan, in accordance with the objectives of the government and Army.\textsuperscript{81}

The dominance of the government and military over the scope of the Australian Society’s activities was not without precedent. One of the lessons of the First World War for national Red Cross societies was the difficulty in conducting operations and formulating policies that were independent of the wartime interests of their respective nation-states.\textsuperscript{82} As part of the International Committee of the Red Cross’ revision of its Statutes in 1921, which reflected its First World War experiences, a ‘Summary of Fundamental Principles’ of the Red Cross movement was codified as ‘the impartiality, the political, religious and economic independence, the universality of the Red Cross and the equality of the National Societies’.\textsuperscript{83}

These Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross movement envisaged a level of autonomy by national societies from their respective governments. This independence was not provided for in the Aims and Objects of the Australian Red Cross Society. The Constitution of the Society set forth the following Aims and Objects:

(a) To accept contributions for general or specific Red Cross purposes;
(b) To supply hospitals, ambulances, vehicles, clothing, comforts, etc., for the sick and wounded in war, and generally to supplement the hospitals, medical stores, and equipment for the medical services of the army, navy and air force;
(c) To contribute aid to the sick and wounded, irrespective of nationality, even though the British forces are not engaged;

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 29, 74; “Red Cross Expansion to War Time Basis,” \textit{The Argus}, 9 September 1939, 2. See Chapters 2 and 3 for details regarding the manner in which the Red Cross mobilised in accordance with the War Book and Mobilisation Plan.
\textsuperscript{82} Moorhead, \textit{Dunant’s Dream}, 175-257.
(d) To enrol men and women who are qualified by having obtained certificates in first aid and home nursing into Voluntary Aid Detachments, and to co-operate with the St John Ambulance Association and Brigade in the formation of units of trained men and women;

(e) To render assistance in the case of any great public disaster, calamity, or need, in Australia or elsewhere, subject to the approval of the Central Council, or, in case of emergency of the President and the Executive and Finance Committee;

(f) To promote the improvement of health, the prevention of disease and the mitigation of suffering in Australia and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{84}

The constitutional Aims and Objects of the Society prescribed activities that the Australian Red Cross should perform that were primarily for the benefit of the government and military.

The precise legal nature of the Society’s relationship with the government and military was a subject of debate within the Red Cross leadership. In June 1944, the Red Cross’ Treasurer, John Roxburgh, argued that a definite clarification of the Australian Red Cross’ legal position should be sought from the Australian government.\textsuperscript{85} The Chairman of the Executive, John Newman Morris, and many of the National Executive members disagreed with Roxburgh. They wished to avoid strict legal codification of the Society’s role to ensure that it could maintain flexibility in supporting the war effort. At a National Executive meeting Newman Morris:

\begin{quote}
Emphasised that the relationship of the Society with the Government and Defence Forces had so far proved most satisfactory... the ‘private society relationship’ of Red Cross should be maintained and... it would
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{84} ARCAR 1939-40, 135; “Red Cross Ambit,” \textit{The Argus}, 29 April 1939, 9; “Red Cross Ideals: Chairman’s Assurance,” \textit{The Argus}, 8 August 1940, 8. For comparison between the Aims and Objects of the Australian and British Red Cross Societies, see “British Red Cross Objects,” AWM41, 931, NAA and “The Origin, Objects and Organisation of the British Red Cross Society,” AWM41, 1620, NAA.

\textsuperscript{85} MNE 6 June 1944, 1.
be most undesirable for the independence and freedom of action of the Society to be in any way restricted by legalities.\textsuperscript{86}

Roxburgh’s preference for a legal codification of the Society’s position in relation to the government and military did not reflect the reality of the manner in which the Australian Red Cross contributed to the war effort. By the time of the National Executive’s debate in 1944, the Society was inextricably integrated with the government and military.\textsuperscript{87} The more demanding the war effort became for the government and military, the more the Australian Red Cross’ lack of formal status was utilised to demand a wide range of activities that were beyond the usual Red Cross services.\textsuperscript{88} Despite occasional refusals to undertake activities that were clearly beyond the scope of Red Cross, any legal independence of the Society had been eroded in reality by the practical implications of integration with the Allied war effort.\textsuperscript{89}

There remained little scope for the autonomy contemplated by the International Red Cross’ Fundamental Principles when the Society’s constitutional Aims and Objects were combined with its status under the \textit{Geneva Convention Act 1938}, the recognition of the Red Cross as a military auxiliary, service agreements with the Army, the historical relationship between the Society and the government, and the practical integration of the Australian Red Cross with the Allied war effort.

The Alignment of the Red Cross Leadership with the Government & Military

The historical and legal connections discussed above were further reinforced by the alignment of the Australian Red Cross’ leadership with the Australian

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{87} See Chapters 1 to 3.
\item \textsuperscript{88} See, for example, the attempts made by the government and Army to seek an extension of the work of the Red Cross Field Force into areas that were beyond the ordinary scope of the Society’s activities that are discussed in Chapter 3.
\item \textsuperscript{89} See, for example, the discussion in Chapter 3 regarding the Australian Red Cross’ refusal to assist the military police in investigating claims for compassionate leave and the prohibition on patients in Red Cross convalescent homes making model aeroplanes that were destined for use by the RAAF and anti-aircraft units for training in aircraft identification.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
government and military. The Society's leadership comprised the nation's social elite. Vice-regal office holders, senior military officers, and leading members of the legal, medical and accounting professions were prominent in the private decision-making and public perception of the Australian Red Cross. The composition of the leadership group inextricably tied the fortunes and public perception of the Society to the Australian government.

Senior government and Army office holders were members of the Australian Red Cross' leadership before and during the Second World War. The President of the Society, Lady Zara Gowrie, was the wife of the Governor-General of Australia.90 Similarly, the President of each State Division was the wife of that State's Governor.91 In the case of Australian Territories in which there was no Governor, the wife of a leading politician or military leader took the role of that Division's President.92 While these pinnacles of the Australian social establishment had very little formal political power, they could be politically influential on an informal basis and acted as the prestige-laden figureheads of the National and Divisional branches of the Society. Although the role of President was largely a symbolic one during the Second World War, the Australian Red Cross' choice of National and Divisional Presidents publicly reinforced the Society's status as a respectable organisation which supported, and was supported by, the government.93

The Chairman of the Australian Red Cross Central Executive and Council at the outbreak of war was Major-General Rupert Downes, a military man who had a long-standing involvement in the administration of the Red Cross between the wars.94 The Deputy Chairman of the Central Executive was a well-known

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91 For example, during the Second World War the President of the National Red Cross body was Lady Gowrie, wife of the Commonwealth Governor-General. During the same period, the President of the Victorian Red Cross was Lady Dugan, wife of the Victorian Governor-Governor – "Lady Dugan: President of Victorian Red Cross," *The Argus*, 15 September 1939, 4.
92 For details of Red Cross office holders, such as Divisions Presidents, see the Australian Red Cross Annual Reports 1939-45 and the corresponding reports of State and Territory Divisions, Series NO13, ARCNA.
93 "Governor's Wives to Speak at Red Cross Annual Meeting," *The Argus*, 16 November 1939, 2.
Melbourne surgeon, Dr Victor Hurley. An accountant with personal and professional connections to the leadership of the New South Wales Division, John Roxburgh, was the Society’s Treasurer. Chief Judge Harold Piper of the Federal Arbitration Court temporarily held the roles of Chairman of the Central Executive and Council, then acted as Vice President of the Society between June 1942 and September 1944. Piper was then replaced as Vice President by Sir John Latham, who had close connections with the government and been Australia’s emissary to Japan. Melbourne lawyers, doctors, accountants and women of social standing were active members of the Central Council and Executive.

A rapid interchange of personnel took place in 1939 and 1940 between members of the armed forces, the judiciary, and the Australian Red Cross. Servicemen were seconded to the Society, members of the judiciary took leading roles in the Executive and Council, and some Red Cross members resigned their positions to join the armed forces. Major-General Downes resigned his position to become Director General of the Medical Services of the Australian Military Forces when the formation of the Second AIF was announced. Dr Victor Hurley, who took a leading role in the Society as Chairman of the Central Executive and Council after the departure of Downes, resigned his position with the Australian Red Cross in June 1940 to accept an appointment as the Director General of Medical Services to the Royal Australian Air Force.

97 “Minutes of Special Meeting of Central Executive 3 June 1940,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1; ARCAR 1941-42, 24; MCE 23 June 1942, 1-2; Nairn & Searle, Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol.16, 6.
98 MNE 19 September 1944, 7.
99 “ARC Central Emergency Service Council Suggested Outline of Chapter of Red Cross War Book,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 4
100 ARCAR 1941-42, 5; “Attachment of Australian Military Forces Personnel to ARC,” MP742/1, 245/1/491, NAA.
102 Ibid.; MNE 6 March 1945, 1; “Victor Hurley Appointed as New Red Cross Chairman,” The Argus, 9 November 1939, 4.
This interchange of senior personnel resulted in a close relationship between the military and the Australian Red Cross that was formed by personal associations as much as formal military hierarchy. The importance of personal associations was increased by the prevalence of Melbourne-based members of the Red Cross leadership as the Australian military high command was based in Melbourne.\textsuperscript{103} The close personal and professional relationships between the Red Cross leadership and the Australian social establishment reinforced the prestige of the Society in the public eye and affirmed the reliability of the organisation in supporting the government. The close connection between Red Cross office holders and senior members of the Australian government, military and professions assisted the integration of the Society with the Allied war effort.

**The Restructuring & Centralisation of Red Cross Leadership**

The personal and social relationships between the leaders of the Red Cross, government and military were only one means of ensuring the Society’s reliable integration. The Australian Red Cross was structured and administered in a manner that enabled it to efficiently support the Australian government’s war effort. The Society adopted a federal structure that reflected the constitutional organisation of the Australian government. The Australian Red Cross centralised its decision-making processes to enable rapid responses to the wartime demands of the government. This structure eased the ability of the Society to administratively deal with government bodies and allowed greater integration of the organisation with the war effort.

At its inception in 1914, the Australian Red Cross adopted a federal structure that reflected the constitutional organisation of the Australian Commonwealth. The National body of the Australian Red Cross, known until 1944 as the ‘Central’ office, acted as the coordinating head of the Society in Australia. The State and Territory Divisions carried out most activities and fundraising, each wielding considerable power and a measure of independence from the National

\textsuperscript{103} Horner, *High Command*. 

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body. In times of emergency, such as the Second World War, the National body took on extraordinary executive, administrative and financial powers that allowed it to dominate the State and Territorial Divisions.\textsuperscript{104} Within each of the National and Divisional bodies was a broadly representative Council that acted as a legislative organ, a smaller Executive that was responsible for much of the decision making and administration of the organisation, a Finance Committee and various ad hoc committees that were formed to address particular issues. The structure of individual Red Cross units within each State and Territorial Division reflected that of the National and Divisional bodies.\textsuperscript{105}

By early 1939, the Australian Red Cross' leadership sensed that their services may soon be called upon again, as international tensions escalated in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.\textsuperscript{106} Nazi Germany made increasing territorial and political gains while the democracies of Europe vacillated and pursued a policy of appeasement that did nothing to reduce Hitler’s appetite for domination.\textsuperscript{107} Meanwhile, the war in China and Japan’s increasingly aggressive international stance caused concern for the security of the British Empire’s hold on its possessions in the Asia-Pacific region.\textsuperscript{108} In this atmosphere of looming conflict, the leadership of the Australian Red Cross recognised that changes to the national structure and administration of the Society were necessary to enable it to efficiently support the government’s war effort.\textsuperscript{109}

Prior to the outbreak of war, steps were taken to ensure that Red Cross Divisions existed in each Australian State and Territory. The Australian Capital Territory Division was reconstituted, having not functioned for a number of years.\textsuperscript{110} The Tasmanian Divisions, which had been anachronistically divided

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{104} ARCAR 1941-42, 27.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Haug, \textit{Humanity for All}, 293-295.
\item \textsuperscript{106} “Red Cross Plans for Emergency,” \textit{The Argus}, 9 February 1939, 5; “Red Cross Plans for Emergency,” \textit{The Argus}, 28 February 1939, 10; Walker, \textit{The Middle East & Far East}, 50.
\item \textsuperscript{108} “Japan – War with China,” A6006, 1937/07/27, NAA.
\item \textsuperscript{110} ARCAR 1938-39, 8.
\end{itemize}
between Northern and Southern Divisions, were reorganised into one body for greater efficiency.\footnote{Ibid.} This revitalisation of the Divisions reflected a sense that the Society’s services would soon be required at a level that called for organisational efficiency. Several new Divisions were formed in Australian territories that were to be of crucial military significance in the coming conflict with Japan. A Northern Territory Division was founded in Darwin on 29 September 1938, followed by a Papuan Division in Port Moresby on 28 June 1939, a New Guinea Division in Rabaul on 4 July 1939, and a Norfolk Island Division on 4 October 1939.\footnote{ARCAR 1937-38, 8; ARCAR 1938-39, 77-78; “Red Cross Service in Darwin,” The Argus, 11 January 1941, 71.} The foundation of these northern Divisions reflected the Australian government’s recognition of the strategic importance of the territories north of Australia, its concern that the threat of war with Japan may come to fruition, and the need for Red Cross logistical support in these regions.

The outbreak of war in September 1939 accelerated the development of a Red Cross command structure that would allow the Society to harmonise its decision making and operations with the Australian government.\footnote{“Red Cross Emergency Service in Operation,” The Argus, 7 September 1939, 2; “Red Cross Expansion to War Time Basis,” The Argus, 9 September 1939, 2.} Amendments to the Constitution of the Australian Red Cross enlarged the Central Council to enable more representatives of the Divisions, government and military to form part of the Council’s membership.\footnote{ARCAR 1938-39, 15-16; ARC, “Minutes of Annual Meeting of Central Council 2 December 1939,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 2.} The Constitution also provided for the appointment of a Central Executive Committee which was empowered with a wide authority over the Society’s general questions of policy and major questions of finance.\footnote{Ibid.; “Directions as to Functions of Sub-Committees of the Central Executive Committee 6 February 1940,” Series NO13, ARCNA, 1.} The Central Executive was the Red Cross’ counterpart to the Australian Federal House of Representatives. The Central Council maintained a limited control over the Central Executive by requiring that monthly reports be made to the Council.\footnote{Ibid.} The Central Council was effectively the Red Cross’ counterpart to the Australian Federal Senate. The authority of the Central Executive...
Committee was amplified by an increasing centralisation of the management of the Society from the Divisions to the National Headquarters. Further Constitutional amendments in 1942 resulted in a smaller Council and Executive which further centralised the management of the Society at the national level.\footnote{ARCAR 1941-42 23, 25.}

At a level below the Central Executive Committee lay the Finance Sub-Committee, which was responsible for the financial regulation and management of the Society, and the powerful but mundanely-named Administration Sub-Committee. The Administration Sub-Committee had a very broad but loosely defined role in the daily management of the Society. The Administration Sub-Committee was effectively the Red Cross’ counterpart of the Australian Federal Cabinet. In October 1939 the Central Council’s Emergency Committee resolved:

\begin{quote}
That matters of daily administrative routine shall be delegated to [the Administration Sub-Committee], who shall have power to take immediate action as may be necessary.\footnote{MCCEC 18 October 1939, 1.}
\end{quote}

The extensive powers of the Administration Sub-Committee resulted in its members acting as the power-brokers of the Society. This Sub-Committee replaced the Central Council Emergency Committee which had been established with similar powers but a broader membership at the outbreak of the war.\footnote{MCC 11 September 1939, 1.} The Chairman of the Central Council, Chairman of the Central Executive, Honorary Treasurer and Chief Commissioner of the Field Force held informal morning meetings, of which no minutes were kept, where the practical implementation of the broad policy decisions of the Central Executive and Council were discussed.\footnote{MCE 2 February 1943, 2-3.} The Administration Sub-Committee controlled the flow of information to, and set the agenda for, the Central Executive and Council. Membership of this Sub-Committee was a pre-requisite for those who sought to control the activities of the Society. Other Sub-Committees of the Society, responsible for Medical Services, Public Relations, Stores and Women

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\begin{itemize}
\item[117] ARCAR 1941-42 23, 25.
\item[118] MCCEC 18 October 1939, 1.
\item[119] MCC 11 September 1939, 1.
\item[120] MCE 2 February 1943, 2-3.
\end{itemize}
Personnel, were required to report to the Administration Sub-Committee.\textsuperscript{121} These Sub-Committees acted as the Red Cross' counterparts to Federal government Departments. In this manner, the Society deliberately structured itself in the image of the Australian government for the purpose of efficiently supporting the government’s war effort. The centralisation of power to the Central Executive and the Administration Committee enabled the Australian Red Cross to make rapid decisions at a national level in response to the wartime demands of the government and military.

The centralisation of power to the Central Executive and the Administration Committee at the national level was accompanied by a clear shift in the management of the Society from the Divisions to the National Headquarters. This centralisation of power over the Red Cross to the federal authority reflected that which took place during the war between the Australian State and Commonwealth governments.\textsuperscript{122} Whereas the Divisions remained distinctly independent of the National Headquarters in peacetime, the Central Executive Committee of the National body was the dominant partner in the relationship between the State and Territory Divisions and the National Headquarters during wartime.

Rule 49 of the Australian Red Cross’ Royal Charter provided that the Council vested control of the Society and its funds in the Executive when a State of Emergency arose.\textsuperscript{123} These conditions were satisfied on 17 February 1942 when the Prime Minister declared a State of Emergency and called for the mobilisation of all the nation’s resources. The State and Territory Divisions

\textsuperscript{121} “Council and Committee Organisation of the Society & Procedure Now Proposed, 7 January 1940,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1-3.


\textsuperscript{123} The Commonwealth Government made similar contingency plans, authorizing ARC personnel to conduct activities in the event of a declaration of a state of emergency. See “The Issue of Passes to Personnel of the ARC to Permit Their Discharging the Function of the Society in the Event of the Declaration of a State of Emergency,” MP508/1, 282/701/151, NAA.
continued to operate, subject to the power of the National Executive.\textsuperscript{124} Efforts were made to establish uniform working arrangements between all Australian Divisions and the National Headquarters. These arrangements were characterised by the formation of a powerful National Executive, with extensive powers delegated to it by the Central Council, centralisation of decision-making, increasingly firm control over the activities of the Field Force, and greater monitoring of the activities of the Divisions.\textsuperscript{125} The exigencies of wartime activity, which required a strong central leadership that ensured the Society effectively supported the government’s war effort, left little room for genuine independence on the part of State and Territory Divisions.

A fierce contest for leadership of the Australian Red Cross accompanied the increasing centralisation of power to the Central Executive. The chief protagonists in this struggle were John Newman Morris and Dudley Turner, two men with different backgrounds and approaches regarding the best means of leading the Society. Dudley Turner was a leader in the business and social life of Adelaide. Turner was financially independent enough to work full time, in a voluntary capacity, with the Society’s Administration from June 1940.\textsuperscript{126} Dr John Newman Morris was Chairman of the Central Executive and practised as a surgeon in Melbourne prior to the outbreak of war. Newman Morris was born in Carlton, Melbourne and resided in the prestigious suburb of Toorak during the Second World War. Newman Morris carved a reputation as a medical statesman due to his energy and leadership of many public bodies including the Australian Red Cross, Royal Flying Doctor Service, St. John Ambulance and the British Medical Association. In addition to his role as Chairman of the Central Executive and a number of Sub-Committees, Newman Morris also assumed leadership roles with the Victorian Division of the Society.\textsuperscript{127}

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{124} ARCAR 1941-42, 27.
\item \textsuperscript{125} A number of unsuccessful attempts were made by the Divisions to regain some independence from, and influence over, the National body during the remainder of the war - ARCAR 1939-40, 6, 15; “Minutes of Special Meeting of the Central Executive 11 January 1943,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{127} “Minutes of Special Meeting of Central Executive 3 June 1940,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1-2.
\end{footnotes}
The contest between Newman Morris and Turner revealed deep flaws in the leadership structure of the organisation and resulted in public embarrassment for the Australian Red Cross. In particular, power within the Society was split between the Chairman of the Central Council and the Chairman of the Executive. The exact role that each Chairman was to play was not strictly defined. This degraded the efficiency of the organisation as it created scope for administrative, political and personal conflicts.\textsuperscript{128} The struggle for power became well known amongst members of Australia’s social elite and resulted in Lady Dugan, the President of the Society who replaced Lady Gowrie in September 1944, calling for unity amongst the Red Cross leadership.\textsuperscript{129} Ultimately, however, the struggle for leadership provided the impetus for the centralisation of the Society’s management in a single person.\textsuperscript{130} Newman Morris was unanimously elected as Chairman of the National Council on 14 December 1944 and Chairman of the National Executive on 8 January 1945.\textsuperscript{131}

Despite occasional internecine squabbles, power and control over the Society remained with Newman Morris and the National Headquarters until the conclusion of the war. The centralisation of power and leadership was a product

\textsuperscript{128} “Minutes of Special Meeting of Central Executive 15 December 1943,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1; MCE 18 January 1944, 4-5; MCC 25 January 1944, 1; MCE 23 & 24 February 1944, 1-2; “Letters from John Roxburgh to Wilfred Johnson dated 25 February 1944, 25 August 1944, 13 December 1944,” Box 2.58, ARCNA; “Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting of National Council 14 December 1944,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 2; MNE 8 January 1945, p4; MCE 29 February 1944, 1; MCC 25 July 1944, 1.

\textsuperscript{129} “Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting of National Council,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 14 December 1944, 1-2. Lady Gowrie left Australia with her husband on 10 September 1944 and Lord Gowrie was succeeded as Governor-General of Australia by the Duke of Gloucester on 30 January 1945 - Nairn & Searle, \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography} Vol.9, 63-64. Lady Dugan was wife of the Victorian Governor-General, Baron Dugan, and was President of the Victorian Red Cross prior to becoming National President on Lady Gowrie’s departure – Nairn & Searle, \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography} Vol.14, 42-43.

\textsuperscript{130} “Minutes of Special Meeting of Central Executive 15 December 1943,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1; MCE 18 January 1944, 4-5; MCC 25 January 1944, 1; MCE 23 & 24 February 1944, 1-2; “Letters from John Roxburgh to Wilfred Johnson dated 25 February 1944, 25 August 1944, 13 December 1944,” Box 2.58, ARCNA; “Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting of National Council 14 December 1944,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 2; MNE 8 January 1945, p4; MCE 29 February 1944, 1; MCC 25 July 1944, 1; “Resignation of Chairman of National Council of Australian Red Cross,” \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 27 July 1944, 3; “Dr J Newman Morris Appointed Chairman of National Council of Australian Red Cross,” \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 18 December 1944, 4.

\textsuperscript{131} “Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting of National Council 14 December 1944,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 2; MNE 8 January 1945, p4; “Dr J Newman Morris Appointed Chairman of National Council of Australian Red Cross,” \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 18 December 1944, 4.
of the challenge to create a workable means of governing the Australian Red Cross in the face of the responsibilities and difficulties posed by the war. Finding a balance between taking tough, decisive action to assist victory in a ‘total war’ and maintaining democratic ideals within a federal institution was a challenge that had to be addressed by many governmental and quasi-governmental organisations upon the outbreak of war. The concentration of power over the Red Cross at the national level resembled the increased dominance that the Australian federal government took over the States as the war progressed.

The centralisation of power to the Administration Sub-Committee of the National body of the Society provided the mechanism by which the policy of the Australian Red Cross could be decisively formulated. Given the speed with which events often progressed during the war, and the unreliable means of rapidly communicating due to technological limitations, the need for decisive policymaking by the Administration Sub-Committee was acute. Conversely, the centralisation of financial resources and decision making to the National body in general, and the Administration Sub-Committee in particular, understandably affronted the State Divisions of the Society. Philip Bobbitt has examined the growth in the size and influence of nation-states as a consequence of the twentieth century’s ‘Long War’, of which the Second World War was a key episode. This growth occurred in both governments themselves and the organisations that supported the nation-state. The dictatorial powers of the Administration Sub-Committee over the increasingly paramilitary Australian Red Cross reflected a concurrent growth in the power of the Commonwealth government and military during the Second World War. Thus, the power of nation-states was enhanced by the national Red Cross societies that were affiliated with, and emulated, them.

133 Ibid.  
134 Bobbitt, The Shield of Achilles, xxii.  
The Development of a Professional Red Cross Administration

With the centralisation of leadership and reforms to the structure of the Australian Red Cross came changes to the Society’s administration that were intended to smooth tensions between Divisions and improve the level of service provided to the government. To complement these structural advantages, the Australian Red Cross also cultivated a professional administrative bureaucracy that enabled the Society to assist the Australian government’s war effort. The National Headquarters Administration was formally established on 18 September 1939.\(^{136}\) The increasing scope and volume of activities for which the National body of the Red Cross was responsible resulted in a growing number of staff at the National Headquarters of the Society.\(^{137}\) While the Australian federal capital had moved to Canberra prior to the war, the close relationship between the Society and the Defence Department, coupled with the limited communications technology available, made it imperative that the Australian Red Cross headquarters be based in Melbourne.\(^{138}\) The administration of the National body of the Society was dominated by the Victorian Division because the Society had been founded in Victoria during the First World War when Melbourne was the federal capital.\(^{139}\)

From January 1939, the New South Wales Division lobbied for the creation of a National administration for the Society, headed by a Secretary-General, that was independent from the work or funding of any particular Division.\(^{140}\) The New South Wales Division had the largest membership and fundraising capacity of all the State Divisions, yet felt largely excluded from the important policymaking of the Victorian-dominated National body. This was the cause of internecine strife. The proposal for dissociation of the administration of the National Body of the Society from the Victorian Division was widely supported,

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136 ARCAR 1939-40, 5.
138 “Minutes of Meeting between the Administration Sub-Committee of the Central Executive Emergency Council and the Proposed Members of an Emergency Finance Committee 27 September 1939,” Series NO14, ARCNA 1.
140 MCE 23 January 1939, 1; MCC 21 February 1939, 2.
and steps were immediately taken to form an independent National administration.\textsuperscript{141}

The development of a National administration was calculated to reduce the distraction of Divisional tensions and provide a focal point for contact between the Australian Red Cross and the government. The Red Cross proceeded to adopt a professional bureaucracy to administer the Society. This professionalisation of administration was in accord with the Australian government’s approach to its own public service during the war, as has been detailed by Paul Hasluck.\textsuperscript{142} The full-time salaried position of a Secretary-General of the Australian Red Cross was filled by the appointment of Captain Alfred Brown, MC, on 16 October 1939.\textsuperscript{143} As head of the administrative branch of the Society, the Secretary-General’s role involved close cooperation and consultation with the Central Executive and the Administration Committee.

It was the Secretary-General’s task to ensure that decisions of the Australian Red Cross’ leadership which supported the war effort were implemented by the Society’s staff and volunteers. A marked shift towards the professionalisation of National Headquarters roles occurred as the war progressed. A transformation of responsibility for the daily administration of the Society at the National Headquarters took place as voluntary helpers gave way to dominance of full-time, paid and professionally skilled staff.\textsuperscript{144} Full and part-time Central Bureau staff increased from 22 at 30 June 1941 to 121 at 30 June 1942.\textsuperscript{145} By the conclusion of the war, the Society employed 1,382 paid staff and a further 1,350

\textsuperscript{141} These changes were codified in the revised Constitution of the Australian Red Cross, which was adopted by the Central Council on 27 February 1940 - MCE 21 February 1939, 1; MCC 21 February 1939, 2; MCE 10 March 1939, 1. The attempts to ensure independence of the National Body of the Society from the influence of the Victorian Division only temporarily assuaged the New South Wales Division’s concerns, which recurrently surfaced to cause divisive struggles for control of the Society during the course of the war - MCE 5 October 1943, 1; MCC 23 November 1943, 5.


\textsuperscript{143} “Captain A.G. Brown Appointed Secretary-General of Red Cross,” \textit{The Argus}, 18 October 1939, 2. Mr Stanley Addison, who had had acted as a volunteer part-time Secretary-General since December 1938, was appointed as Under Secretary-General - ARCAR 1938-39, 11; MCC 16 October 1939, 3-4; “Mr S.R. Addison Appointed Secretary-General of Red Cross,” \textit{The Argus}, 21 December 1938, 10.

\textsuperscript{144} “No Large Salaries: Red Cross Chairman’s Denial,” \textit{The Argus}, 7 November 1939, 7.

\textsuperscript{145} ARCAR 1941-42, 15.
volunteers who were classified as staff members of the organisation.\textsuperscript{146} The need for full-time professional staff reflected the increasingly complex demands and breadth of responsibility placed upon the Australian Red Cross. The development of a bureaucratic culture and the professionalisation of administrative careers in Australian government was under way as these transformations occurred in the Australian Red Cross.\textsuperscript{147} The development of a professional bureaucracy enabled the Society to efficiently conduct its operations in support of the government’s war effort.

This professionalisation and bureaucratic organisation was to be one of the factors that drove the Australian Red Cross to establish itself as a premier disaster relief provider at the conclusion of the Second World War, rather than allowing the Society to wither and lie dormant as it did after the First World War. Whereas the Society had only existed as a relatively small nucleus of volunteers between 1918 and 1939, the implementation of a bureaucratic structure and the growth of professional staff roles during the Second World War fundamentally altered the character of the Australian Red Cross.\textsuperscript{148} The Society was thereafter established as a permanent organisation with a staff whose careers depended upon the long-term viability of the Australian Red Cross as an active body.\textsuperscript{149}

\textbf{The Domination of the Australian Red Cross}

While the International Committee of the Red Cross portrayed itself as a neutral and independent international organisation, the Australian Red Cross Society’s independence was curtailed by its extensive integration with the Australian

\textsuperscript{147} Hasluck, \textit{The Government and the People 1939-1941}, 415-490; Hasluck, \textit{The Government & The People 1942-45}, 540, 542-9; Paul Hasluck, \textit{Diplomatic Witness}.
\textsuperscript{148} "Red Cross Year: Vast Expansion," \textit{The Argus}, 25 November 1940, 5.
government. The connections that had been forged between the Australian Red Cross and the government during the First World War were further developed over the course of the Second World War. This relationship was reinforced on a legal, social, structural, and administrative basis. The close integration of the Australian Red Cross with the war effort of the Australian government accords with John Hutchinson’s observation that nineteenth century governments endorsed the formation of national Red Cross societies on the condition that they would put themselves under military control and discipline.150

The Second World War provided the Australian Red Cross with the opportunity, impetus and resources to transform itself from an organisation that struggled for relevance into a vast and dynamic actor in the field of Australian military and humanitarian action.151 Without these reforms and connections with government, it is unlikely that the Society could have supported the war effort of the Australian government and military. In doing so, however, the lack of independence of the Australian Society from the government was starkly apparent.

The popularity and importance of the Australian Red Cross during the Second World War was largely due to the mutual endorsement and support of the Society and the Australian government. The legal, social, organisational and political foundations of the Australian Red Cross rested on the supporting government. This support was contingent upon the Society’s assistance in the war effort to the manner and extent expected by the government. The close relationship between the Red Cross and the Australian government influenced the Society’s mode of governance and the centralisation of power to the National body. The manner in which the Australian Red Cross furthered the interests of the government and military, with which it was integrated, on the ‘home front’ and overseas during the Second World War is explored in the next two chapters.

150 John Hutchison, Champions of Charity, 350.
Chapter Two

The Australian Red Cross’ Support of the Allied War Effort

Australian Red Cross Recruitment Poster 1939-45
(ARTV01084, AWM)
Life is mostly froth and bubble,
   Two things stand like stone,
      Kindness in another’s trouble,
         Courage in your own.¹
- Adam Lindsay Gordon, Ye Weary Wayfarer. Finis Exoptatus

The integration of the Australian Red Cross with the Australian government was for the purpose of supporting the war effort of the Allies in Australia and overseas. The policies of the Australian Red Cross became extensions of the wartime policies of the Australian government. This chapter will demonstrate that the Australian Red Cross furthered the interests of the government and military on the ‘home front’ and abroad during the Second World War. The membership of the Society was attracted to the Red Cross because it provided a means by which civilians could participate in the war effort. Significant funds were raised by the Red Cross from the general public on the premise that this money would be spent supporting soldiers in the field and prisoners of war. In doing so, the Society financed services and materials that would otherwise have been the responsibility of the Australian government and military. These services included support to Allied troops and Red Cross Societies who operated in Australia, such as the Americans and Dutch. In addition to financial services, the Australian Society shaped public opinion in a manner that was favourable to the government and Army – a service that was reciprocated by the establishment of a prominent public profile for the Red Cross. The manner in which the Australian Red Cross provided overseas aid during the conflict was calculated to support the Allied wartime strategy. Particular care was taken to ensure that the policies of the Society accorded with the Angliphile preferences of the Australian government, social establishment and Red Cross leadership. This concordance with the government’s policies extended to the Society’s attitude to enemy aliens who sought membership of the Red Cross. A desire to comply with government policy, and sensitivity to adverse public opinion, led the

Australian Red Cross to limit the extent of services to enemy citizens and soldiers who were interned in Australia.

The Nation-State and the Lure of the Red Cross

All nations desired national Red Cross societies during the Second World War, regardless of the constitutional ideology they espoused. Philip Bobbitt has argued that the Second World War was but one episode of a struggle between 1914 and 1990 to determine which constitutional form should govern modern nation-states.\(^2\) Bobbitt identifies three ideological belligerents who sought to establish the primacy of their particular constitutional form - fascism, communism and parliamentarianism.\(^3\) Caroline Moorhead has argued that the parliamentary Allies, communist Russians and fascist Axis powers all possessed Red Cross societies that were subservient to the military and constitutional objectives of their nation-states.\(^4\) Despite the implicit Christian aspects present within the Red Cross movement, which were not strictly compatible with atheistic communism and pagan-Christian infused fascism, the governments that championed these ideologies were pragmatic enough to realise the tangible benefits that national Red Cross societies provided in supporting the struggle of the nation-state.\(^5\) The champions of the parliamentarian form during the Second World War, most notably the United States and the British Empire (including Australia), crafted Red Cross societies that were as dominated as those of their enemies by the imperative of their nation-states’ survival and the victory of their vision of constitutional legitimacy.

Australians participated in the Australian Red Cross as a means of contributing to the Australian government's war effort. The Australian Red Cross’ active membership of 600,000 volunteers was reflected by other combatant nations who possessed similarly popular National Red Cross Societies.\(^6\) The American

\(^2\) Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*.
\(^3\) Ibid. 24-64.
\(^4\) For more detailed discussion of the strong influence of the fascist (German, Italian and Japanese) and communist (Russian) nation-states on national Red Cross societies see Moorhead, *Dunant's Dream*.
\(^5\) Haug, *Humanity for All*, 443-446; Moorhead, *Dunant's Dream*, 12.
\(^6\) “Minutes of 31st Annual General Meeting 19 November 1945,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 6.
Red Cross attracted 7,500,000 members by the conclusion of the Second World War. The joint British Red Cross and St. John War Organisation raised £54,000,000 in public donations during the conflict. The German Red Cross marshalled 800,000 mainly female doctors, nurses and auxiliary medical personnel for wartime service. The Japanese Red Cross organised 30,000 staff into 960 medical and relief teams that were dispatched throughout the war zones of Asia and the Pacific.\(^7\)

The large membership and impressive fundraising abilities of National Red Cross Societies attest to the popularity of these organisations throughout belligerent states in the Second World War.\(^8\) The attraction of the Red Cross’ activities to the populations of warring nations may be partially explained as an emotional humanitarian reaction to state violence. A desire to relieve human suffering in the face of the extraordinary horrors of the Second World War was a strong motivation of those who volunteered for Red Cross service. At the Australian Red Cross Annual General Meeting of 1941, Lady Gowrie encapsulated the attraction Red Cross members felt for the convergence of the Society’s humanitarian mission with the patriotic support of the Australian government that their work involved when she opined that:

I think every woman who works for the Red Cross feels how much she wants to help those boys who are fighting overseas; and as she knits for them her thoughts are with them always. We have our eyes on, and hearts with, those brave boys. We work to save them and you can help the Red Cross in your own way. When we think of the noble work we have to do, I think our worries take a lesser place.\(^9\)

John Nimmo explained the emotional humanitarian impulse that inspired his Red Cross service by reference to a poem by Adam Lindsay Gordon, who wrote:

\(^7\) Haug, *Humanity for All*, 208, 217, 302; Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*.
\(^9\) MCC 24 November 1941, 6. Lady Gowrie’s sole surviving son Patrick was killed in action in 1942 - Nairn & Searle, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol.9, 63-64.
Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
Kindness in another’s trouble,
Courage in your own.¹⁰

The emotional humanitarian attraction of Red Cross membership and activities does not, however, entirely explain the popularity of the National Societies amongst the populations and governments of states engaged in the Second World War. The ‘total war’ nature of the conflict, in which each belligerent state’s efforts were marshalled in support of the prosecution of the military struggle, had a significant influence on the organisation and activities of National Red Cross Societies.

At the same Annual Meeting of 1941 at which Lady Gowrie spoke with such familial compassion, Dudley Turner, then Chairman of the Central Council, publicly assured the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Forde, that the Australian Red Cross was prepared to assist the Government in any way possible.¹¹ One of the fundamental attractions of involvement in the Red Cross for non-combatants was the opportunity that the Society provided to participate in the war on the ‘home front’.¹² Being a member of, or making donations to, the Australian Red Cross provided the Australian civilian public with an opportunity to imbibe the culture of ‘total war’ by vicariously contributing to the military struggle. The National Red Cross Society provided a forum for non-combatants to demonstrate both their patriotism and humanitarianism while gaining the feeling of inclusion and participation in the ‘all in’ culture promoted by the Australian government.¹³

The activities and policies of the Australian Red Cross exhibited three distinct and complementary responses to the ‘total war’ environment of the Second

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¹¹ MCC 24 November 1941, 6.
¹³ Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1939-1941*, 361-414; McKernan, *All In!*. 
World War. Firstly, the Australian Red Cross’ leadership and membership were certainly motivated by a desire to alleviate human suffering. Secondly, the means by which suffering was alleviated was by a selective application of resources that contributed to a complementary desire to patriotically contribute to an Allied military victory. There was a third, less visible, strand to the thread of Australian Red Cross motivations. The membership of the Red Cross was, consciously or unconsciously, able to participate in the culture of ‘total war’ that permeated the Australian social fabric during the Second World War.

The activities to which Red Cross members were attracted contributed to the wartime resources of the government, the involvement of non-combatant Australians in the war effort, and the preparedness of the civilian population in the event of an attack upon the Australian mainland. As in the case of other national Red Cross societies of combatants in the Second World War, the membership of the Australian Society was attracted to the Red Cross because it provided a means by which civilians could participate in the war effort. In addition to providing personal services on behalf of the Red Cross, the efforts of many members were focused upon the raising of funds for the Society. While the membership of the Australian Red Cross was highly successful in raising funds under the aegis of supporting the war effort, the manner in which these funds were expended and accounted for proved problematic for the Society.
Printed Tin Sign, Maker Unknown, Newcastle NSW, 1941-45.
(REL27487, AWM)
Australian Red Cross Wartime Fundraising:

The Australian Red Cross raised funds with the support, and for the benefit, of the Australian government during the Second World War. As the Society’s activities directly supported the Australian government and military, it was in the interest of the government to facilitate the Red Cross’ fundraising activities. The Society developed well organised fundraising, publicity and accounting departments to assist the financial support of the war effort. There was, however, regulation imposed by the government on the raising and expenditure of funds. The fundraising success of the Red Cross was due in part to the Society’s integration with the government’s war effort, yet this success was double-edged. The Red Cross faced the risk that excess funds due to its wartime popularity would be appropriated by the government or fuel public criticism that the Society was hoarding contributions that should have been spent for the benefit of servicemen and prisoners of war.

The funds of the Australian Red Cross were in an emaciated state prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. As the Society depended upon public donations to sustain its activities, the Depression years and their accompanying lack of a publicly perceived threat of war resulted in a dwindling of funds. The financial position of the Australian Red Cross in 1938 and 1939 was so paltry that the Executive considered approaching the Commonwealth government to request financial support for the Society. While this plan was never pursued, it reflected the dire financial circumstances of the Australian Red Cross Society in the Depression. The active consideration of this option also revealed a readiness by some members of the Executive to financially tie the Society to the government in the face of fiscal challenges. Given that the historical role of national Red Cross societies was to support the inadequate services of their governments, it is unlikely that the Commonwealth government would have been enthusiastic about funding the operation of the Australian society.

14 ARCAR 1938-39, 7.
At the outbreak of the Second World War, the Australian Red Cross sought to raise funds in support of the war effort with a broad appeal for public donations. This appeal was entitled the 'The Lady Gowrie Appeal' in an effort to capitalise on the social prestige of the Governor-General’s wife in support of the Society.\textsuperscript{15} The stated purposes of the appeal, which was approved by the Defence Department, was to provide funds for the Society to assist sick and wounded members of the armed forces of the British Empire and its Allies, and all other forms of relief which the Red Cross could be called on to provide.\textsuperscript{16} The need for such a broad-based appeal became clear when the camp and hospital services provided in Australia by the Society expanded in proportion to the growing number of armed forces personnel.\textsuperscript{17}

In addition to the broad ‘Lady Gowrie Appeal’, other appeals were conducted over the course of the war that related to specific areas of service, such as prisoners of war, or particular countries, such as Britain and Russia.\textsuperscript{18} The fundraising efforts of local Red Cross branches were augmented by professional associations and industrial associations, such as trade unions and chambers of commerce, who were successfully targeted by the Society as sources from which regular donations for general activities could be procured.\textsuperscript{19} This regular fundraising took the form of self-explanatory ‘Penny-a-Week’ and ‘Adopt a Prisoner of War’ schemes.\textsuperscript{20} These additional appeals enabled the Society to focus the search for funds on members of the community with interests in specific Red Cross activities, such as relatives of prisoners of war or Russian expatriates. Specific appeals attracted donations that may not have been made to the general appeal with the prospect that these donations would


\textsuperscript{16} “Minutes of Central Emergency Services Council 4 September 1939,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 2; “Red Cross Drive: £30,000 Wanted,” \textit{The Argus}, 6 February 1940, 2.

\textsuperscript{17} ARCAR 1939-40,17; “The Red Cross Way: Growth of Activity, \textit{The Argus}, 24 November 1939, 4.

\textsuperscript{18} ARCAR 1939-40, 6; “Donations Received by ARC for Prisoners of War,” A989, 1943/925/1/59, NAA; “£10,000 to British Red Cross Society,” \textit{The Argus}, 30 September 1939, 2.


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. See illustration “This Street Supports an Australian Prisoner of War” on page 68.
be applied by the Red Cross for a purpose that was of personal interest or
tangential advantage to the donor. In the case of donations made for the benefit
of prisoners of war, however, the expectations created by the fundraising
rhetoric of the Society were not ultimately matched by an ability to deliver relief
to prisoners of the Japanese, as is discussed in Chapter 4.

The number and form of fundraising appeals was governed by the
Commonwealth government’s Patriotic Funds Board, the National Security
(Patriotic Funds) Regulations and State legislation such as the Victorian
Patriotic Funds Act.\(^21\) This legislation gave the Australian government a level of
de facto control over the Australian Red Cross by stipulating the means of the
Society’s fundraising.\(^22\) The fact that that the Red Cross was allowed to conduct
a large number of appeals with great success is further evidence of the
government’s self-interested endorsement of the Society’s activities.

The Australian Red Cross was the largest, but not the only, organisation that
sought to raise funds by appealing to the patriotic and humanitarian impulses of
the Australian people. The Australian Comforts Fund, Salvation Army, YMCA,
Order of St John, Lord Mayor’s Patriotic Funds and other organisations directly
or indirectly competed with the Society’s fundraising activities.\(^23\) The scope of
these organisations varied, with some more directly associated with assisting
the government and military than others, but they nevertheless drew on the
same finite pool of public support and funds.\(^24\) While the activities of all these
organisations were to the ultimate benefit of the Australian government’s war
effort, this did not prevent competition developing between patriotic fundraisers.

\(^{21}\) “Commonwealth Control of Patriotic Funds,” A2671, 27/1940, NAA; “National Security
(Patriotic Funds) Regulations,” A472, W232, NAA; “Patriotic Funds Policy,” A1608, A55/1/1,
NAA; “Commonwealth Control of Patriotic Funds (War Cabinet Agendum 27/1939),” A5954,
378/2, NAA; “Correspondence re: Patriotic Funds and the National Security (Patriotic Funds)
Regulations,” A6388/12, NAA; ARCAR 1939-40, 31; MCE 8 December 1939, 1; “Administration
of Red Cross Funds,” The Argus, 24 October 1939, 2; Melanie Oppenheimer, “Control of
Wartime Patriotic Funds in Australia – The National Security (Patriotic Funds) Regulations

\(^{22}\) ARCAR 1939-40, 31.

\(^{23}\) “Patriotic Welfare Organisations – General Policy,” A705, 91/4/4, NAA; “Patriotic Funds –
Australian Comforts Fund,” A2421, G1360, NAA; Oppenheimer, All Work, No Pay; Badham
Jackson, A State At War.

\(^{24}\) Oppenheimer, All Work, No Pay; Howie-Willis, A Century for Australia; Badham Jackson,
Proud Story; Badham Jackson, The State at War; Australian Comforts Fund, History of the
Australian Comforts Fund.
In the field of patriotic fundraising, it was difficult for the Society to evade the political implications of the Federal government’s increasing interest in central control of donations for the war effort. In September 1939, the Premier of New South Wales proposed that a War Chest be organised by the Commonwealth government to act as a common collecting agency for public funds donated for war relief services. It was proposed that this War Chest would allocate funds to bodies that were authorised to perform relief work, at the discretion of the Commonwealth government. This proposal reflected the view, based firmly upon reality, that patriotic funds in all their forms were ultimately destined to be spent for the benefit of the government’s war effort.

Already concerned that the Australian Red Cross’ status as the nation’s premier relief organisation would be threatened by the proliferation of wartime charitable organisations, the Society’s leadership regarded the proposed Commonwealth control of fundraising as a serious threat to the viability of its activities. While this resistance by the Australian Red Cross may appear perverse in the face of its comprehensive integration with the government and military, there were valid reasons for the desire to retain an independent fundraising ability. The Society had undertaken an extensive print, film and radio advertising campaign to distinguish its Lady Gowrie Appeal from the fundraising efforts of other organisations such as the Salvation Army and Australian Comforts Fund. The Australian Red Cross distinguished itself from similar organisations by means of an aggressive public relations campaign and the strong public connection between the Society and senior members of government and respectable society, including the wives of the Governors of each State. This connection was exemplified by the use of Lady Gowrie, wife of the Commonwealth Governor-General, in naming and launching the Society’s general appeal. In addition, the activity-specific appeals of the Society allowed the Red Cross to differentiate itself from other fundraising organisations. The Australian Red Cross purported to assure donors that their money would be spent on specific

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projects, such as aid to prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific or the British fight against Germany.\textsuperscript{27} Thus, the Red Cross utilised a sense of purpose and certainty of expenditure that the general appeals of other voluntary organisations could not provide.\textsuperscript{28}

The centralisation of collection of funds would have negated the sophisticated Red Cross marketing campaign by removing any choice by donors regarding which organisation ultimately received their funds. More importantly, the proposal risked a general reduction in the amount of donations to war relief services, as with Commonwealth control came an aura of government bureaucracy and taxation, rather than a feeling of patriotism and ‘helping the troops’.\textsuperscript{29}

Dr Victor Hurley outlined these issues in a letter to Prime Minister Robert Menzies in September 1939.\textsuperscript{30} He then sought to distinguish the position of the Red Cross from that of other war relief services by pointing out the Society’s uniquely close relationship with the Defence Department and the fact that the launch of the Lady Gowrie Appeal had already been approved.\textsuperscript{31} Apart from the obvious damage that Commonwealth collection and control of funds would have on the already limited independence of the Australian Red Cross, the long-term effects of a War Chest would have been detrimental to the government itself. In allowing the Australian Red Cross to be publicly perceived as a respectable and autonomous charitable Society to which giving donations was a humanitarian and patriotic activity, the Commonwealth government gained the advantage of public funding that supplemented its military medical services without the politically onerous burden of extra taxation. The government maintained effective control of the Australian Red Cross’ activities by legislating that war relief organisations must be approved by the Commonwealth; historically, legally, socially, structurally and administratively integrating the Society with the

\textsuperscript{27} ARCA R 1939-40, 6; “Donations Received by ARC for Prisoners of War,” A989, 1943/925/1/59, NAA; “£10,000 to British Red Cross Society,” \textit{The Argus}, 30 September 1939, 2.

\textsuperscript{28} In the case of donations intended to benefit prisoners of war in the hands of the Japanese, however, this assurance could not be fulfilled - see below and Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{29} Donations to the Red Cross, on the other hand, were generally tax deductible – “Donations to Red Cross Not Taxable,” \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 12 December 1939, 10.

\textsuperscript{30} “Letter from Victor Hurley to the Prime Minister 7 September 1939,” Series NO14, ARCNA.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
government; and by imposing the military hierarchy upon the field activities of
the Society. The Commonwealth was not, however, burdened with the
administrative costs, political liabilities and financial responsibilities of operating
the Red Cross as an official branch of government. To assume control of
fundraising would have resulted in the Commonwealth assuming many of these
burdens while simultaneously removing many of the public-spirited reasons why
voluntary donations were made to the Red Cross. When these consequences
were considered in conjunction with the howls of protest from each war relief
organisation in the country, the proposed War Chest was quietly stowed away.\(^{32}\)

Despite this success in staving off legislative restrictions to fundraising, the
amount of funds held by the Society became a subject of sensitivity, if not
embarrassment, for John Roxburgh. As war spread to the Pacific, Honorary
Treasurer Roxburgh recognised the Society’s need to retain sufficient funds to
meet the projected increased cost of service to prisoners of war as provision of
relief to prisoners of the Japanese became possible. He was, however,
sensitive to the potentially adverse reaction of the government and public
donors if the large sums held idle by the Society became apparent. At a
meeting of the Central Council on 9 July 1943, Roxburgh warned:

I feel very disturbed that we have so much cash on hand [£2,000,000],
and that we have such a large value of actual stores on hand
[£1,000,000]. I feel that we may be challenged, with all this money and all
these goods, that we are not completely doing the job that should be
done. We have to educate our Divisions and the public of Australia that
in giving money they must give it to ARCS for the work and objects of the
Society as a whole, and not for any particular section of our work. Today
we might have too much money for POW and not enough tomorrow.\(^{33}\)

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\(^{32}\) A similar proposal by the Commonwealth government, which would have restricted
fundraising appeals and removed income tax deductions for donations, was raised in late 1943.
This legislative proposal, which would have severely restricted the Australian Red Cross’ ability
to raise large sums such as those obtained between 1939 and 1944, was as unsuccessful as
the War Chest of 1939 – “Letter from John Roxburgh to Wilfred Johnson 16 March 1944,”
Box.258, ARNCA, 3; “Commonwealth Control of Patriotic Funds,” A2671, 27/1940, NAA;
“Patriotic Funds Policy,” A1608, A55/1/1, NAA; “Patriotic Funds,” A2421, G1272, NAA; Butlin,
*War Economy 1939-1942*, 195-223; Badham Jackson, *The State at War*.

\(^{33}\) “Minutes of Special Meeting of Central Council 9 July 1943,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 8-9.
Wilfred Johnson, Chairman of the New South Wales Division of the Society, commented to his friend John Roxburgh that although the Australian Red Cross had not spent most of the money allocated for expenditure in the Asia-Pacific region due to Japanese intransigence:

The Government is getting the benefit of this, as the money is either invested in War Loans or left at the credit of current accounts in the Banks from whom, of course, the Government gets it at an interest rate of ¾ per cent per annum.\(^{34}\)

Thus, the government financially benefited from the Red Cross even when the national Society did not spend its funds on direct wartime services and material.

Between the launch of the ‘Lady Gowrie Appeal’ for funds in September 1939 and the conclusion of the war in September 1945, the Australian Red Cross’ income reached a total of over £12,250,000 – the largest amount raised by such an organisation during the Second World War.\(^{35}\) Despite the pressures placed on the Society, such as the threat of government control of fundraising, competing humanitarian organisations, and potential embarrassment regarding efforts to aid prisoners of war, the Australian Red Cross succeeded in attracting increasingly large public donations as the war progressed.\(^{36}\) This was a powerful endorsement of the Society by the public and a reflection of the popular view of the Australian Red Cross due to its appealing combination of humanitarian and patriotic activity. This popular image, carefully cultivated by the Society’s Publicity Department and supported by the government, allowed public donors to feel that they were vicariously contributing to winning the war.

\(^{34}\) “Letter from Wilfred Johnson to John Roxburgh 23 November 1943,” Box 2.58, ARCNA, 1.

\(^{35}\) “Report of Speeches Delivered at the 31\(^{st}\) Annual Meeting of the ARC 19 November 1945,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 6; “Commonwealth Control of Patriotic Funds,” A2671, 27/1940, NAA; “Patriotic Funds Policy,” A1608, A55/1/1, NAA; “Patriotic Funds,” A2421, G1272, NAA.

\(^{36}\) The first year of the war saw donations of just under £400,000. As Australia’s involvement in the conflict increased, so too did the amount of donations. In the second year of the war £1,000,000 was collected by Society, followed by £1,500,000 in the third year. The financial years of 1943/44 and 1944/45 each resulted in donations of over £3,000,000 to the Australian Red Cross. See ARCAR 1939-45.
while simultaneously acting in a humanitarian and charitable manner when they gave money to the Australian Red Cross.

The advantage of the Australian Red Cross independently raising public funds that would ultimately benefit the Allied war effort outweighed the government’s desire to take increasing control charitable organisations. In the field of fundraising, the symbiotic relationship between the Australian Red Cross and the government was starkly visible. As will be further demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 4, the Society financed services and materials that would otherwise have been the responsibility of the Australian government and military. Despite the temptation to directly appropriate funds raised by the Red Cross, the Australian government allowed the national Society free rein to raise money from the public that would ultimately be expended in ways that were aligned to the government’s war effort. A dividend of the integration of the Society with the war effort was that the Australian Red Cross permanently ensconced itself in the mind of the Australian public as a patriotic and humanitarian force. The manner in which this humanitarian mandate was exercised during the Second World War remained, however, in strict accordance with the wartime strategy of the Allies.

The Symbiosis of Australian Red Cross & Government Publicity

It was not just in the field of fundraising that the Australian Red Cross and the government engaged in a symbiotic relationship. Public opinion was shaped by the Society, government and Army for mutual benefit. The Australian Red Cross developed an active Publicity Department, staffed by salaried journalists and volunteers with experience working for newspapers and radio stations.37 Their task was to assist the recruitment of Red Cross members, swell the Society’s coffers and supplement the government’s wartime propaganda. In return for the extensive logistical assistance provided to the military, the Australian Red Cross obtained free publicity for its activities that enhanced the Society’s prestige and fundraising abilities. The Army agreed to make regular announcements praising

37 ARCAR 1939-1940.
Red Cross work and encouraging cooperation with the Society. A weekly series of ABC radio sessions was arranged in August 1940 in which General Rupert Downes, Army Director-General of Medical Services and former Chairman of the Society, gave lectures praising the Australian Red Cross' work with the Army.

The Australian Red Cross was occasionally subjected to criticism in the press by members of the public and journalists. Such criticism usually concerned allegations of the Society’s misuse of resources and the adequacy of service provided to prisoners of war. The Army was sympathetic to the Society’s objection that such press reports were damaging to the Red Cross and, in turn, to the war effort. The Chief Censor’s Department thereafter intervened to prevent further ‘attacks’ on the Australian Red Cross in the press that would have diluted the propaganda value of the Society’s work.

Not all of the Australian Red Cross’ publicity work was met with approval by the government, however, as reporting by the Society’s field representatives sometimes conflicted with official propaganda. In late March 1942, the government launched an ‘Anti-Japanese’ or ‘Hate Campaign’ which was designed to bolster the Australian public’s support for the war effort with tales of
Japanese barbarity and alien behaviour.\textsuperscript{42} Earlier in the month, however, the Australian Red Cross’ publicity sheets had carried a report of the experiences of Mrs Proud, a field representative of the Society who had been in Singapore. Mrs Proud reported that the Japanese had respected the Red Cross emblem in accordance with the \textit{Geneva Convention}.\textsuperscript{43} This report of civilised and law-abiding behaviour by the Japanese incensed the Australian government’s Chief Censor’s Department, who requested that circulation of the Society’s publicity sheets be stopped on the basis that it undermined the Anti-Japanese Campaign.\textsuperscript{44}

The Australian government’s attempt to manipulate the content of the Australian Red Cross’ publicity sheets highlighted an issue of tension for the Society. On one hand, the Anti-Japanese Campaign was a measure by the government that sought to ensure full public support for the war. As the Australian Red Cross was integrated with the government and military, the interests of the Australian government were generally shared by the Society.\textsuperscript{45} Failure by the Australian Red Cross to support all efforts to win the war, which included propaganda efforts, would have undermined its role as an auxiliary to the military. On the other hand, the Society’s involvement in the Anti-Japanese Campaign had the potential to undermine the Australian Red Cross’ increasingly important attempts to provide relief to Australian prisoners of war in Japanese captivity.\textsuperscript{46} Therefore, the Australian Red Cross refused the Lord Mayor of Melbourne’s invitation in August 1942 to be an organiser and beneficiary of his unsubtly-titled ‘Stamp Out the Jap Fund’.\textsuperscript{47} The issue was resolved by the Australian Red Cross not becoming a public critic of the Japanese conduct of the war, but satisfying the Chief Censor by not further publishing positive reports of Japanese behaviour. A similar approach was adopted in relation to reports of...

\textsuperscript{42} This campaign was extreme and was ultimately withdrawn - MCC 24 March 1942, 4; Towle, Kosuge & Kibata, \textit{Japanese Prisoners of War.}
\textsuperscript{43} MCC 24 March 1942, 4.
\textsuperscript{44} As the publicity sheets had already been circulated throughout all Divisions of the Society, there was little to be done that would allay the Chief Censor’s concern – MCC 24 March 1942, 4.
\textsuperscript{45} See Chapters 1 to 3.
\textsuperscript{46} MCC 24 March 1942, 4. See also Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{47} MCE 25 August 1942, 3.
conditions in German prison camps. This was an example of the tensions between the Australian Red Cross’ national and international obligations. The Society attempted to balance its competing priorities as a paramilitary organisation with close ties to the Australian government and its duty to relieve the plight of prisoners of war pursuant to the Geneva Conventions.

**Australian Red Cross Overseas Aid in a ‘Total War’ Environment**

While the Australian Red Cross was sometimes troubled by conflicts of interest, such as that between the government’s propaganda priorities and the welfare of prisoners, no such divergences from government policy were apparent in the field of delivering aid overseas. The Society provided money and goods to overseas Allies as an extension of the Australian government’s foreign and military policy. The manner in which the Australian Red Cross provided overseas aid during the conflict was calculated to support the Allied wartime strategy. The ‘total war’ nature of the Second World War resulted in aid by the Society to foreign countries being selective and laden with the wartime strategic agendas of the Allied nations.

On 29 September 1939, Lady Gowrie pronounced that:

> The Red Cross knows no enemies. It serves the brotherhood of man and in its common service it must and will work (I am convinced of this) as one united Body. Australia’s Red Cross will be proud to throw in its whole weight to alleviate suffering in this Crusade that we are waging against oppression and persecution.  

Lady Gowrie’s statement was inherently contradictory. By proudly taking a central role in the ‘Crusade’, the Australian Red Cross was forced to choose which side of the conflict it would support. In choosing sides, the Society chose enemies. The Australian Red Cross leadership supported the Allied cause without reservation, making a mockery of assertions that the Society was strictly

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48 MCE 17 November 1942, 2.
49 “Address by the President Lady Zara Gowrie 29 September 1939,” Series NO13, ARCNA, 2.
neutral or that it had no enemies. This was also the case with the national Red Cross Societies of other belligerent nations, whose allocation of resources supported the wartime aims of their respective governments. The enemies of the Australian Red Cross were clearly the Axis governments, military forces and, to a lesser extent, peoples. In supporting the Allies in the environment of total war that characterised the Second World War, the Australian Red Cross contributed to the military prowess of those who sought to defeat the Axis countries by crushing their military forces, economies and people.

In commenting on the effect of ‘total warfare’ on the Red Cross movement, Max Huber, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, stated at the conclusion of the war:

> Formerly, war was essentially a military struggle between fighting forces. Today, it has become the total mobilisation of the living forces of the nation against an enemy state involving the entire population.

Similarly, the International Committee reflected after the conflict that:

> The Second World War at once assumed the character of total warfare, since the states engaged did not count only on the force of arms to defeat the enemy. Particularly, they had planned before hand the means to strike at his economic power… According to the governments concerned, this policy… was justified by the necessity for the earliest conclusion of the war and for the suffering inflicted on the entire world. There was however, no doubt that it affected neutrals as well as the enemy, and the civilian population as well as the combatants: it was thus difficult to reconcile with the humanitarian principles to which civilised nations should conform when waging war. In particular, the belligerents were adverse to the dispatch of relief supplies because they wished at all

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costs to deprive the adversary of any element that would give him the slightest assistance in the war effort.\textsuperscript{52}

In a conflict of such magnitude as the Second World War, the provision of assistance and relief by the Australian Red Cross to foreign countries was necessarily selective. The selection of the beneficiaries of Australian Red Cross assistance was, however, consistently in accord with the military and foreign policy objectives of the Australian government.

As the initial years of the Second World War did not involve a tangible threat of the invasion of Australia, the Australian Red Cross focused in 1939 and 1940 on assisting the British Red Cross, the Second AIF, the British armed forces and British civilians.\textsuperscript{53} In particular, financial aid and shipments of stores were forwarded to the British Red Cross and an Australian Red Cross field unit accompanied the Second AIF to the Middle East.\textsuperscript{54} The focus of the Australian Society was upon events in Europe and the Middle East that largely concerned Britain but also affected Australia as a member of the British Empire.\textsuperscript{55}

The plight of Greece in the Second World War was one in which the interests of the Australian government, the sympathies of the Australian public, and the activities of the Australian Red Cross neatly converged. The resistance of Greece to German and Italian forces in 1940 and 1941 was supported by an unsuccessful military campaign in which Australian, New Zealand and British forces were involved.\textsuperscript{56} The failure of the Greek campaign engendered support and sympathy for the Greek people, especially amongst Greek Australians, resulting in the establishment of Greek branches of the Australian Red Cross in each Division of the Society.\textsuperscript{57} Greek resistance to the Axis formed part of the Australian government’s foreign and military policy, was supported by a

\textsuperscript{52} ICRC, \textit{Report of the ICRC Volume 3 - Relief Activities}, 367-368.
\textsuperscript{53} ARCAR 1939-40, 5-7, 18-21; MCCEC 5 September 1939, 3; MCCEC 6 September 1939, 1.
\textsuperscript{54} ARCAR 1939-40, 5, 18-19, 21; “£81,493 for Red Cross Overseas Unit,” \textit{The Argus}, 24 January 1940, 2; “Lord Mayor of London’s Fund Now £919,000,” \textit{The Argus}, 6 January 1940, 3. See also Chapter 3 below.
\textsuperscript{55} ARCAR 1939-40, 5.
\textsuperscript{56} Gavin Long, \textit{Australia in the War of 1939-45, Series 1, Volume II - Greece, Crete & Syria –} (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1953).
\textsuperscript{57} ARCAR 1940-41, 19.
sympathetic Australian public, and allowed the Australian Red Cross an
opportunity to provide relief to an allied European country in addition to Britain.\textsuperscript{58} Therefore, the decision of the Society to grant £5,000 cash and £15,000 in
woollen goods to the Greek Red Cross in 1941 was not difficult.\textsuperscript{59}

This position altered when formal military resistance to the Axis ceased and the
Allies withdrew from Greece. Whereas the provision of Red Cross relief to the
Greek military and populace had been viewed as a contribution to the Allies’
war effort against the Axis, the capitulation of Greece to overwhelming German
forces in March and April of 1941 resulted in a reversal of this view.\textsuperscript{60} The British
and Australian governments discouraged further Red Cross aid to occupied
Greece as this would have indirectly aided the Axis by assisting in feeding the
population. Despite press reports in October 1942 of a starving population in
occupied Greece, the Australian Red Cross followed the policy of the British
Red Cross and only supplied token dispatches of food and clothing to Greek
prisoners of war in Axis hands.\textsuperscript{61} This decision was in accordance with the
policy of the Allied governments to avoid providing any relief to the Axis-
occupied civilian population that may have undermined the economic warfare
campaign.\textsuperscript{62}

A similar policy of economic warfare was applied in relation to Japan. While
regular transfers of money to Japanese territory for expenditure by Swiss
delegates for the benefit of prisoners of war was possible, the banking laws of
Allied governments often forbade such transfers from taking place.\textsuperscript{63} The
prohibition on exporting currency to enemy states during wartime was a core
piece of the British Empire’s economic warfare program, yet it simultaneously
operated to the detriment of prisoners in Japanese captivity.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{58} “£5,000 to Help Greeks,” \textit{The Argus}, 8 November 1940, 9.
\textsuperscript{59} ARCAR 1940-41, 19.
\textsuperscript{60} Long, \textit{To Benghazi}, 131-304.
\textsuperscript{61} MCE 6 October 1942, 3.
\textsuperscript{62} Butlin, \textit{War Economy 1939-1942}.
\textsuperscript{63} “Letter from J Heylan, ICRC, to Dr Morel, ICRC Delegation Australia, 31 October 1944,”
Societies Nationale - Australie, BCR00/65-230, Document 55, ICRCA, 1-2; “Report Number 735
from Dr Georges Morel, ICRC Delegation Australia, to Secretary-General of ICRC 11 June
1944,” Societies Nationale - Australie, BCR00/65-230, Document 49, ICRCA, 1.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
By November 1943 it was clear to the Australian Red Cross that the Australian public felt great sympathy for the plight of the Greek people, which was reinforced by tales of Greeks assisting Australian soldiers in escaping captivity after the fall of Greece to the Axis. The Australian Red Cross was influenced by public opinion enough to advise the Australian government and the Society’s London Committee that it could offer a large supply of woollen goods and clothing for Greek relief. The Allied policy of not undermining the economic warfare campaign by supplying relief to occupied territories was largely maintained, however, until the liberation of Greece in October and November 1944. The Allies then found that the humanitarian situation in liberated Greece had so deteriorated that emergency intervention by the United Nations Relief & Rehabilitation Agency and associated organisations, such as the Australian Red Cross, was required. Thus, the Australian Red Cross’ assistance to Greece during the Second World War waxed and waned in accordance with the political and military policy of the Australian government. The ‘humanitarian’ activities of the Australian Red Cross were defined, and confined, by political and military boundaries established by the Australian government.

Similarly, the Australian Red Cross provided ‘humanitarian’ relief to the Chinese, Russian, British, Free French, Finnish, Polish, Malayan, Ceylonese and Middle Eastern national Red Cross societies within a politically and militarily defined scope. The selection of these countries as beneficiaries of Australian aid was in full accord with the Australian government’s policy of supporting those nations who resisted the Axis. This relief was intended to benefit both the military forces and the civilian population of Allied countries. In the environment of ‘total war’, the condition of a nation’s population and economy had a direct influence upon its capacity to wage war. While the plight of some civilians in Europe may have been judged to be more desperate than those in Allied

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65 MCE 9 November 1943, 4.
66 Ibid.
67 MNE 31 October 1944, 2-3.
68 ARCAR 1941-42, 5; “Red Cross Goods for Poland,” The Argus, 10 October 1939, 7; “£1000 Grant Approved for Red Cross in Finland,” The Argus, 29 December 1939, 3.
countries, to provide Red Cross relief from the societies of Allied countries would have been to provide relief to the Axis. The provision of Red Cross relief to Axis countries undermined the campaign of economic warfare that, combined with strategic bombing, was intended by the Allies to destroy the economy and population of Axis countries, and therefore the ability of the enemy to wage war. Conversely, the provision of relief by the Allied national Red Cross societies to Allied nations bolstered their ability to participate in the war against the Axis. Little regard was had to whether, on an objective basis, the needs of the civilian or military population for Red Cross relief was greater in Allied or Axis regions. Thus, in the era of ‘total war’, the Australian Red Cross formed an integral part of the Australian government’s foreign and military policy in selectively providing relief to Allied nations and denying aid to countries within the domination of the Axis powers.

The parliamentary democracies and their Red Cross societies assisted communist Russia from extinguishment as fascist forces ran rampant until late 1942. This may, however, be more accurately characterised as a necessary balancing of power than a preferential endorsement of communism by the parliamentary nation-states. As Philip Bobbitt has argued, parliamentary and communist ideological foes temporarily set aside their struggle to face the common fascist enemy. The parliamentary democracies used their Red Cross societies to aid the Russians for so long as it suited their strategy to sustain the communist model in order to allow the survival of parliamentarianism and the

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75 Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, 34-44.
Having defeated the common threat of fascism, the remaining contenders in the struggle for the constitutional legitimacy of the nation-state were, in the words of Winston Churchill, ‘able to resume the follies which had so nearly cost them their life’.  

The Australian Red Cross’ selectivity in which countries received relief continued even after former Axis countries had been liberated or defeated. It became the policy of the Society from November 1944 that:

We should continue to supply civilians with clothing in liberated territories and render every possible assistance to Greece and Crete. It was felt, however, that the Australian public would react unfavourably if Red Cross aid were given to former enemy countries.

Following the victory of the Allies in Europe and increasing gains in the war against Japan, the National Executive further defined its policy regarding relief to released civilian internees. The National Executive resolved that:

A gift of up to £1 per head [will be made] by the Society to white people of British Empire descent and citizens of the USA released by the AMF or handed to the AMF for treatment or evacuation… the Society has no policy in regard to the extent to which relief should be given in the pre-UNRRA period to destitute persons other than white people of British Empire descent in the areas liberated...

A hierarchy of countries and peoples more or less deserving of relief was created. This prioritisation was based more on subjective considerations than a pragmatic allocation of resources. The racial bias towards white people of British Empire descent and American citizens was a deliberate policy of the

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76 ARCAR 1941-42, 5; MNE 20 February 1945, 1; “British Red Cross Gives £250,000 to Russia,” The Argus, 26 September 1941, 1; “Supplies for Soviet Red Cross,” The Argus, 3 October 1941, 7.
78 MNE 7 November 1944, 3.
79 MNE 8 May 1945, 2-3.
Australian Red Cross, whose leadership were drawn from the Anglophile elite of Australian society, and reflected racial hierarchies present in Australia and the British Empire. This policy obviously discriminated against the many loyal non-white subjects of the British Empire who had suffered as a result of the war. No justification was articulated by the Society for this discriminatory policy. In addition to assisting displaced white Allied civilians, Greece and Crete were singled out for special treatment by the Australian Red Cross due to the great public sympathy felt for the populations of those countries in which Australian forces had fought valiantly but vainly. Provision of assistance by the Australian Red Cross to Greece and Crete reflected well on the Society as approval of this by the public and government was guaranteed.

The second category of countries deemed worthy of relief comprised those nations who had been militarily defeated by the Axis powers and dominated during the course of the war. These countries, such as France, the Netherlands and Norway, were described as being 'liberated' rather than 'defeated' upon the victory of Allied forces. Despite some collaborationist behaviour in 'liberated' countries, these nations were viewed with sympathy by the Australian public and government - and therefore by the Australian Red Cross.

The third category of countries consisted of those actual members of the defeated Axis, including Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy and Japan. The former Axis powers were regarded by the Australian government public as perpetrators of the war to whom little sympathy was due. In accordance with the public opinion which influenced the Society’s overseas relief policy, the Australian Red Cross excluded the Axis powers from its relief program. This decision was made in spite of the fact that the civilian populations in the defeated Axis territories were amongst those who faced the most devastation and hardship at the close of the war.

This Australian Red Cross’ overseas relief policy entailed the abdication of an objective international humanitarian role for the Society in favour of a politically and racially motivated prioritisation of relief that accorded with the mood of the Australian public. The mood of the Australian public was, however, not
necessarily an appropriate means by which the Society could judge the relief needs of civilian populations overseas. Conversely, acting in a manner that would be approved by the public and government, regardless of whether this met objective international relief priorities, was a good means of ensuring an active and enduring role for the Society. The Australian Red Cross was, by late 1944, still uncomfortable with defining itself as a fundamentally neutral and international organisation, like that of the International Committee of the Red Cross. While the Society developed an increasingly international outlook over the course of the war due to links with other facets of the Red Cross movement, the Australian Red Cross remained a partisan paramilitary organisation that was sensitive to the government’s policies and the mood of the Australian people.

The Australian Red Cross and the British Empire

Inherent in the Australian Red Cross’ allocation of overseas aid was the bolstering of the British Empire, from which the Australian nation and the Society had been established. There is an extensive literature on the strong historical, cultural and political relationship between Australia and Britain. In this context, the Australian Red Cross shared and supported the Australian government’s wartime policy of supporting the British Empire.

By 1941, the future of the British Empire was imperiled by defeats in Europe, German attacks on Britain, a global campaign against shipping, loss of colonies

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80 Marion Harroff-Tavel, “Neutrality and Impartiality - The Importance of These Principles for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the Difficulties Involved in Applying Them,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 273 (November-December 1989), 536-552.

to Japan in the Asia-Pacific, a struggle for control of the Middle East, and threats to India and Australasia. The ability of Britain and its Dominions to successfully resist the blows of Axis forces lay in the balance. As the British Empire writhed in this crucible, Lady Zara Gowrie sought to rally the Society’s members to the imperial cause. Lady Gowrie, herself a British aristocrat and wife of the Australian Governor-General, declared that the:

Magnificent work done by the people of Australia in support of Red Cross service... [is] the central factor in what has been attempted in help and succour to those who are serving the Empire in this great struggle and what has been so faithfully accomplished.

The Voluntary Aid organisations and patriotic funds which were active in Australia prior to the foundation of the national Red Cross society were a result of the Crimean War of 1854-1856, the British engagement in the Sudan of 1885, and the Boer War of 1899-1902. These organisations were all tangible expressions of the Australian public’s support for the British Empire and its military exploits. The Australian Red Cross was the successor to this tradition of volunteer organisations that supported the British Empire’s war efforts when it was founded on 13 August 1914 as an overseas branch of the British Red Cross.

Many of the statements made by the Presidents of the National body and Divisions in the Annual Reports exhibited a distinctly partisan and Anglophile mindset. Lady Gowrie regarded Australia as a British country with a British population and British strengths of character. She pronounced shortly after the war commenced that:

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83 ARCAR 1940-41, 5.
85 The tenor of these statements was reinforced by Anglophile fundraising events – “Britain’s Might in Pictures: Exhibition to Help Red Cross,” *The Argus*, 22 February 1940, 2; “Empire Day Drive Raises £2,943 for Red Cross,” *The Argus*, 28 May 1940, 2.
One of our Statesmen has said in describing British characteristics – our greatest characteristic… ‘In time of crises, grumbling ceases, and our nerves hold.’ \(^{86}\)

In commenting upon the work of the Australian Red Cross’ London Committee, Lady Gowrie noted that:

Our Red Cross Society looks towards ‘mother England’… [where] our London Committee still carries on its effective work, and we are fortunate in having such capable advisers at our Empire’s centre. \(^{87}\)

Lady Gowrie was not alone in equating the interests of Australia, and the Australian Red Cross, with that of Britain. The Queensland Division of the Society left little doubt regarding the importance of the British Empire to the leadership of the Australian Red Cross when its 1940-41 Annual Report stated that:

The Empire has been in very grave danger, and it is due largely to the courage and skill of the wonderful boys in our Air Force that the seat of government is still in England, and that London remains the heart of our Empire. \(^{88}\)

It is not surprising that the majority of Australian people, including members of the Red Cross, were enthusiastic supporters of the British Empire. By the time of the Second World War, the population of Australian largely consisted of people who were born in Britain, were the children of British-born parents, or who regarded themselves as being partly-British due to their status as citizens of the British Commonwealth. According to the 1911 census, 13 per cent of Australian citizens were born in the British Isles, 82 per cent were born in other parts of the British Commonwealth, and only 1.5 per cent were born in

\(^{86}\) “Address by the President Lady Zara Gowrie 29 September 1939,” Series NO13, ARCNA, 2.
\(^{87}\) ARCAR 1940-41, 7.
\(^{88}\) Ibid., 80.
Continental Europe. By 1947, 10 per cent of the Australian population were born overseas, 81 per cent of whom came from English speaking countries such as the British Isles, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and the United States. Despite Imperial tensions regarding trade and defence planning, the dominant members of the Australian government supported the nation’s place in the British Empire before and during the Second World War. The structure of the Australian government, with its Westminster system and British Governors-General, served to reinforce the Anglophile character of Australia’s leadership.

Such was the loyalty felt by members of the Society’s Central Executive members to the British Empire that they resolved that the Australian Red Cross should always be in a position to provide immediate assistance to the British Red Cross in the event of an emergency arising. This resolution was reinforced by the unequivocal opinion expressed by the Central Council in June 1940 regarding the prioritisation of Australian Red Cross work that:

In the opinion of the Council the Society should from now on concentrate on service for the Australian Forces at home and abroad, and that any services undertaken for war refugees should be only as to Empire countries or countries substantially in British control.

This resolution reflected the Council’s realisation that the resources available to the Society were limited in comparison to the vast scope of the conflict. Therefore, a practical decision had to be made as to where resources would be allocated. Just as the Australian Red Cross was integrated into Australian government and military, so too were the government and military integrated

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91 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Year Book Australia 2002 (Canberra: ABS, 2002); 5.39.
92 Day, The Politics of War, 1-15; Day, The Great Betrayal, Maddon, Australia & Britain; Hassam, Images & Identity; L’Estrange, The Australia-Britain Relationship Today; Lee, Australia & British Empire Between the Wars; O’Neill, Australian-British Relations; Hall, Australia & England; Bell, Dependent Ally; Goldsworthy, Losing the Blanket; Bridge, Munich to Vietnam.
93 Ibid.
94 ARCAR 1940-41, 80.
95 MCC 25 June 1940, 5.
into the British Empire. The decision to restrict the provision of relief to Australian and British Empire countries or possessions was a natural result of this integration. This resulted in the provision of Red Cross service by the Australian Society to all British Empire forces stationed in Malaya and Ceylon, in the absence of representation there by the British Red Cross.\textsuperscript{95} Servicing Australian, British and Indian troops in Ceylon, Malaya and Singapore, the Australian Red Cross was integrated into the logistics of the British Empire’s military forces.\textsuperscript{96}

While the Australian Society provided service to non-white troops, such as Indians, in Ceylon, Malaya and Singapore, this policy was not sustained at the conclusion of the war.\textsuperscript{97} Instead, a racially prejudicial policy was adopted in 1945 in relation to which civilians and former prisoners of war would be assisted in the wake of Japan’s defeat. Under this policy, the Australian Red Cross only committed itself to providing assistance to white people who were citizens of the British Empire or United States.\textsuperscript{98} This racially-based policy combined pragmatic concerns about limited Red Cross resources with the Anglophile priorities of the Australian Red Cross leadership.

As a paramilitary organisation with a strong allegiance to the Australian government and military, the Australian Red Cross was an active supporter of the struggle to maintain the integrity of the British Empire in the face of the Axis threat. Like the Australian government, however, the Australian Red Cross found that in implementing the fine detail of defending the Empire, the interests of Australia and Britain did not always coincide. As the war between the British Empire, America and Japan developed in the East, divergences in the interests of the Australian and British governments emerged. These breaches of unified policy amongst governments created tension between the Australian and British Red Cross Societies.\textsuperscript{99} The competing priorities and capabilities of the two

\textsuperscript{95} MCE 22 April 1941, 2.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} MNE 8 May 1945, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{99} See Chapters 3 and 4.
Societies were most apparent in the activities of their Field Forces and their approach to providing relief in South East Asia, as will be further examined in Chapters 3 and 4. Even in these circumstances of divergence from the British, however, the allegiance of the Australian Red Cross to the Australian government remained firm.

**Provision of Support to Allied Troops & Red Cross Societies in Australia**

The Australian Red Cross’ support of the Australian government’s wartime Allies was not limited to the provision of selective overseas relief. The services provided by the Australian society included support to Allied troops and Red Cross societies who operated in Australia, such as the Americans and Dutch. The Australian Red Cross thus provided logistical assistance and acted as the government’s host to these Allied assets in Australia.

Early measures were taken by the Australian Red Cross co-operate on an informal basis with the American Red Cross. These included the use of the expatriate ANZAC war relief fund in New York as a liaison to discuss American Red Cross co-operation in Australia and overseas. The ANZAC War Relief Fund consisted of Australian expatriates and sympathisers in the United States who made significant donations to the Australian war effort and encouraged dialogue between Australians and Americans.¹⁰⁰ The widening of the war to include America in December 1941 emphasised the international nature of the Red Cross movement in which the Australian Red Cross was a part. Following the entry of the United States into the war with Japan, the Australian Red Cross provided relief to American hospitals containing United States General Douglas MacArthur’s wounded troops who had been evacuated from the Philippines.¹⁰¹ By mid 1943, 150,000 United States servicemen were based in Australia as part

¹⁰⁰ ARCAR 1941-42, 6; MCCEC 18 September 1939, 1; MCCEC 21 September 1939, 1; “£16 Million for Red Cross: US Plan,” The Argus, 12 June 1940, 3.

of the Allied war effort against Japan.\textsuperscript{102} Most American troops were based in Queensland, although their influence and infrastructure spread across the country.\textsuperscript{103}

The initial influx of American military personnel into Australia in 1942 required Australian Red Cross service while the American Red Cross became established in Australia. This provision of service to American troops was reciprocated by gifts of stores and equipment from the American Red Cross.\textsuperscript{104} The American Red Cross later attempted to service their own men, in particular the wounded, as much as possible.\textsuperscript{105} Professional American Red Cross medical and administrative staff arrived in Australia in February 1942 to prepare for the increasing American military commitment in Australia, South East Asia and the Pacific.\textsuperscript{106} The Australian Red Cross recognised the valuable role that professional staff played in the activities of the American Red Cross, and implemented a similar program of professionalisation of staff roles in Australia.\textsuperscript{107}

The American Red Cross possessed a number of distinctive differences when compared to the Australian Society. The President of the American Red Cross was the President of the United States. While the President of the Australian Red Cross was also an official government figure, the wife of the Governor-General, there was a qualitative difference in the tangible power wielded by the Presidents of the two national Red Cross societies. President Roosevelt was the dynamic and powerful wartime leader of the United States. Lady Gowrie and


\textsuperscript{103} Ibid; Moore, \textit{Over-Sexed, Over-Paid & Over-Here}; Daniel & Anne Potts, \textit{Yanks Down Under 1941-45}.

\textsuperscript{104} ARCAR 1942-42, 29; “US Red Cross Will Help Australia,” \textit{The Argus}, 9 November 1942, 3.

\textsuperscript{105} MCE 13 January 1942, 3; “American Red Cross Recreational and Welfare Services for United States Army Forces in Australia,” MP508/1, 245/701/242, NAA.


her successor, Lady Dugan, possessed limited political power and relevance in Australia. President Roosevelt's official role as President of the American Red Cross left even less room for doubt regarding the integration of the national Society with the United States government than was the case in its Australian counterpart. On this basis, the American Red Cross may be differentiated from national Red Cross societies of Western European origin, such as the British and Australian Red Cross, who attempted to create a façade of independence from their governments. The American Red Cross' subservience to the American government was made obvious by President Roosevelt's official dominance over the organisation. On the other hand, the American Red Cross shared the Western European interpretation of humanitarian values, including implicit Christian influences, of the British and Australian societies. Therefore, the American Red Cross was a hybrid of Western humanitarian values and the openly pragmatic exploitation by government that characterised the Japanese Red Cross, albeit to a lesser extreme, as is discussed in Chapter Four.

The resources available to the American Red Cross also significantly contrasted with the Australian Red Cross. The American Society drew on the vast supplies of a wealthy industrialised nation that was mobilised for war but had not been subject to significant disruption of productive capacity by the enemy. Although the Australian Red Cross was certainly successful in raising funds throughout the war, its resources paled in comparison to those of the Americans. While the American Red Cross had a lavish approach to resourcing, its ability to actually provide direct relief services to the military in the field did not compare favourably to that of the Australians. The American Society's equivalent of the Field Force in Australia had a distinctly civilian aura, as opposed to the Australian Red Cross' paramilitary character. It was not as integrated into the Army structure and used less militaristic uniforms and titles.

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110 Ibid.

111 MNC 25 September 1945, 10.
than the Australian society. The American Red Cross emphasised the provision of medical equipment, luxuries and civil reconstruction and did not adopt the Australian Society’s direct hierarchical integration with the Army. The American society was a civilian organisation controlled by the President of the United States. This resulted in a peculiar position. The American Society was less formally integrated into the military than the Australian Red Cross, but it possessed an equally limited ability to make independent judgments as to the propriety of carrying out the orders it received from American officers.

By the conclusion of the war, the Australian Red Cross came to rely on the American Society’s facilities north of Australia. The Australian Red Cross’ behaviour in relation to the American Red Cross was similar to the Australian government’s behaviour towards the American government. The Australians realised the tangible security and resources that the Americans were able to provide in the absence of the British, who did not give priority to the war in the Asia-Pacific or Australia’s security. There was, however, never a complete sundering of the historically close relationship between the Australian and British Red Cross Societies.

The Americans were not the sole recipients of the Australian Red Cross’ attention. In accordance with the government’s policy of encouraging the Australian Red Cross to provide relief to Allied nations, branches of the Society were established in each State or Territory Division that focused its membership and relief activities upon a particular country. French, Greek, Russian and Polish Red Cross branches were established within Australian State Divisions whose members largely consisted of the ethnic community for which relief was sought.

Efforts to form branches of the French Red Cross Society in Australia in November 1939 were quashed when the Australian Red Cross insisted that

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112 Ibid.; Hurd, A Compact History of the American Red Cross.
113 Ibid.
115 MCE 19 November 1940, 2; ICRC, Report of the ICRC Volume 1- General Activities, 163-165; “French Red Cross Branch Formed in Melbourne,” The Argus, 16 November 1939, 10.
only it had the legal capacity to operate in Australia. This policy was sensible, as there was the risk of a profusion of different national Red Cross Societies operating branches in Australia and potentially conflicting with each other. In some instances, Australian Red Cross Divisions allowed the formation of ethnic branches who remitted half of their membership subscriptions to the Australian Society and half to a nominated foreign National Society. In each case, the Australian Red Cross Division retained control over the activities of units devoted to the assistance of other National Societies. The formation of ethnic branches of the Australian Red Cross proved an effective compromise between the Society’s desire for an increased membership that would support its relief activities to Allied countries and the need to retain unified control of the organisation in Australia.

An exception to this rule was made in October 1943, when the Netherlands East Indies Red Cross was permitted to establish its own branches in Australia. The close allegiance of the Dutch, coupled with their inability to operate in support of the Allies from the occupied Netherlands or East Indies, explains this change in policy. While membership subscriptions from these Netherlands East Indies Red Cross units were forwarded to Australian Red Cross Divisional Headquarters, the remainder of funds raised could be used for the purposes of the Netherlands East Indies. This represented a fundamental shift in policy, and considerable pragmatic favouritism of a military ally, by the Australian Red Cross which benefited a foreign Red Cross Society on Australian soil. Although the Netherlands East Indies Red Cross was not permitted to establish an executive structure in Australia, granting permission to establish Red Cross units in Australia that were not part of the Australian Red Cross was tantamount to the formation of a Netherlands East Indies Red Cross.

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116 MCCEC 20 November 1939, 2. An appeal for funds that would have been provided to the French Red Cross was also deferred in light of the German occupation of France – “Aid For French Red Cross: Appeal Plan Deferred,” The Argus, 20 June 1940, 10.
117 MCE 16 September 1941, 1.
118 Ibid.
119 MCE 23 February 1940, 2.
121 MCE 12 October 1943, 3;
‘in exile’ following the Japanese conquest of that territory.\textsuperscript{122} This obviously suited the Allied governments, who had implemented their own ‘government in exile’ programs in favour of those governments that had been dominated by the Axis such as Poland, France and Norway.\textsuperscript{123} In this manner, the Australian Red Cross accommodated the Australian government’s desire to support the Allied ‘government in exile’ program by facilitating the establishment of a Netherlands East Indies Red Cross in exile.

\textbf{The Australian Red Cross and Enemy Alien Membership:}

The Second World War provided the Australian Red Cross with the impetus to embrace the international opportunities provided by cooperation with other Allied national Red Cross societies and governments. The same cannot be said for the Society’s attitude to foreign citizens who wished to be embraced by, and contribute to, the Red Cross in Australia. The Australian Red Cross firmly implemented the Australian government’s xenophobic policy regarding enemy citizens and domestic security, excluding those persons who were not British subjects from participating in the activities of the Society.\textsuperscript{124}

The Australian government, like those of many other Allied nations, took steps to intern or otherwise restrict many nationals of Axis countries who were resident in Australia during the Second World War.\textsuperscript{125} The Australian government, like those of many other Allied nations, took steps to intern or otherwise restrict many nationals of Axis countries who were resident in Australia during the Second World War.\textsuperscript{125}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item \textsuperscript{122} “Letter from Alfred Brown to Secretary of ICRC 22 September 1945,” Sociétés Nationale - Australie, BCR00/65-230, Document 66, ICRCA, 1-2.
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Marcel Baudot, ed., \textit{The Historical Encyclopedia of World War II} (London: Macmillan, 1980), 202.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
government followed the British model of internment, designating as ‘enemy aliens’ refugees from enemy states and nationals from states subjected by the enemy.\textsuperscript{126} Under the Commonwealth \textit{National Security (Alien Controls) Regulations}, some enemy aliens were interned and all were subject to registration and restrictions on travel or movement of residence.\textsuperscript{127} As this policy was implemented by the Australian government, the Australian Red Cross was faced with the challenge of what policy it should follow with regard to non-British citizens. This challenge had two facets. Firstly, the Society had to determine whether it would include non-British Empire citizens amongst its membership or employees.\textsuperscript{128} Secondly, the Australian Red Cross was required to formulate a policy regarding the extent to which it would provide humanitarian relief to enemy aliens or prisoners of war who were interned within Australia.

The Australian government and Red Cross regarded the subjects of enemy countries, such as expatriate Germans, Japanese, Italians and others who originated in regions dominated by the expanding Axis powers, as ‘enemy aliens’\textsuperscript{129} Having been identified as an enemy alien, a person was subject to social prejudice, scrutiny by government agencies, restrictions on movement and limitation of activities during the Second World War.\textsuperscript{130} Whether such enemy aliens could be members of the Australian Red Cross was considered at the outbreak of war by the Central Council Emergency Committee\textsuperscript{131}, which formulated a policy that:

\begin{quote}
Membership of the Society should be limited to subjects of Great Britain and her Allies, that enemy subjects should not be admitted to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{126} Hasluck, \textit{The Government and the People 1939-1941}, 593-598.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128} The Australian Army faced a similar decision regarding whether it should use friendly and enemy aliens in its employment (labour) companies – June Factor, “Forgotten Soldiers: Friendly and Enemy Aliens in the World War Two Employment Companies of the Australian Army,” (Gender, Identity and War Conference, Melbourne, 12-13 July 2002).
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} MCCEC 13.9.39, 1-2.
membership, but they might be permitted to undertake voluntary work on behalf of the Society.¹³²

This policy amounted to a compromise between xenophobia, national security and the need to attract support to the Red Cross. As the Australian Red Cross played an integral paramilitary role in the war effort, it was regarded as inappropriate for the subjects of enemy countries to potentially access information of military sensitivity through Red Cross channels.¹³³ In addition, the wartime propaganda effort by the Allies to demonise the Axis would not have been reinforced by the inclusion of Axis subjects amongst the British-Australian Red Cross membership. On the other hand, the Australian Red Cross leadership was understandably keen in late 1939 to leave open the option of utilising enemy alien volunteers on a selective basis in the event of wartime labour shortages.

The policy of excluding enemy aliens from Australian Red Cross membership or work was applied selectively. The Society attempted to steer a course between maintaining the security of its paramilitary activities and making use of non-British subjects who volunteered for service and could perform duties that were not militarily sensitive.¹³⁴ Not entirely certain that it had adopted the correct policy, the Central Council took steps in June 1941 to refer the matter of non-British volunteer Emergency Service Company membership to the Army for approval.¹³⁵

While no immediate reply from the Army was forthcoming, in mid-1941 military intelligence authorities began to subject the staff and membership of the Australian Red Cross to scrutiny. In July 1941 the Intelligence Department of the Army discovered that a German Jew was employed to work at the Red Cross Blood Bank at the Prince Henry Hospital in Sydney.¹³⁶ Despite the fact that the Chairman of New South Wales Blood Transfusion Service was firmly of

¹³² MCCEC 14.9.39, 2.
¹³³ “Letter from John Nicholson to Dudley Turner 9 May 1941,” Box 2.58, ARCNA, 1.
¹³⁴ Ibid.
¹³⁵ MCC 24 June 1941, 2.
¹³⁶ “Letter from Dr A H Tebbutt to Wilfred Johnson 13 November 1941,” Box 2.58, ARCNA, 1; “Letter from Kate Pariser to Dr A H Tebbutt 20 May 1941,” Box 2.58, ARCNA.
the view that the German Jew was politically reliable and the best candidate for the job, her employment was terminated at the request of the Army.137 The Director-General of Army Medical Services later asserted that:

This is gross carelessness and negligence in recommending an allegedly unnaturalised German to work in such a highly specialised branch as to the preparation of blood serum for use on Australian troops.138

Having been scolded by the Army, the Australian Red Cross implemented a strict anti-alien security policy in April 1942 which was in accord with the directive of the military. The Central Executive resolved that:

Enemy aliens be not accepted as members of the Society... [and] not employed by the Society in any capacity unless they are approved by Military Intelligence. That where such aliens are already enrolled as members of Branches or Companies, or employed by the Society, a list of such be prepared for submission to Military Intelligence for their approval if that approval has not already been obtained.139

While screening of enemy aliens by military or police authorities was necessary, given the integration of the Australian Red Cross with the military, the process of application to the Divisional Executive and then military intelligence was a deliberately obstructive deterrent to Red Cross participation by those of non-British heritage.140 This restrictive membership and employment policy, which effectively excluded enemy aliens from all forms of Red Cross work or membership, was a distinctly stricter approach than that which had been adopted by the Central Council Emergency Committee at the start of the war.141 Whereas enemy aliens were previously permitted to be employees or voluntary workers, but not members, of the Society, this avenue was closed in the wake

137 “Letter from Dr A H Tebbutt to Wilfred Johnson 13 November 1941,” Box 2.58, ARCNA, 1.
138 “Letter from Major-General DGMS, Department of the Army Military Board (Adjudant-General), to Dudley Turner dated 7 November 1941 marked SECRET,” Box 2.58, ARCNA.
139 MCE 21 April 1942, 3; “Enemy Aliens Will Not Be Accepted As Members,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 20 May 1942, 9.
140 Ibid.; Lamidey, Aliens Control in Australia.
141 MCCEC 14.9.39, 2.
of the Blood Bank controversy.

The Queensland Division of the Australian Red Cross was troubled enough by the National policy of excluding enemy aliens to seek legal advice from its Brisbane solicitors. The solicitors observed that:

Under the Rules incorporated into the Charter of the Australian Red Cross Society, there would appear to be no restrictions whatever on any person who pays his or her annual subscription on becoming a member of the Society, and further, we understand that by the Rules of the International Red Cross no regard is to be taken as to the nationality of the applicants for membership of Red Cross.\(^\text{142}\)

Understandably concerned by this advice, the Queensland Division forwarded the legal opinion to the Secretary-General, Alfred Brown, for consideration. Brown brushed aside the legal concerns raised and stated that:

The main thing to watch is that the Society assists the Government in preventing leakage on matters which may be a deterrent to the war effort.\(^\text{143}\)

Brown’s reply to Brisbane pragmatically ignored the implications of the solicitors’ advice and gave preference to the maintenance of the Society’s reputation with the government as an organisation secure enough to entrust with information of military importance. Despite objections from a minority of the public who sympathised with the desire of refugees to participate in the Allied war effort as a Red Cross volunteer, the policy that effectively excluded non-British or Allied subjects from Australian Red Cross membership was retained for the remained of the war.\(^\text{144}\)

\(^\text{142}\) “Letter from McCullogh & Robertson Solicitors to Secretary-General of Queensland Division 4 May 1942,” Box 2.58, ARCNA.

\(^\text{143}\) “Letter from Alfred Brown to Miss Richardson, Secretary-General of Queensland Division 29 May 1942,” Box 2.58, ARCNA.

\(^\text{144}\) “Letter from HA Herborn to Chairman of New South Wales Division 6 June 1942,” Box 2.58, ARCNA; “Letter from Alfred Brown to Mr Pitt, Superintendent of New South Wales Division 10 June 1942,” Box 2.58, ARCNA; MCE 21 July 1942, 1.
In the context of other Allied nations and Red Cross societies, the exclusion, monitoring and control of enemy aliens by the Australian government and Red Cross was consistent. As the war progressed, the Australian Red Cross prioritised national security concerns over the need to attract non-British volunteers to work for the Society. The increasing dominance of military priorities, and the reliance of the Red Cross upon government approval to carry out the Society’s work, resulted in the abandonment of the Red Cross principle of universal voluntary service. Instead, the security concerns of the government and military dictated the Society’s membership and employment policy. In doing so, the Australian Red Cross reinforced and endorsed the Australian government’s xenophobic wartime approach to persons who had originated from countries dominated by the Axis powers.

The Australian Red Cross and Axis Prisoners & Internees

The reluctance of the Australian Red Cross to include non-British subjects in the activities of the organisation was replicated in its attitude towards Axis prisoners and internees who were imprisoned by Australian authorities. Around 7,000 civilian internees were held in Australia during the Second World War under the National Security (Alien Controls) Regulations. A total of around 39,000 internees were held by Australian Military Forces in Australia and overseas during the conflict. The nationalities of those civilians interned were generally German, Japanese and Italian. ‘Enemy aliens’ were interned if military authorities were of the view that they posed a threat to public safety and other forms of control, such as registration and restrictions in movement, would be

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145 Saunders & Daniels, Alien Justice; Cesarani & Kushne, The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain; Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore; Robinson, By Order of the President; Meyer, Uprooted Americans; Drennon, Keeper of Concentration Camps.
146 ICRC, International Red Cross Statutes 1921; Haug, Humanity For All, 444; Pictet, Red Cross Principles; Moreillon, ‘The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross’.
147 Hasluck states that 6,780 civilian internees were held in Australia, whereas Bevege asserts that the number of internees was 7,877 – see Hasluck, The Government and the People 1939-1941, 593-598 and Bevege, Behind Barbed Wire, 242.
149 According to Bevege, a total of 15,907 German, 13,695 Japanese, 8,948 Italians and 542 civilians of other nationalities were interned by Australian forces in Australia and overseas between 1939 and 1946. 3,753 Germans, 3,126 Japanese, 459 Italians and 539 civilians of other nationalities were interned in Australia during the Second World War - Bevege, Behind Barbed Wire, 242.
inadequate.\textsuperscript{150} The Australian government’s policy supported that of the British by agreeing to hold in Australia internees who had been transferred from the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{151} The Society assisted the implementation of the Australian government’s policy of internment of enemy aliens and prisoners of war in Australia.\textsuperscript{152} In addition, the Australian Red Cross provided limited logistical assistance to the Australian military in managing Axis prisoners overseas at the conclusion of the war.

The Australian Red Cross was not enthusiastic about providing services to enemy citizens who were held by Australian authorities. In February 1940 the Central Executive approved a policy of rendering appropriate Red Cross service to sick and injured inmates in Australian camps for interned enemy subjects if directed to do so by Army Headquarters.\textsuperscript{153} The exact nature of service to be provided was left to the discretion of the powerful Red Cross Administration Committee.\textsuperscript{154} Despite the Red Cross principle of impartial humanitarian service, the Central Executive did not envisage the provision of relief to internees who required assistance if it did not accord with the wishes of the military.\textsuperscript{155} Definitive guidance was sought from the Army as to what Red Cross service it deemed appropriate for internees in Australian camps, as the Central Executive feared public criticism of both its proposed assistance to enemy aliens and, conversely, its hesitation in providing those services.\textsuperscript{156}

It was not until February 1941 that the Australian Red Cross considered the provision of additional services to enemy alien internees in Australia. Dudley Turner reported after a tour of three internment camps that there was a need to provide Red Cross assistance to internees who were not sick or injured.\textsuperscript{157} There was little doubt on the part of the Central Executive that it was a proper

\textsuperscript{150} Hasluck, \textit{The Government and the People 1939-1941}, 593-598; Bevege, \textit{Behind Barbed Wire}.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid; Hasluck, \textit{The Government and the People 1942-1945}, 522, 605.
\textsuperscript{153} MCEC 23 February 1940, 1.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} ICRC, \textit{International Red Cross Statutes 1921}; Haug, \textit{Humanity For All}, 444; Pictet, \textit{Red Cross Principles}.
\textsuperscript{156} MCE Committee 19 March 1940, 1.
\textsuperscript{157} MCE 18 February 1941, 2.
function of the Society to provide relief to sick and injured internees.\textsuperscript{158} The question of whether it was the proper function of the Society to meet the needs of internees who were not incapacitated was more strenuously debated by the Central Executive. After discussion it was resolved that:

It is the duty of the Society, being in possession of information as to the needs existing in the camps generally, particularly in respect of the indigent and their dependents, to bring these needs to the attention of the Commonwealth Government, and that such be done.\textsuperscript{159}

This resolution fell short of a commitment to providing Red Cross service to all internees regardless of their health. The Central Executive remained wary of expanding the scope of Red Cross services to internees without a clear legal mandate or direction by the Army to do so. The Society's Aims and Objects, and the Geneva Convention, did not provide such a clear mandate, leaving the Australian Red Cross potentially subject to the criticism of unnecessarily expending the donations of the Australian public for the benefit of enemy citizens.\textsuperscript{160} Nevertheless, the Central Executive's resolution recognised the moral and philosophical duty of Red Cross societies to at least advocate for humane conditions within internment camps.

Following further consultation with the Army, the final position of the Australian Red Cross regarding the extent of service to enemy alien internees was formulated in April 1941. The Society accepted the Army's dictate that Red Cross service was to be restricted to sick internees who were actually hospitalised under the supervision of the Army or otherwise acknowledged by the military as suffering from chronic illness.\textsuperscript{161} In relation to internees who were not ill, the Army directed that:

It is considered that in serving the sick internees only the Society will be

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{160} ARCAR 1939-40, 135.
\textsuperscript{161} MCC 29 April 1941, 3; “Report on the Directorate of Prisoners of War and Internees of Army Headquarters, Melbourne,” A7711/1, NAA.
discharging its recognised humanitarian function and that the provision of clothing and amenities for fit and well internees is the responsibility of the Commonwealth and certain other welfare societies who are prepared to assist.\footnote{MCC 29 April 1941, 3.}

While the Army circumscribed the scope of the Australian Society’s service to internees, the International Committee of the Red Cross established a delegation in Australia which began operating in February 1941.\footnote{ICRC, Report of the ICRC Volume 1 - General Activities, 71; MCE 18 February 1941, 3.} At the same time, the International Committee dispatched permanent delegations and temporary special missions to the majority of belligerent countries in which prisoners of war were held or enemy alien civilians interned.\footnote{ICRC, Report of the ICRC Volume 1- General Activities, 71, 152-153.} Dr George Morel was appointed as a Delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Australia and New Zealand.\footnote{“Letter from ICRC to Australian Minister of External Affairs 29 January 1941,” BG95/104 Gouvernements Australie, Document 31 ICRCA.} A Swiss citizen based in Mittagong, New South Wales, Morel held a Doctorate in Economics and resided in Australia prior to the outbreak of war.\footnote{“Report Number 51 from Dr Georges Morel, ICRC Delegation Australia, to Secretary-General of ICRC 5 May 1942,” Camps - Australia, G.17/21, ICRCA.} As was the case with many of the International Committee’s delegates, Morel was selected to act as the International Committee of the Red Cross’ representative due to the combination of his Swiss citizenship, educational qualifications, social standing and local knowledge.

The International Committee of the Red Cross established an Agency of Information for Prisoners of War in November 1939.\footnote{MCCEC 9 November 1939, 2.} As the Australian government was responsible for the establishment and management of internment camps, the Department of Defence provided information regarding enemy aliens and prisoners who were interned to the International Committee and Australian national society.\footnote{Ibid.; “Report on the Directorate of Prisoners of War and Internees of Army Headquarters, Melbourne,” A7711/1, NAA.} Correspondence took place between Dr Morel, the Swiss Consul in Australia (acting as a protecting power for prisoners under the \textit{Geneva Convention}), the Australian Red Cross, the Australian
government and each Camp’s commanding officers regarding the conditions of prisoners and internees in Australia. Morel advised Geneva that he was able to maintain cordial and civil relationships with the National Red Cross Societies and military authorities of Australia and New Zealand.

Dr Morel visited interned German, Italian and Japanese civilians and prisoners of war throughout Australia. He forwarded several hundred regular reports to the International Committee of the Red Cross in which details of the condition of each internment or prison camp in Australia and its occupants were provided. These reports discussed in great detail matters such as the number and identity of internees or prisoners, conditions of accommodation, meals provided, entertainment facilities, physical and psychological welfare, frequency of correspondence and funds transfers, instances of disciplinary action, and any complaints made regarding the camp. Morel was permitted to assist the transfer of correspondence and funds by cable to prisoners in Australia from their relatives in Germany and Japan. Aside from occasional requests that more news and cinema films be provided to prisoners, the reports by Morel did not convey to Geneva any significant concerns regarding the conditions in which German, Italian and Japanese prisoners were held in Australia.

169 “Report Number 48 from Dr Georges Morel, ICRC Delegation Australia, to Secretary-General of ICRC 26 April 1942,” Camps - Australia, G.17/21, ICRC; “Red Cross Reports on Prisoner of War Camps in Australia,” A989, 1943/44/925/1/30 Parts 1-4, NAA.
170 MCCEC 9 November 1939, 6. For correspondence from the Australian government and Army providing the ICRC with lists of prisoners of war and internees in Australia see G85/104 Gouvernements – Australie, Folder 1.4, Documents 1-38, ICRC.
171 ARCAR 1940-41, 26; Towle, Kosuge & Kibata, Japanese Prisoners of War.
172 “Report Number 72 from Dr Georges Morel, ICRC Delegation Australia, to Secretary-General of ICRC 23 July 1942,” Camps - Australia, G.17/21, Document 46, ICRC. Also see Morel’s many other reports, letters and telegrams to Geneva in the ICRC’ Camps-Australia G.17/21 file and Camp Reports Summary P6&1C files. Hand-written notes on Morel’s reports indicate that their contents were noted and acted upon when received approximately two months later by Geneva. The International Committee of the Red Cross used the results of this correspondence to advise the Japanese Red Cross, the German Red Cross, the German Consulate of the status of their citizens who were held in Australia - see “Report Number 45 from Dr Georges Morel, ICRC Delegation Australia, to Secretary-General of ICRC 21 April 1942,” Camps - Australia, G.17/21, Document 20, ICRC. See more generally Camps - Australia, G.17/21, Documents 1-38, ICRC.
173 Ibid.
Representatives of the Australian Red Cross, such as John Newman Morris, were similarly impressed with both the standard of internment camps in Australia and Morel's work in surveying them.\footnote{MCE 11 November 1941, 10.}

The International Committee of the Red Cross was less impressed with the propensity of belligerent governments to intern non-combatant civilians such as women, children, elderly men, priests, and doctors. General memoranda circulated to all warring nations, coupled with specific letters to the Australian Minister for External Affairs, raised the International Committee's concerns regarding what it viewed as the unnecessary and inhumane internment of many enemy aliens.\footnote{“Letter from Max Huber to President of Council of Ministers, Canberra 5 August 1941,” BG 85/104 Gouvernements Australie, Document 42, ICRCA; “Letter from Max Huber to Minister for External Affairs, Canberra 24 February 1942,” BG 85/104 Gouvernements Australie, Document 56), ICRCA.}

The Committee argued in July 1943 that, as many prisoners had been interned for up to three years, their prolonged captivity would have detrimental spiritual as well as physical effects.\footnote{“Letter from Max Huber to Minister for External Affairs 14 July 1943,” G 85/104 Gouvernements Australie, Document 87, ICRCA.} The Australian Red Cross attempted to contribute to the psychological health of prisoners in Australian camps providing limited educational and recreation services, in consultation with Camp Commandants.\footnote{“Policy of the Society Regarding Service to Enemy Prisoners of War (undated),” Box 1.94, ARCNAC; MCC 9 December 1941.}

The Australian government responded to Geneva’s concerns by allowing prisoners access to religious facilities within the camps, but was certainly not prepared to release interned enemy aliens despite their non-combatant status.\footnote{“Letter from Max Huber to Minister for External Affairs 14 July 1943,” G 85/104 Gouvernements Australie, Document 87, ICRCA.} With occasional exceptions, such as Dudley Turner’s tour in February 1942 and the provision of limited recreational and educational services, the Australian Red Cross delegated the role of monitoring the condition of internees and prisoners of war in Australia to the International Committee’s delegation.\footnote{MCE 18 February 1941, 2; “Policy of the Society Regarding Service to Enemy Prisoners of War (undated),” Box 1.94, ARCNAC; MCC 9 December 1941.}

The tension between the Australian Red Cross’ humanitarian responsibilities and the Society’s reluctance to expend its resources and public goodwill on
enemy citizens was redoubled by the question of what services would be provided to enemy troops at the conclusion of the war. As resistance to the Allies in the Asia-Pacific region crumbled in July 1945, a policy was required regarding the provision of Field Force service to the increasing numbers of Japanese prisoners who were being taken. The Society’s Field Force representatives initially supplied ‘capture parcels’ consisting of basic toiletries to each Japanese prisoner captured. Luxuries that normally formed part of the ‘capture parcels’ such as chocolates, packs of cigarettes, writing paper and envelopes, were withheld until the Allied military officer in charge of each compound was satisfied with the behaviour of individual prisoners. Field Force Commissioner Heywood explained to Secretary-General Alfred Brown that:

In the First Australian Army area, all captured Japanese are handed a Dilly Bag containing [basic toiletries]. In addition to this, [luxury] items are given to the compound orderlies and are used in an endeavour to elicit information.

Australian Red Cross supplies were thus utilised as a means by which the military could enforce discipline and obtain intelligence from captured Japanese servicemen. The provision of Red Cross supplies to Japanese prisoners of war was not without its critics. Commissioner Heywood reported that:

As a result of my issuing cigarettes here, I have been criticised by senior officers who contend that their families contributed to Red Cross not for the purpose of making comforts available to Japanese who, from reports received at this HQ, are meting out most inhuman treatment to Australian Prisoners of War.

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182 Towle, Kosuge & Kibata, *Japanese Prisoners of War*. In relation to the Australian Red Cross Field Force in the Asia-Pacific, see Chapter 3.
183 “Memorandum from Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Searcher Bureau to Officer in Charge ARC Advanced Land Headquarters 6 July 1945,” Box 1.94, ARCNA.
184 Ibid.
185 “Memorandum from Commissioner AD Heywood, Advanced LHQ, to Secretary-General Alfred Brown 5 July 1945,” Box 1.94, ARCNA.
186 Ibid.
Alfred Brown and the National Executive also objected to the issuing of Red Cross luxuries by the military to fit and well prisoners who cooperated with their captors, prompting them to enunciate a policy that:

A modified service as compared to that given to hospitalised members of the [Australian Military Forces] is available and rendered only on the advice of Medical Officer concerned. The service does NOT include luxury items such as tobacco confectionery etc. The service is limited to the relieving of distress.\(^{187}\)

The Society was sensitive to the sentiment reported by Commissioner Heywood, and wished to avoid the public criticism that accompanied the distribution of Red Cross supplies to Japanese prisoners, albeit at the behest of the Army.\(^{188}\) Members of the public remained hostile to the concept of the Australian Red Cross assisting the plight of Japanese troops who had surrendered. In a letter to the Society, a member of the public reported that:

A friend of mine said he saw a letter from a boy written in Balikpapan or very near there, in which he states that not only are our Authorities giving the Japanese pictures every night, but they were passing on our Australian Red Cross parcels to them too. I realise what a serious effect this will be on the Red Cross, if it gets out, and on the other hand if it is true - well words fail me.\(^{189}\)

This letter, which repeated a rumour based on hearsay, was enough to provoke the Australian Red Cross’ Field Force Commissioner Heywood to conduct an inquiry. His anxieties were partially relieved when the Field Force Senior Representative who served with the Headquarters of the 7\(^{th}\) Australian Division in Balikpapan, reported that:

\(^{187}\) "Memorandum from Secretary-General Alfred G Brown to all Divisions 24 July 1945," Box 1.94, ARCNA. See also "Memorandum from Chief Commissioner Alex Russell to Commissioner AD Heywood, ARCS Advanced LHQ, 25 July 1945," Box 1.94, ARCNA; MNE 17 July 1945, 1.

\(^{188}\) Ibid.

\(^{189}\) “Letter from Emily Hepburn to Mr Henderson of the Australian Red Cross 2 October 1945," Box 1.94, ARCNA.
At no time have Red Cross Parcels been supplied to the Japanese from 7 Aust Division... the Japanese have not, do not, and are most unlikely to receive Picture Shows... These statements are ridiculous and most damaging and can cause serious results.\textsuperscript{190}

The danger posed to the Australian Red Cross by a public perception that the Society was contributing to lenient treatment of Japanese prisoners illustrated the extent to which the principle of reciprocity had failed to be positively implemented in the Asia-Pacific.\textsuperscript{191} The refusal of Japan to provide humane conditions to Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees contributed to a strong anti-Japanese sentiment amongst the Australian military and public at the conclusion of the conflict. The perception that the Japanese had behaved in a barbaric manner towards Australians in their hands created an atmosphere in which the provision of generous humanitarian assistance by the Australian Red Cross to Japanese prisoners would have been detrimental to the Society's reputation with the public and government.\textsuperscript{192} While the Australian Red Cross did not completely disregard its humanitarian obligations to Japanese prisoners in the wake of the conflict, the Society chose to narrowly exercise its discretion in determining the exact scope of service. The Australian Red Cross possessed sufficient resources and flexibility of purpose to provide a more generous scope of service to Japanese prisoners. The behaviour of the Japanese Red Cross and government, which is further discussed in Chapter 4, extinguished any desire to do so.

The Australian Red Cross' assistance and lack of dissent regarding the internment of enemy aliens and treatment of prisoners of war served to legitimise government policy. The assistance that was provided by the Society to interned enemy aliens and prisoners was hesitantly publicised for fear of adverse public reaction. The Australian Red Cross delegated much of the work of monitoring the conditions in internment camps to the International Committee

\textsuperscript{190} “Letter from CT McErvale, Senior Representative of ARC Field Force HQ 7\textsuperscript{th} Australian Division, to Commissioner AD Heywood 29 October 1945,” Box 1.94, ARCNA.
\textsuperscript{192} “Letter from Emily Hepburn to Mr Henderson of the Australian Red Cross 2 October 1945,” Box 1.94, ARCNA; “Letter from CT McErvale, Senior Representative of ARC Field Force HQ 7\textsuperscript{th} Australian Division, to Commissioner AD Heywood 29 October 1945,” Box 1.94, ARCNA.
of the Red Cross. By providing limited service to internees and prisoners of war, the Australian Society sought to acquit its responsibilities as member of the international Red Cross movement. In doing so, the Society simultaneously assisted the Australian government to manage internees and prisoners of war and strove to not offend the wartime sentiments of the Australian public. As was the case with the Australian Red Cross’ approach to enemy alien membership, the supporting role of the Society in the Australian government’s internment and prisoner of war schemes was consistent with that of other Allied nations and Red Cross societies.\(^{193}\)

**Australian Red Cross Support of the Allied War Effort**

In its 1948 Report on Activities during the Second World War the International Committee defined its view on the application the Red Cross principle of impartiality to national societies.\(^{194}\) Geneva counselled that:

> The task of the National Societies is, above all, national in scope. Their task is to assist their own people, their field is mainly their own national territory or territories perhaps occupied by their own forces. In obedience to the principle on which the *Geneva Convention* is founded, National Societies accord to the wounded and sick enemy the same care as to members of their own armed forces. This is the principle of impartiality, which finds its application by analogy also to persons foreign, even of enemy nationality, who fall within the field of a Society’s national activity (for example prisoners of war and enemy internees). In the nature of things, however, the chief concern of every National Society will always lie in relief activities for its own countrymen.\(^{195}\)

In contrast to the very strict notion of political neutrality and impartiality applied to the International Committee, a lesser standard of impartiality applied to


\(^{195}\) Ibid.
national societies.\textsuperscript{196} The International Committee of the Red Cross explicitly approved, albeit after the war, a definition of impartiality for national societies that did not require or encourage political neutrality. Rather, the impartial application of humanitarian assistance to sick, wounded or imprisoned members of any enemy who fell within the power of the national society’s government or armed forces was expected. An expectation of political neutrality on the part of national societies may have been counter-productive, as many Red Cross members were attracted to the organisation as a means of participating in their nation’s effort to win the war. Moreover, governments supported the development of national Red Cross societies due to their utility in enhancing the logistics of each nation state’s war effort.

The policies of the Australian Red Cross were extensions of the wartime policies of the Australian government. These policies integrated the personnel and resources of the Society into the Allied war effort. The integration of the Red Cross into wartime logistics was a microcosm of the broader integration of the Australian people into the ‘total war’ effort that was adopted by the protagonists of the Second World War. This integration was consistent with the approach taken by other Allied and belligerent governments and their national Red Cross societies.

The policies adopted by the Society enabled members of the Australian Red Cross to be used by the government, either in their role with the Society or by direct recruitment to the military. Australians such as John Nimmo participated in the Red Cross precisely because the organisation provided non-combatants means of contributing to the Australian government’s war effort. The Red Cross and government cultivated the public profile of the Society to enhance the attractiveness of participation in, and donation to, the war effort by civilians. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, however, the Society’s emphasis on its ability to the ease the plight of prisoners of war was not matched by an ability to deliver relief to prisoners of the Japanese.

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 10-11, 15; “Auxiliary Status of Australian Red Cross,” MP151/1, 552/201/1401, NAA; “Geneva Convention Act 1938,” A263/1, NAA.
While Australian Red Cross volunteers were used to bolster the personnel available for the war effort, overseas aid provided by the organisation served as an extension of the Australian government’s foreign and military policy. The Society shared and supported the Australian government's wartime policy by selectively supplying overseas aid to strategically important or popular nations without an objective assessment of which countries most desperately needed assistance as a result of the war. This selective provision of assistance was particularly apparent in the Australian Red Cross’ support of Britain, the British Empire, and countries of strategic or economic interest to Australia in the wake of the conflict.

The Australian Red Cross firmly implemented the Australian government’s xenophobic policy regarding enemy citizens and domestic security, excluding those persons who were not British subjects from participating in the activities of the Society. This policy was extended by the Society’s assistance in the implementation of the Australian government's policy of internment of enemy aliens and prisoners of war in Australia. The assistance that was provided by the Society to interned enemy aliens was hesitantly publicised for fear of an adverse public reaction. The Australian Red Cross chose to narrowly exercise its discretion in determining the exact scope of service to prisoner and internees. This policy resulted in the delegation of much of the monitoring of conditions in internment camps to the International Committee of the Red Cross. At the conclusion of the war, the Australian Red Cross carefully limited its assistance to prisoners of war due to the adverse reaction that such service would engender in the Australian public. The Society did, however, allow its supplies to be used as a means by which the Australian military could enforce discipline and obtain intelligence from captured Japanese servicemen. The policy of logistically integrating the resources of the Australian Red Cross with the Army in operational environments was most comprehensively displayed in the activities of the Society’s Field Force throughout the Second World War, as is discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter Three
The Embedding of the Australian Red Cross within the Australian Military

Stella Bowen, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Australian Red Cross Field Force John Fleming, (London, 1945), ART26280, AWM.¹

¹ Australian War Memorial, Stella Bowen – Art, Love & War Exhibition Catalogue (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 2002); Stella Bowen, Drawn From Life – A Memoir (Sydney: Pan MacMillan, 1999).
The Australian Red Cross Society is rendering to the Army in the Field a service any disturbance to which would occasion me immediate and serious concern.²

- Letter from Australian Commander in Chief General Thomas Blamey to Minister for the Army Francis Forde, 21 January 1944.

The Australian Red Cross was embedded as a paramilitary branch of the Australian military forces. This integration was consistent with, and an extension of, the Society’s relationship with the Australian government that supported the war effort. The Australian Red Cross provided logistical support to the military in Australia and overseas by means of the Field Force. The extent of this support, and the boundaries imposed by the Army and the Society respectively, will be examined. The paramilitary character of the Australian Red Cross’ Field Force enabled the Society to directly participate in the military waging of the Second World War. The members of the Field Force were proxies for non-combatant members of the Australian public whose donations were used to finance the Field Force which provided direct logistical aid to the Army. This chapter traces the manner in which the Field Force operated in active theatres of war to support the Army. In particular, the transformation in the Field Force’s governance and methods as a result of operational experience is examined in the context of similar changes undertaken by the Australian Army during the war.

The Australian Red Cross’ Role in Military Logistics

In the view of Phillip Bobbitt, one of the primary features of the nation-state is a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence.³ As both John Hutchinson and

² “Attachment of Australian Military Forces Personnel to ARCS and Authorised Philanthropic Organisations,” MP742/1, 245/1/491, NAA.
Nicholas Berry have pointed out, members of the international Red Cross movement must grapple with a conflict between humanitarian principles and their traditional role, embodied in the activities of Red Cross national societies, as an active component of military logistics.\(^4\) Nicholas Berry argues that the international Red Cross movement, including its national societies, of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries seeks to undermine the institution of war by prioritising international humanitarian principles and laws.\(^5\) During the Second World War, however, the utility of national societies as instruments of nation-states superseded the international humanitarian principles of the Red Cross movement. National Red Cross societies acted as catalysts that aided their respective nation-states in the waging of war.

The Australian Red Cross channelled the patriotic voluntary impulses and funds of the Australian people for the purposes of supplementing the deficiencies of military medical and welfare services.\(^6\) The Society actively assisted the military in Australia throughout the Second World War. A national Camps and Hospitals Committee coordinated the development of Red Cross service in military camps and hospitals throughout the Commonwealth. Red Cross volunteers, many of whom were members of Voluntary Aid Detachments, provided Red Cross relief services to troops, nursing staff and hospital orderlies in around eighty tented hospitals and many more dental clinics, sick bays and depots.\(^7\) In addition, by mid-1942 the Red Cross had established nineteen convalescent homes with a total of 1,225 beds for sick military personnel.\(^8\) The Red Cross bore


\(^{4}\) Hutchinson, Champions of Charity, 347-350; Berry, War & The Red Cross, 3-4; Roger De Weiss, The Role of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent in the Nineties - The League’s Identity, Crisis or Affirmation? (Geneva: League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 1989); David Forsythe, Present Role of the Red Cross in Protection (Geneva: Joint Committee for the Reappraisal of the Role of the Red Cross, 1975).

\(^{5}\) Berry, War & the Red Cross, 159. See also the discussion in the Conclusion of this thesis.

\(^{6}\) “Memorandum on Mobilisation of the ARC Society by Stanley Addison” Series NO14, ARCN.

\(^{7}\) ARCAR 1940-41, 23; “How the Red Cross Aids Troops: £750 Spent Each Week,” The Argus, 30 August 1940, 7.

\(^{8}\) Red Cross convalescent homes for sick and wounded servicemen and nurses were located throughout Australia. The homes were often situated in stately buildings that were provided for Red Cross use such as Stonnington in Toorak, Victoria - ARCAR 1940-41, 23; ARCAR 1941-42, 22; “Australian Red Cross Convalescent Homes,” AWM54, 837/4/9, NAA; “Stonnington Red Cross Convalescent Hospital,” The Argus, 13 March 1940, 9; “Complaints of Military Indecision Regarding New Convalescent Homes,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 October 1940, 12; “Red
responsibility for much of the cost and staffing of these homes. Expensive specialist medical equipment was provided by the Red Cross to the military in Australia. By 1941, 165 ambulances, four mobile blood banks, six mobile advanced dressing stations, one mobile operating unit and one x-ray unit had been supplied to the military medical services by the Red Cross, often as a result of generous donations by individual members. This support of the military by the embedded Australian Red Cross caused the Society to be described in the Army service magazine, Salt, as the ‘Army Without Guns’.

The extent of the Australian Red Cross’ provision of medical equipment to the Army caused some concern amongst members of the Central Executive. In September 1941 Mr George Patterson, a Central Executive member supported by the New South Wales Division, attempted to bring a resolution concerning the government’s use of Red Cross funds for equipment which he believed should instead have come from taxpayers’ money. Patterson was concerned that the government was draining Australian Red Cross funds in an attempt to meet the medical equipment demands of the military establishment.

The attitude displayed at the Society’s Annual General Meeting of 1941 by Major-General Maguire, Director-General of Australian Army medical services, gave credence to Patterson’s concern. Maguire enthused that:

When the Army Medical Service wants something urgently the Red Cross is there with that something at hand and the thing is done immediately. [He] likened the Government Departments to a huge rabbit warren. He said you put a rabbit in at one hole and he wanders about for

Cross Becomes Only Civil Body Authorised to Administer Convalescent Homes," The Sydney Morning Herald, 9 September 1942, 9.


10 “Army Without Guns,” Salt 1, no.13 (22 December 1941), A5954, 542/1, NAA.

11 MCE 9 September 1941, 3.
a time then pops up at some other hole. While the rabbit was wandering round the Department, the Red Cross was there on the spot to give and give and give.\textsuperscript{12}

The general policy of the Australian Red Cross had been that it would only provide additional medical supplies and equipment over and above that which the Army had set as the minimum required for the establishment of medical units.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, the government was theoretically expected to fund the medical equipment inherently required for the formation of Army medical units. The reality, however, differed from the general policy. The subject was of sufficient sensitivity for Patterson’s resolution to be debated in the absence of the press - who were usually permitted to observe meetings of the Executive.\textsuperscript{14} In providing equipment necessary for the establishment of Army medical units, the Australian Red Cross moved from providing assistance and relief to actually funding the Army medical services. This was a divergence from the Society’s role as an auxiliary to the military medical services, as it was the government’s role to fund the establishment of military units. Funding the procurement of medical equipment essential to the formation of military medical units marked a new level of logistical integration and reliance by the government on the Australian Red Cross.

While Patterson’s resolution was effectively suppressed by the Central Executive, his point was well made and had some effect.\textsuperscript{15} The Australian Red Cross carefully attempted to avoid the government’s abuse of the Society’s generosity by endeavouring to only provide medical supplies and equipment above the level required for establishment of medical units. Nevertheless, two incidents in February 1943 forced the Society’s leadership to limit the Red

\textsuperscript{12} MCC 24 November 1941, 8.
\textsuperscript{13} Walker, Middle East & Far East, 50.
\textsuperscript{14} MCE 9 September 1941, 3. Nevertheless, the press had become aware of the issues raised by Patterson – “Sponging on Red Cross: Army and Navy Authorities Criticised,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 27 August 1941, 11; “Mr Spender Deprecates Statement,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 28 August 1941, 9. While the issue of the extent to which the Red Cross should fund military services excited interest amongst some politicians, no significant changes in policy resulted – “Senator Keane Proposes Suspension of Public Collection: Government’s Responsibility,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 January 1942, 12.
\textsuperscript{15} MCE 9 September 1941, 3.
Cross’ level of logistical integration with the military. The Victorian Division of the Society was approached by the military for assistance in policing soldiers who went absent without leave and then justified their actions on the basis of domestic concerns. A letter from the Victorian Division to the Central Headquarters stated that:

With the vast organisation at the Society’s disposal such organisation might be offered to Army to substantiate the statements made in these cases. If the Society was able to do this, thus giving genuine cases the privilege of compassionate leave, it would be doing a service that was not outside the scope of its apparent authority.\(^{16}\)

The proposed involvement of the Society in substantiating the reasons given by soldiers for being absent without leave was clearly outside the scope of the Australian Red Cross’ mandate. While the Society played a leading role in the development and provision of social work services to the military, this role was as an auxiliary to the medical services, not the military police and justice system.\(^{17}\) The Army was proposing to use the Australian Red Cross as an investigative branch of its system of justice and discipline. Recognising the invidious position that this would place the Society in, the Central Council resolved to let the proposal lapse, despite another request for this service by the Army in October 1943.\(^{18}\)

The second incident in February 1943 occurred when the Tasmanian Division sought guidance from the Central Executive regarding the proper scope of the Society’s rehabilitation activities. In particular, the Tasmanian Division was unsure whether its rehabilitation services should include the encouragement and assistance of patients to make model aeroplanes that were destined for use by the RAAF and anti-aircraft units for training in aircraft identification.\(^{19}\) While military legal officers advised that the making of model aeroplanes was not an act that was harmful to the enemy, and therefore not a breach of the *Geneva*

\(^{16}\) MCC 23 February 1943, 3.
\(^{18}\) Ibid.; MCE 19 October 1943, 2.
\(^{19}\) MCE 9 February 1943, 3.
The subject of this debate appeared trivial, but the issue at the heart of the matter was critical to the Australian Red Cross. The Society was forced to acknowledge that its integration into military logistics had definite limits. Although assisting in the construction of model aeroplanes had a rehabilitative purpose, this activity clearly risked the Society going beyond its mandate as an auxiliary to the military medical services and providing equipment for the RAAF’s anti-aircraft combat training regime. Such examples of Red Cross resistance to the wishes of the military were rare. For the most part, the Society acted as an enthusiastic auxiliary to the armed forces, particularly when its Field Force embarked upon operational deployments with the Army.

The Australian Red Cross Searcher Service

The logistical support that the Field Force provided to the Army in operational theatres was supplemented by the performance of social welfare and intelligence gathering activities. The Australian Red Cross’ Missing, Wounded and Prisoners of War Bureau operated services that aimed to enhance knowledge about the fate of missing troops and civilians. The Society’s extensive searcher service supplemented the efforts of the armed forces to account for the whereabouts of service personnel. As the war progressed, however, the Australian Army and government realised the sensitivity of the information it had allowed the Red Cross to gather, and moved to retain control of this – thereby demonstrating the limits of the Society’s integration with the military.

As Australian troops were committed to action in the Middle East in 1940, Red Cross searchers worked to locate sick, injured and missing soldiers. The

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20 Ibid.
Society’s Central Bureau for Wounded, Missing and Prisoners of War kept detailed records of all enquiries. Operating from the Australian Red Cross Headquarters in Melbourne, the Central Bureau was supplemented by bureaux in each State capital and with each overseas field unit.\(^{23}\) By 1942 the details of 32,573 enquiries had been recorded. These resulted in the conclusion that 20,968 people remained missing, 8,559 were prisoners, 2,085 in need of welfare assistance, and 961 deceased.\(^{24}\) A card was kept for every case and a camp index compiled. The number of enquiry cards relating to individual prisoners or missing persons held by the Australian Red Cross’ Central Searcher Bureau amounted to 49,800 by mid-1943.\(^{25}\) The expansion of the Central Bureau’s labour-intensive work resulted in the Society employing 318 full or part-time staff by mid-1943.\(^{26}\) To ensure continuity of searching services and procedures, a Handbook of Bureau Service was issued to Red Cross personnel. This Handbook represented an effort by the Australian Red Cross to distil the experiences of its searchers in the field and headquarters, although the changing face of prisoner of war conditions in the Asia-Pacific resulted in later evolution of the searcher service.\(^{27}\)

The International Committee of the Red Cross co-ordinated an international network of searchers who shared information and utilised official lists of missing persons that were issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross Headquarters and the National Societies.\(^{28}\) By March 1945, the international Consolidated Inquiry List amounted to a 150 page volume of names in relation to whom more information was sought.\(^{29}\) Having combined the official missing persons list with enquiries made directly to the Society by friends and relatives of the missing, the Australian Red Cross printed its own distilled list for searchers to use in the areas covered by the Field Force.\(^{30}\)

\(^{23}\) ARCAR 1941-42, 15-17.
\(^{24}\) Ibid.
\(^{25}\) ARCAR 1942-43, 17.
\(^{26}\) Ibid.
\(^{27}\) Ibid.
\(^{28}\) “Red Cross Enquiries Through General Red Cross,” A989, 1943/925/1/33, NAA; “Prisoners of War – Detaining Powers,” S989, 1943/925/1/34, NAA.
\(^{29}\) ARCAR 1944-45, 21. Many of those whose names remained on the Consolidated Inquiry List near the end of the war were known to have been killed in action or were missing presumed dead, but more details were sought by relatives regarding their fate.
\(^{30}\) ARCAR 1942-43, 20.
The efforts of the Red Cross movement in listing the missing and tracing their fate were supplemented by Catholic Church’s international information network. The Vatican compiled its own lists of missing civilians and prisoners of war using information gathered from sources wherever the Church was represented. The Vatican’s sources were regarded as sufficiently reliable that the Secretary of the Army advised the Australian Red Cross to treat the Vatican lists of prisoners of war as authentic and official. The Australian Society’s searcher service found the Vatican’s connections to be particularly useful in obtaining details regarding the status of Australian prisoners of war held in Italy. The searchers in the Middle East Field Force Unit were similarly impressed by the Vatican’s lists, which proved useful in tracing the fate of Australians lost to Axis forces during the campaigns in Libya, Greece and Crete.\(^{31}\)

When a missing, sick or imprisoned person had been located, the Red Cross facilitated the forwarding of messages to and from that person.\(^{32}\) The Australian Red Cross sent letters from friends and relatives in Australia to prisoners of war overseas free of charge, often with the assistance of the Swiss Consul to Australian and the International Committee of the Red Cross.\(^{33}\) Any replies or inward messages received by the Red Cross Bureau were forwarded onto addresses in Australia.\(^{34}\) By 30 June 1943, a total of 628,631 letters from prisoners of war were handled by the Society, of which 295,971 came from the Asia-Pacific.\(^{35}\) All letters passed through the Australian Red Cross’ Central Bureau to ensure they were written in the appropriate form, then passed on to the Censorship authorities.\(^{36}\)

The success of the Australian Red Cross’ searcher service was marred by the Australian government’s decision to restrict the activities of the Society’s

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\(^{31}\) MCE 12 August 1941, 2; MCE 19 August 1941, 1; MCE 26 August 1941, 1; MCC 23 September 1941, 5.

\(^{32}\) “Wireless Messages to and From Internees,” A989, 1944/925/1/42 Parts 1 to 4, NAA; “Mail to Prisoners of War: Red Cross Service,” The Argus, 23 August 1940, 5.

\(^{33}\) MCC 27 August 1940, 5.

\(^{34}\) ARCAR 1940-41, 26-27.

\(^{35}\) ARCAR 1942-43, 18.

\(^{36}\) ARCAR 1941-42, 16.
searchers at the conclusion of the war.\textsuperscript{37} In 1945, the Australian military created special units to carry out the searcher work that had previously been the domain of the Red Cross.\textsuperscript{38} Permission was refused for the Australian Red Cross to dispatch a searcher unit to Europe in the wake of Allied victory.\textsuperscript{39} This was a complete reversal of the position that had been taken by the Defence Department’s representatives during the coordinating conference at Victoria Barracks with the Australian Red Cross leadership on 24 May 1939. At that point, the Defence Department had been happy to leave searcher work to the Australian Red Cross.\textsuperscript{40} The change in policy was driven by the Australian Army and government’s realisation that it needed to control access to the sensitive information it had previously allowed the Red Cross to gather.

Despite the Army’s enthusiasm in leaving the burden of searcher work to the Red Cross, the Australian military kept its own records regarding the status of dead, missing or captured servicemen.\textsuperscript{41} When the Army’s records conflicted with the results of the Australian Red Cross’ more extensive information gathering, the military bureaucracy sought to suppress the Society’s findings.\textsuperscript{42} Mr O’Dell Crowther, the Central Executive member entrusted with overseeing much of the Missing, Wounded and Prisoners of War Bureau’s work, gave an example in September 1941 of:

A member of the AIF who had been reported as killed in action in April 1941. Recently amongst a batch of Red Cross messages one appeared giving this man’s address as Stalag 8B, Germany, although these messages are normally confined to internees and enemy subjects. The Society desired to advise the next of kin… but Army officers had placed an embargo on this action because it conflicted with Army Records.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{38} ARCAR 1944-45; 30.
\textsuperscript{39} MNC 24 July 1945, 2.
\textsuperscript{40} “Mr McCahon’s Notes on Conference on Wednesday 24th May 1939 at Victoria Barracks,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 2.
\textsuperscript{41} MCE 30 September 1941, 3.
\textsuperscript{42} “POWs – Representations by ARC Regarding System of Notification of Next-of-Kin,” MP508/1, 255/711/131, NAA.
\textsuperscript{43} MCE 30 September 1941, 3.
Whereas the Australian Red Cross’ searchers often obtained personal details about the fate of missing servicemen that may have consoled families in Australia, the military searchers were more concerned with the needs of the services than those of anxious or grieving families.\textsuperscript{44} The military felt it necessary to monitor and censor communications from the Australian Red Cross to ensure that the humanitarian activities of the Society did not imperil military priorities.\textsuperscript{45} This feeling on the part of the military was demonstrated again in November 1944 when the Australian Red Cross was not permitted to provide personal service to prisoners of war who had been rescued from torpedoed Japanese transport ships.\textsuperscript{46} As the rescued men recovered from their ordeal in a hospital near Brisbane, Red Cross personnel were not permitted near them.\textsuperscript{47} The reason given for this action was that:

The Government has determined as far as possible to prevent access to these men in order that information which they could supply should be kept strictly confidential on an official basis. It has been stated that this was an exceptional occasion and probably such prohibition of Red Cross service would not be repeated.\textsuperscript{48}

Despite the government’s claim that it did not intend to prohibit Red Cross service to rescued prisoners of war, the Army further restricted the extent of Red Cross searcher operations in February 1945.\textsuperscript{49} The Adjutant-General of the Department of Army advised that the military would conduct all inquires in Australia, effectively relegating the Australian Red Cross’ experienced searcher service to overseas Field Force operations.\textsuperscript{50} It was explained by the Adjutant-General that:

\textsuperscript{44}MNE 29 August 1944, 2-3.  
\textsuperscript{45}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{46}MNC 21 November 1944, 3.  
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{48}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{49}MNC 27 February 1945, 6; “Procedure for Welfare Enquiries by the ICRC Regarding POWs and Internees in the Far East,” A1066, IC45/7/17, NAA.  
\textsuperscript{50}MNC 27 February 1945, 6.
Interrogation of all personnel returning to Australia is carried out by [the Army] in order to obtain information in regard to personnel so that next of kin may be kept fully informed of their location, condition and other factors.51

The difficulty with the reasoning of the Adjutant-General was that the Australian Red Cross had demonstrated far greater care in sensitively and accurately informing relatives of the fate of servicemen.52 The Army’s argument in this case was tailored with a caring and humanitarian cloth to reduce the offence to the Red Cross that was caused by the expropriation of mainland searcher duties. What the Army was really concerned with was ensuring information security.

By the conclusion of the war with Japan, the Australian Army came to the realisation that it had abdicated responsibility for a potentially very effective and sensitive form of information gathering to the Australian Red Cross. While the Red Cross’ searcher service saved the Army and government time and expense, allowing this information to be gathered by the Society entailed political and military risks. Despite the very close integration and cooperation between the Australian Red Cross and the Army, the Society had demonstrated that it would not suppress information at the request of the military if it had a humanitarian value to the families of the missing. Therefore, the relatively free rein that the Army had allowed the Australian Red Cross in the field of information gathering amounted to a military intelligence and political propaganda liability. The creation of military searcher units was an endorsement of the importance of searcher work to the Army in gathering intelligence and information about the fate of servicemen. Transfer of responsibility for searching for the fate of missing soldiers from the Australian Red Cross to the military was, to some extent, a sign of the government’s realisation of the importance of such humanitarian work. The Society was embedded with the Australian military, but only so far as it suited the government. The extent of integration was delineated by the points at which the trustworthiness and utility of the Australian Red Cross to the military came to an end. In gathering sensitive

51 Ibid.
52 MNE 29 August 1944, 2-3.
information by means of the searcher service, and disseminating this information on humanitarian grounds, the Society crossed the threshold at which point the military invoked its ability to direct and suppress Red Cross activity.

The Role of the Australian Red Cross Field Force

The Australian Army showed no such desire to limit the role of the Australian Red Cross when it came to the provision of logistical support in the field. When the Army marched to war, it was accompanied by contingents of Society’s Field Force. It was the responsibility of the paramilitary Field Force units to act as auxiliaries to the military medical services in the field. Operating in harsh, war-torn environments such as the Middle East, Malaya and New Guinea was a significant challenge for both the Australian Red Cross’ leadership and field personnel. Despite these challenges, the operations of the Field Force were the apex of the Society’s efforts to marshal its resources in support of the Australian government’s war effort.

The activities of the Australian Red Cross’ field units in the First World War served as a precedent for the Society’s leaders in 1939. While still a branch of the British Red Cross, the Australian Society formed field units in 1914 that accompanied the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) to the Middle East, the Western Front and the United Kingdom. Members of the field units provided supplementary rations, clothing, toiletries, tobacco, vocational accommodation, medical equipment and recreational equipment to Australian troops in staging areas, hospitals and the field. In addition, the Australian Society established a Wounded and Missing Inquiry Bureau in Cairo in 1915 that was staffed by field personnel on humanitarian grounds.

53 ARCAR 1938-39, 8; ARCAR 1942-43, 28; “Proposed Establishment of ARC Personnel for Attachment to Military Forces Within Australia and the Relationship of the Society to Civil Defence and Air Raid Precautions,” MP508/1, 282/701/144, NAA.
54 Bean, Australia in the War of 1914-18 Volume XI, 706-713; “Organisation and Personnel of Australian Hospital Units and Red Cross Supplies,” AWM25, 837/1, NAA; “Grant of Honorary Rank to Australian Red Cross Commissioners,” MP376/1, 552/2/154, NAA; “Report on Work of the Australian Branch, British Red Cross in Egypt March to September 1915,” AWM41, 1517, NAA; “Report on the Work of the Australian Red Cross in Egypt, Palestine, Syria & Salonika July 1918 to September 1919,” AWM25, 837/2, NAA.
55 Bean, Australia in the War of 1914-18 Volume XI, 705-706, 709-710.
unit members and attempted to trace the fate of Australian servicemen overseas.\(^56\) These services were funded by the massive donations of funds and voluntary services that were harnessed by the Australian Red Cross during the First World War. Around £2,200,000 in cash and goods was expended on overseas field services during the First World War.\(^57\) The precedent of the Society’s field activities in the First World War raised the expectation that the same service would be provided when war resumed in 1939.

It became apparent in October 1939 that the Australian government intended to raise the Second AIF for service in the British Empire’s war against the Axis.\(^58\) The Australian Red Cross leadership recognised an opportunity for the Society to provide a service similar to that performed in support of Australian soldiers and the Empire in the First World War and offered to logistically support the Second AIF in the field.\(^59\) This offer was accepted by Army and the Australian government, which led to the rapid raising of a field unit for overseas service in the following months.\(^60\) This initial unit, which served in the Middle East, was later replicated by similar units in Australia, Malaya, Ceylon, the Pacific, and the United Kingdom which became known by 1942 as the ‘Field Force’.\(^61\)

Once posted overseas, the Field Force units worked with Australian and Allied troops in the active combat theatres, supplying Australian-manufactured relief goods to hospitals, first aid posts, and rehabilitation and convalescent homes.\(^62\) As was the case in the First World War, the Field Force distributed supplementary rations, clothing, toiletries, tobacco, vocational accommodation, medical equipment and recreational equipment to the troops.\(^63\) Significant amounts of relief and comfort stores were shipped from Australia and around

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 707-708. See also the Australian War Memorial's database “Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau Files,” based on the Australian Red Cross tracing records from the First World War – www.awm.gov.au.

\(^{57}\) Bean, Australia in the War of 1914-18 Volume XI, 712-713.

\(^{58}\) Long, To Benghazi, 32-53.

\(^{59}\) MCCEC 30 October 1939, 2; “ARC Organisation of the Society’s First Unit,” MP508/1, 245/707/18, NAA.

\(^{60}\) MCCEC 30 October 1939, 2; MCE 8 December 1939, 1; MCC 18 December 1939, 2; MCE 28 December 1939, 2; “ARC Organisation of the Society’s First Unit,” MP508/1, 245/707/18, NAA; “Red Cross Unit to be Sent Overseas,” The Argus, 11 December 1939, 5.

\(^{61}\) ARCAR 1941-42, 17; ARCAR 1942-43, 12.

\(^{62}\) ARCAR 1939-40, 19.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.; Bean, Australia in the War of 1914-18 Volume XI, 706-713.
war zones by the Australian Red Cross Field Force. The Australian Unit operated in conjunction with the British Red Cross in some areas, such as the Middle East and United Kingdom, but specifically focused upon the fortunes of Australian and New Zealander troops.\textsuperscript{64}

In addition to providing supplies and personnel for medical facilities, Field Force Units conducted a number of ancillary operations. Field Force members contributed to the work of the Allied Red Cross Bureau for Missing Persons and Prisoners of War in the Middle East, Europe and Asia-Pacific.\textsuperscript{65} Red Cross bus services were set up in Palestine and England, which allowed convalescent patients and nurses to go on outings each week.\textsuperscript{66} The women on the Field Force and their local volunteer assistants visited hospitals and were in great demand to write letters, play games and go shopping with patients.\textsuperscript{67} They also undertook the far more melancholy duty of writing to relatives to inform them of a patient’s death.\textsuperscript{68}

While much of the efforts of the Australian Red Cross were concentrated on supporting the Army overseas, logistical support of military forces by the Field Force on the Australian mainland was not neglected.\textsuperscript{69} The threat of war with Japan prompted the Australian Red Cross to appoint a Mobilisation Committee in May 1941 with the role of planning the general mobilisation of the Society in Australia. This Committee, in conjunction with the National Executive, ensured that the provisions of the War Book were implemented when Japan entered the war on 8 December 1941. Stores were decentralised, Field Force membership developed, motor transport provided, Emergency Services personnel enrolled,

\textsuperscript{64} ARCAR 1939-40, 21.
\textsuperscript{66} ARCAR 1943-44, 15-16.
\textsuperscript{67} MCC 23 March 1943, 2; “Women With Red Cross in Palestine,” The Argus, 17 August 1940, 7
\textsuperscript{68} ARCAR 1943-44, 15-16.
\textsuperscript{69} “Red Cross in the North,” The Argus, 12 October 1940, 9.
reserve stocks set up in strategic areas, a stock take performed of current stores, and further stores accumulated. A particular focus of the organisation was the establishment of Field Force units in every Division so that:

The whole of the resources of the Society can be thrown behind any point attacked by the enemy.

While subject to the direction of the Society’s National Headquarters, each Field Force unit was supported by the resources of the State Division in which it was based and worked closely with the Army in stores, searcher and relief work. Each Divisional Field Force Unit was fully mobile, with its own transport and intelligence capabilities. An infrastructure of forward storage depots, main stores, issuing centers and reserve stores was developed so that, by March 1942, there were 250 Red Cross supply units scattered throughout Australia. The Australian Red Cross’ Field Force Units serviced all Allied troops in Australia.

Field Force personnel were often Red Cross volunteers prior to the war who were recruited to take part in full-time skilled relief operations in conjunction with the Australian Army. This recruitment was undertaken by both public advertisement and the Red Cross leadership’s extensive social connections. The members of the Field Force ranged in age from 29 to 47 years of age. While an age limit of 45 years was set for personnel serving overseas with the Australian Red Cross, due to the physically demanding nature of Field Force work, flexibility was allowed in the case of well-qualified or senior personnel. No women formed part of the initial deployments, despite the preponderance of

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70 ARCAR 1941-42, 17.  
71 Ibid., 18.  
72 MCC 27 January 1942, 6.  
73 Ibid., 7.  
74 Ibid.; MCE 17 March 1942, 2.  
75 By April 1942, the developing infrastructure of the American Red Cross allowed it to take primary responsibility for providing service to American forces in Australia, in conjunction with the Australian Red Cross - MCE 7 April 1942, 5-6.  
76 ARCAR 1939-40, 18; “ARC Personnel for Attachment to Military Forces,” MP508/1, 282/702/33, NAA.  
77 Ibid.  
78 MCC 28 December 1939, 2.  
79 MCC 18 December 1939, 3.
female Red Cross volunteers, due to uncertainty regarding the conditions and requirements of service that the Field Force would face.\textsuperscript{80} When the Field Force units became established, however, several women were appointed and expatriate Australian women were recruited to act as Hospital Visitors.\textsuperscript{81}

Despite the fact that they had volunteered for duty, many Field Force members were paid a salary by the Australian Red Cross due to the full-time and skilled nature of their services. Monthly payments of wages to Field Force personnel were made through the Army’s Headquarters.\textsuperscript{82} Field Force members were remunerated and taxed at a rate that did not compare favourably with the terms offered to military personnel. These financial inequities were highlighted when Australian Army personnel were seconded to work alongside volunteers in the Field Force, as is discussed below.\textsuperscript{83}

Membership of the Field Force provided an opportunity for men and women who did not meet the Army’s selection standards to take part in the war effort overseas. The volunteer status of Field Force personnel, however, coupled with the financial stresses imposed by relatively low levels of remuneration, contributed to some disciplinary issues in the field.\textsuperscript{84} Significant difficulty was encountered in appointing personnel who were physically and psychologically suited to Field Force work. The Field Force relied upon volunteers who were often unsuitable for, or did not wish to be part of, the regular military. The operational leaders of the Field Force were of the view that personnel selected for work overseas should have previous military service – in part because it was assumed such personnel would bring with them a history of martial discipline.\textsuperscript{85}

It was difficult, however, to recruit suitably qualified people in the wartime labour

\textsuperscript{80} MCE 4 January 1940, 3.
\textsuperscript{82} MCE 7 March 1944, 2.
\textsuperscript{83} MCC 16 October 1939, 3; ARCAR 1939-40, 18; “Army Personnel For Red Cross Duties,” SP1048/7, S9/7/314, NAA; “Attachment of Members of AIF Middle East to Overseas Red Cross Unit,” MP508/1, 282/704/41, NAA; “Allotment of Army Personnel for Red Cross Duties,” P617, 411/8/14, NAA.
\textsuperscript{84} MCE 8 May 1940, 2; “Report of the Honorary Treasurer John Roxburgh on a Survey of Red Cross Work in Malaya 19 September 1941,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 20-21, 37.
\textsuperscript{85} MCC 25 February 1941, 2.
market which offered military or industrial work to most able-bodied men.\footnote{Ibid.} In any event, previous wartime service did not guarantee that a Field Force member would be an appropriate representative of Red Cross values.\footnote{MCE 4 January 1940, 7.} Over the course of the Second World War, a number of Field Force members were found to be physically or psychologically unsuitable for overseas service with the Red Cross.\footnote{MCE 8 May 1940, 2; MCE 20 August 1940, 2; MCE 19 May 1942, 2.}

The Field Force provided the resources necessary to deliver supplementary logistical support to military units in the field, alleviating the need for the Australian government to do so. This behaviour was consistent with that of the Society during the First World War. What distinguished the Field Force in the Second World War from the previous conflict, however, was the diversity of environments in which it operated and the greater level of integration between the Field Force and the Army.

**The Paramilitary Nature of the Australian Red Cross Field Force**

As a consequence of its integration with the Australian government and military, the Australian Red Cross’ Field Force members were subject to military law, security procedures, command structure, and uniform requirements.\footnote{Department of Defence, *Red Cross Emergency Service-Department of Defence Relation to Mobilisation for War Service* (Melbourne: Department of Defence, 1939), 1-19; Sir John Nimmo Interview, 6-7; “Uniforms – Members of ARC,” MP742/1, 87/1/12, NAA; “Red Cross Subject to Military Law,” *The Argus*, 18 December 1941, 4; “Members of Red Cross Performing Military Duties to Wear Colour Patches,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September 1943, 3.} The Society readily adopted militaristic uniforms, organisational structure and culture in its Field Force.\footnote{MCCEC 16 October 1939, 3.} Field Force members wore military uniforms that were the same as those worn by Australian Army officers and soldiers.\footnote{“Uniform – Members of Australian Red Cross,” MP742/1, 87/1/12, NAA; “Application by ARC for Permission to Incorporate a Crown in the Badge of the Association to be Used for War Service,” A472, W42, NAA; “Issue of Surplus Army Clothing to Red Cross,” MP742/1, 255/8/227, NAA.} After these uniforms had been supplied by Army Ordnance, Red Cross buttons and badges were added.\footnote{Ibid.} On a Field Force member’s jacket there was an Australian Red
Cross badge, a shoulder title ‘Australia’, colour patches for the Army unit they were attached to, rank markings similar to the Army Medical Corps (chocolate braid bands and gold stripes) and badges of rank. Field Force officers held commissioned Army status, but not the powers of military rank in relation to Army personnel. The Society’s most junior Field Force members had the status of ordinary soldiers. As Field Force activities fell within the hierarchy of Army operations, the Society’s Representatives were often able to avail themselves of military transport, accommodation, meals, medical care and even stationery.

No attempt was made by the Australian Red Cross to maintain a secure line of communications that was separate from that of the Australian military. The Society utilised its integration into the military structure to obtain access to military communication and coding facilities, particularly for transmissions to and from Field Force units. The use of military lines of communication was made more attractive by the Australian Red Cross’ inability to obtain free cabling of some messages from commercial cable services, as it had in the 1914-18 war. The Society’s Field Force Tracing Bureau chose to use Army unit codes which aided efficiency at the price of further militarising the form and substance of communications. While it was certainly necessary for the Australian Red Cross to communicate in a secure manner due to the militarily sensitive nature of the information it possessed, the use of military transmission facilities removed any pretence of the Society’s independence from the Australian military. The Army knew anything that the Australian Red Cross knew and was important enough to transmit by secure channels, as military personnel were responsible for the coding, transmission and decoding of the Society’s communications.

The embedding of the Society and its Field Force with the organisational structure of the military provided the Australian Red Cross with the ability to

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93 Ibid.
94 MCCEC 16 October 1939, 3; Defence Department, Red Cross Emergency Service-Defence Department Relation to Mobilisation for War Service; “Supply of Australian Army Forms For Use by ARC,” AWM61, 474/2/1068, NAA.
95 MCC 18 January 1940, 3-4.
96 MCE 23 February 1940, 2; Bean, Australia in the War of 1914-18 Volume XI, 708.
97 MCC 22 October 1940, 4.
purchase goods from the Army supply pool rather than having to rely upon the dwindling resources of the civilian pool in the environment of government-imposed rationing.\textsuperscript{98} Despite its paramilitary status, the Society was initially at a disadvantage in obtaining sufficient stores for its Field Force as it was required to make purchases through the limited civilian supply pool. In February 1943, the Australian Commander-in-Chief General Thomas Blamey agreed to assist the Australian Red Cross in making arrangements for purchases from the more liberally stocked Army supply pool.\textsuperscript{99} With this supply arrangement came closer ties between the Society and the military organisational structure. Specific depots of Field Force stores were established to enhance the operational effectiveness of Red Cross units in the field, which in turn provided more effective logistical support to the Army.\textsuperscript{100} While most stores and vehicles were obtained by request from the Central Executive, the Field Force’s officers were granted the power to requisition urgently needed goods or vehicles directly from the State Divisions.\textsuperscript{101} Thus, the Field Force was granted priority of access to the resources required to sustain its activities and Divisional relief efforts were relegated to a distinctly secondary role. This was a culmination of the Central Executive’s dual policies of dominating the State Divisions while in turn allowing the Society’s field activities to be dominated by the needs of the military.\textsuperscript{102}

Secondment of Australian Military Forces Personnel to the Field Force

In addition to providing an injection of military culture and resources, the Army further intertwined itself with the Field Force by secondment of its personnel. A proportion of junior ranked members of the Field Force were Australian Army personnel who had been seconded to assist the Society’s units.\textsuperscript{103} By November 1943, 271 Army privates and non-commissioned officers were

\textsuperscript{99}MCE 2 February 1943, 2.  
\textsuperscript{100}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{101}See Chapter 1.  
\textsuperscript{102}MCCEC 16 October 1939, 3; ARCAR 1939-40, 18; “Army Personnel For Red Cross Duties,” SP1048/7, S9/7/314, NAA; “Attachment of Members of AIF Middle East to Overseas Red Cross Unit,” MP508/1, 282/704/41, NAA; “Allotment of Army Personnel for Red Cross Duties,” P617, 411/8/14, NAA.
attached to the Australian Red Cross, usually acting as storemen and drivers.\textsuperscript{104} In doing so, the Army implied that the interests and resources of the Australian military and the national Red Cross society were mutual.

As Australian Commander-in-Chief, General Blamey authorised the attachment of Army personnel to the Australian Red Cross pursuant to his powers under the \textit{National Security (Military Forces) Regulations}.\textsuperscript{105} These Regulations allowed Blamey to determine and amend the allocation of Army and Red Cross personnel, which did not involve any material change in the total manpower requirements.\textsuperscript{106} In doing so, Blamey clearly equated the personnel of the Army and Red Cross as being interchangeable components of a single war machine. Army or Red Cross personnel could be posted to duties in support of either organisation as part of the Australian government’s war effort. In a letter from Blamey to Minister for the Army Francis Forde dated 21 January 1944, the General explained that:

The decision [to allocate Australian Military Forces personnel to the Australian Red Cross] was made primarily because if the task is not carried out by the Red Cross Society it becomes incumbent upon the Army to do it. This excellent service rendered to the AMF by the Australian Red Cross Society personnel in the Field has thus resulted in considerable savings of both personnel and public monies from the activities of this Society.\textsuperscript{107}

Blamey’s decision to attach Army personnel to the Australian Red Cross without formal prior consultation with the government caused some consternation.

\textsuperscript{104} “War Cabinet Agendum 288/1/605, 19 March 1945, in Attachment of Australian Military Forces Personnel to ARCS and Authorised Philanthropic Organisations,” MP742/1, 245/1/491, NAA.
\textsuperscript{105} David Horner, \textit{Blamey - The Commander in Chief} (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988).
\textsuperscript{106} “Letter from General Blamey to Senator Fraser (Acting Minister for Army) 22 May 1945 and War Cabinet Agendum 288/1/605, 19 March 1945,” MP742/1, 245/1/491, NAA.
\textsuperscript{107} “Letter from General Blamey to FM Forde (Minister for Army) 21 January 1944,” MP742/1, 245/1/491, NAA. The Australian Military Forces (AMF) were restricted by law to service on Australian territory. The definition of ‘Australian territory’ in which the AMF could operate was altered during the war and comprised areas to the north of Australia that were operational theatres of conflict. The Second AIF was made up of men who had volunteered for overseas service during the Second World War. The overarching military remained the AMF as it was a permanent structure, whereas the Second AIF was raised for the duration of the war - Hasluck, \textit{The Government and the People 1939-45}; Beaumont, \textit{Australia’s War 1939-45}, 209.
amongst Treasury bureaucrats, who were concerned about who would meet the
cost of these personnel.\textsuperscript{108} Treasurer Ben Chifley was concerned that public
funds should not be expended on any labour costs or expenses of philanthropic
organisations except to the extent deemed necessary to serve the Army’s own
interests.\textsuperscript{109} While the Treasurer’s concerns were incorporated into a briefing to
the War Cabinet on the subject of attachment of AMF personnel to
organisations such as the Australian Red Cross, Blamey’s views predominated.
The War Cabinet Agendum noted that:

\begin{quote}
The services rendered to the AMF by the Australian Red Cross in the
field have resulted in a considerable saving both of AMF personnel and
of public money, and if these services were not available, it would be
incumbent on the Army to provide them.\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}

The Acting Minister for the Army, Senator James Fraser, agreed with the
Commander-in-Chief’s recommendation that the practice of seconding Army
personnel to the Australian Red Cross should continue, and that the cost of this
be borne by the Commonwealth government.\textsuperscript{111} The War Cabinet agreed with
Blamey and Fraser, although it balked at formally committing to payment of past
secondment expenses or continuing the practice of secondment after the war.\textsuperscript{112}
These reservations had little effect, however, as the Commonwealth had a
dubious basis on which to reclaim past expenses from the Red Cross and
seconded AMF personnel were unlikely to be required for long after the war.

Blamey’s enthusiasm for supporting the Red Cross with Army personnel had a
basis in self-interest. He recognised the symbiotic relationship between the
Australian Red Cross and the Australian Army when he commented in Army
correspondence that:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{108} “Letter from JB Chifley (Treasurer) to FM Forde (Minister for Army) 16 October 1944,”
MP742/1, 245/1/491, NAA.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} “War Cabinet Agendum 288/1/605, 19 March 1945,” MP742/1, 245/1/491, NAA.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid. Senator Fraser was ordinarily the Minister for Health and Francis Forde MP was
ordinarily Minister for the Army.
\textsuperscript{112} “War Cabinet Minutes 18 August 1945,” MP742/1, 245/1/491, NAA.
\end{quote}
The Red Cross fills a very important part in the return of men to condition of health, and its members fill a role that the Army would have to carry out from its own resources if these helpers were not available.\textsuperscript{113}

Blamey’s enthusiasm was reflected, and perhaps stimulated, by his wife’s membership of the Society.\textsuperscript{114} The Army itself recognised, however, that there were risks entailed in fusing AMF and Red Cross members together in the field.\textsuperscript{115} The attachment of AMF personnel to the Australian Red Cross undoubtedly benefited both the Society and the Army in delivering support to servicemen in the field. In addition to raising the ire of Treasury officials, however, the practice of seconding soldiers to the Red Cross was legally dubious and physically hazardous for those involved. Attachment of non-medical Army personnel to Red Cross formations degraded the legal protection afforded to medical and Red Cross personnel under the \textit{Geneva Conventions}.\textsuperscript{116} When regular Army privates and NCOs were mixed with Red Cross units for logistical purposes, they could not necessarily claim the protection of the \textit{Geneva Conventions} against attack by the enemy. More fundamentally, their presence risked claims by the enemy that Army personnel were abusing the protection of the Red Cross emblem to illegitimately shield themselves from attack. This imperilled the Red Cross unit to which the Army personnel were attached and the Red Cross movement as a whole.

The symbiotic benefits of secondment, however, trumped the legal and military risks. The Red Cross gained from the additional manpower and military experience that came with seconded AMF personnel. The Army benefited from the enhanced efficiency and capability of Red Cross Field Force units to deliver logistical support in operational areas that resulted from the embedding of

\textsuperscript{113} “Letter from Blamey CinC to LGA 13 August 1943,” MP742/1, 245/1/491, NAA.

\textsuperscript{114} Lady Blamey was a Red Cross member, sat on the Australian Red Cross National Council and acted as a visitor with the Field Force in the Middle East – “Lady Blamey Red Cross Personnel Records,” J1189, QB120, NAA; “Visit of Lady Blamey to Middle East,” A1608, AF45/2/1, NAA; “Return of Lady Blamey to Australia, War Cabinet Agendum No.124/1940,” A5954, 551/3, NAA; “Lady Blamey Appointed a Visitor in the Middle East,” \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 27 August 1941, 11.

\textsuperscript{115} “Department of Army Minute Paper ECH:77/1/549 - Army Personnel for Red Cross Duty 25 March 1944, 02E to DPE copy to D of O,” MP742/1, 245/1/491, NAA.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.; \textit{Geneva Convention Act 1938}. 141
military personnel. Therefore, the practice of seconding AMF personnel to Australian Red Cross units continued until the conclusion of the war.\textsuperscript{117}

\textbf{The Field Force in the Middle East & Mediterranean}

The Australian Red Cross' first operational deployment with the Sixth, Seventh and Ninth Divisions of the Second AIF was undertaken by its Middle East Field Force Unit. The Second AIF played a significant role in the North African campaign during 1941 and 1942, particularly during fighting in Libya, the siege of Tobruk and the battle of El Alamein.\textsuperscript{118} The Australian Red Cross unit provided a clear demonstration of the operational integration of the Army and the Field Force. The leadership and other personnel of this unit developed close relationships with their Army counterparts. The Middle East served as a proving ground for the organisational structure and logistical capability of the Field Force to deliver support to the Army in a war zone.

The Middle East Field Force Unit was led by Colonel the Honourable Harold Cohen.\textsuperscript{119} Cohen was born into a family of lawyers, businessmen and conservative politicians. He was a successful solicitor and company director prior to the First World War. Cohen obtained a string of military decorations (CMG, CBE, DSO, VD) as a result of his service with the AIF in the First World War. Between the wars, he was a member of the Victorian Parliament, serving as Member of the Legislative Assembly for South Melbourne (1929-1935) and Member of the Legislative Council for Caulfield (1935-1943). A member of the United Australia Party, Cohen served as the Victorian Assistant Treasurer (May 1932-March 1935) and Minister for Public Instruction and Solicitor-General (March-April 1935).\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{117} “Department of Army Minute Paper ECH:77/1/549 - Army Personnel for Red Cross Duty 25 March 1944, 02E to DPE copy to D of O,” MP742/1, 245/1/491, NAA.

\textsuperscript{118} Long, To Benghazi; Maughan, Tobruk & El Alamein; Walker, Middle East & Far East.

\textsuperscript{119} Harold Edward Cohen (1881-1946) - Nairn & Searle, \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography} Vol.8, 53-54.

\textsuperscript{120} “Colonel Harold Cohen (Service No. VX80699),” B2455, COHEN H E, NAA; “Personal Papers of Prime Minister Curtin – Correspondence 'C’,” M1415, NAA, 7; Nairn & Searle, \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography} Vol.8, 53-54; Geoff Browne, \textit{Biographical Register of the Victorian Parliament 1900-1984} (Melbourne: Victorian Government Printer, 1985), 36; R Wright, \textit{A People's Counsel - A History of the Parliament of Victoria 1856-1990} (Melbourne:
Colonel Harold Cohen, Australian Red Cross Commissioner, Directing the Stacking of Stores in the Old Church Used for this Purpose (Alexandria, Egypt).

(023742, AWM)
The Central Executive and the Department of the Army identified the need for a Commissioner for the Middle East Unit who was on the Army’s Reserve of Officers list, held senior military rank, had a reputation of public distinction, and was willing to work for the Society on a voluntary basis.\textsuperscript{121} As a veteran of the First World War and a parliamentarian, Colonel Cohen met these criteria. It was hoped Cohen’s credentials would allow the Field Force Unit to be more easily embedded with, and respected by, the Australian and British military in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{122} As Commissioner, Colonel Cohen was granted broad authority over the Middle East Unit, subject to the direction of the Central Executive in Australia.\textsuperscript{123} The tyranny of distance and limited efficacy of communication by cable resulted in the Central Executive having little practical control over the Field Force when it had departed Australia. The primitive communications available and differing perspectives of Cohen and the Central Executive resulted in a number of disagreements and misunderstandings. In time, Cohen demonstrated he was of the view that the Red Cross must act as an auxiliary within the military hierarchy if it was to be effectively deliver the Society’s objective of providing service in the field.\textsuperscript{124}

The Field Force Unit arrived safely in the Middle East and began preliminary preparation of stores and accommodation at the end of February 1940.\textsuperscript{125} By 1941, the Unit consisted of around 50 staff and operated throughout the shifting battlefronts of the Middle East and North Africa.\textsuperscript{126} The Unit provided relief to wounded and sick military personnel, primarily Australians but also other Allied troops, along the lines of communication and in medical establishments throughout the Middle East and Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{127}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{121} MCE 1 April 1940, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{122} MCE 1 April 1940, 1; MCE 28 May 1940, 1; “Colonel Harold Cohen Appointed Red Cross Commander in Middle East,” The Argus, 24 April 1940, 6; “Action, Not Talking: Colonel Cohen’s Message,” The Argus, 21 May 1940, 5;\textsuperscript{123}
\item \textsuperscript{123} MCE 4 January 1940, 6-7.
\item \textsuperscript{124} MCE 20 May 1941, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{125} MCC 27 February 1940, 5.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Long, To Benghazì, 131-304; Maughan, Tobruk & El Alamein, 52-110, 639-754; Timothy Hall, Tobruk 1941 – The Desert Siege (North Ryde: Methuen, 1984); Chester Wilmot, Tobruk 1941 – Capture, Siege, Relief (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1944); Lawson Glassop, We Were The Rats (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1944).
\item \textsuperscript{127} ARCAR 1940-41, 6.
\end{itemize}
The Middle East Unit attempted to bring succour and logistical support to the 58,000 Australian, British and New Zealand troops defeated in the ill-fated expedition to Greece and Crete in 1941. The wisdom of the Greek campaign was dubious and the expedition provided the Middle East Unit with some hair-raising moments alongside their Army counterparts. Some members of the Field Force were lucky to escape injury or death during the frantic Allied evacuation of Greece in the face of heavy dive-bombing. The main party of the Middle East Unit that had been deployed in Greece managed to embark upon a ship that missed the escaping convoy and remained in danger of attack by the Luftwaffe, which dominated the skies over Greece. This ship later rejoined the main convoy, allowing the Field Force members to provide first aid to injured soldiers. A group of three Australian Red Cross Field Force personnel undertook an even more perilous escape from Greece. Cut off from the main unit, they were forced to travel through the Greek countryside for nineteen nights, sleeping in orchards before driving the final forty-five mile stretch to a port from which they could escape despite the menace of German dive-bombers.

A Red Cross hospital ship service via Colombo linked the Middle East Unit and those sick and wounded personnel under its care with Australia. An Australian Field Force unit in Ceylon serviced the busy strategic port of Colombo, looking after the requirements of hospital ships. Three hospital ships regularly travelled the route between the Middle East and Australia, via Ceylon. These ships transported supplies to the Middle East Unit and returned to Australia with wounded troops. The wounded troops were then transferred by the Australian Red Cross to military hospitals and convalescent homes around

130 Ibid.
131 MCC 27 May 1941, 1.
132 ARCAR 1940-41, 17.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.; ARCAR 1941-42, 15.
the country. In the period between 1940 and 1941 alone, £220,000 worth of stores was shipped overseas by the Australian Red Cross. The majority of these supplies flowed to the Middle East where the Field Force Unit was providing relief to the fighting services and prisoners of war in Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Greece. The remainder of the overseas stores were shipped to India, Ceylon, Malaya and Burma to increase stock holdings that could be called upon when the need arose.

The militarily sensitive nature of Field Force’s activities in conjunction with the Army resulted in few specific details of the location and movement of the Unit being conveyed to the Red Cross in Australia. The relationship between Colonel Cohen’s Field Force and the Army was close and friendly. British and Australian officers were appreciative of Cohen’s Field Force, as he and several other Middle East Unit members were mentioned in despatches in the London Gazette on 14 April 1942. In practical terms, the Field Force personnel felt part of, and were accepted as, members of the Second AIF. John Nimmo, who joined the Middle East Unit in 1941, reflected that:

We lived with the army. We lived in tents or whatever other quarters were available at the time, and we lived in the army messes. And we were really in the army although we were appointed to serve with the army. And we enjoyed much the same conditions as anybody else in the army… we were subject to military discipline, and all our movements were under the control of the army.

Reporting to the Central Council in May 1942, Cohen emphasised:

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136 ARCAR 1940-41, 18.
137 Ibid., 24.
138 ARCAR 1939-40, 19.
139 Ibid., 19.
140 MCE 7 July 1942, 3; “Superb Record of the Red Cross in the Middle East,” The Argus, 1 May 1943, WM2.
141 Sir John Nimmo Interview, 10.
The need for active and effective liaison with Army and the building up of such a relationship between senior officers that their advice and active co-operation was always available to Red Cross.\footnote{MCC 26 May 1942, 2.}

In addition to developing close personal relationships with Army officers, the Middle East Unit ensured that it was integrated into the military communications network. The Unit was placed upon the distribution list of all Army orders, including those of a secret nature, to allow the Field Force to position personnel and supplies where and when they were most needed.\footnote{MCC 27 April 1943, 1.} This measure reflected the Army’s confidence that the Red Cross was securely integrated enough into the military infrastructure to be trusted with the custody of secret orders.

Servicing the vast Middle East theatre with hospitals, dental clinics and convalescent depots posed a significant challenge. The Middle East Field Force was given the task of providing relief in an extremely harsh environment over an area of around 1,000 miles in length from Libya to Syria.\footnote{ARCAR 1940-41, 16.} The establishment of Field Force mobile teams for the servicing of forward areas was the primary means by which the Unit ensured it could keep up with the rapid pace of modern warfare.\footnote{MCC 26 May 1942, 2.} In addition, Red Cross officers were provided with their own robust vehicles to maintain mobility.\footnote{Ibid.} The Field Force relied upon trucks to cover the huge Middle East theatre of operations. In January 1941 alone, Colonel Cohen undertook an arduous road journey of 2700 miles in a fortnight as he inspected all Red Cross activities over the 1000 mile long Middle East theatre.\footnote{MCE 21 January 1941, 6.}

Two novel means of overcoming delays in providing Red Cross service due to the long distances and harsh environment of the Middle East were suggested by the Army with the support of Colonel Cohen. Firstly, it was proposed that the Society provide two air ambulances that could be used to rapidly evacuate...
casualties and serve a secondary transport role.\textsuperscript{148} Secondly, it was suggested that a hospital train be commissioned by the Australian Red Cross so as to allow a mobile hospital with the capability of travelling close to the scene of combat.\textsuperscript{149}

Both proposals entailed significant problems. A lack of suitable railway carriages in the Middle East prevented the establishment of a hospital train.\textsuperscript{150} The provision of air ambulances was not possible due to a lack of suitable aeroplanes and Red Cross policy. There were no suitable aeroplanes available in the Middle East or Australia due to the immense military demand for aircraft and the primitive state of the Australian aircraft manufacturing industry. It was, however, hoped that the American Red Cross may have been able to provide planes.\textsuperscript{151} The Society’s policy was that it would only provide medical equipment to the Army, especially ‘big ticket’ items such as aircraft and ambulances, that were in addition to the minimum number paid for by the government to allow the establishment of a military medical unit.\textsuperscript{152} Until the government provided the two air ambulances necessary to meet establishment requirements, the Society refused to take steps to obtain additional planes from the American Red Cross.\textsuperscript{153} This incident illustrated the extent to which the Field Force’s integration with the Army resulted in a pragmatic and unquestioning approach by Colonel Cohen to the Society’s financial support of the military. This was also a notable instance of the Australian Red Cross leadership resistance to being transformed into an Army procurement division.\textsuperscript{154} The indeterminate legal status of the Red Cross allowed the organisation to maintain its relationship with

\textsuperscript{148} MCE 15 October 1940, 2; “Proposed Supply of Air Ambulances by ARC to Army,” A1196, 33/501/6, NAA; Walker, \textit{Middle East & Far East}, 128-129.
\textsuperscript{149} MCE 15 October 1940, 2.
\textsuperscript{150} “Diary of Decisions of Administration Sub-Committee of the Central Council Executive Committee 1 October 1940,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1.
\textsuperscript{151} “Diary of Decisions of Administration Sub-Committee of the Central Council Executive Committee 11 October 1940,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 2; Day, \textit{The Great Betrayal}, 49-50.
\textsuperscript{152} MCE 9 September 1941, 3.
\textsuperscript{153} “Diary of Decisions of Administration Sub-Committee of the Central Council Executive Committee 11 October 1940,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 2; MCE 22 April 1941, 1-2.
\textsuperscript{154} These concerns were consistent with the position taken by George Patterson in the Central Executive in September 1941, discussed above - MCE 9 September 1941, 3.
Damien Parer, Colonel Cohen at Gaza Ridge (August 1940)
(002974, AWM)
the Australian government and military while simultaneously resisting being directed to supply equipment at the whim of the Army.\textsuperscript{155}

Colonel Cohen and the Society’s leadership in Australia also diverged over the issue of who controlled the Middle East Unit’s activities and selection of personnel. The increasing size of the unit resulted in the appointment of further senior Field Force officers to the Middle East in 1941.\textsuperscript{156} The Central Executive selected Field Force officers without consulting Colonel Cohen.\textsuperscript{157} Cohen made it clear that he regarded only fit and experienced men as suitable for Field Force work, rather than the men who were medically unsuitable for regular Army service that the Central Executive proposed to send him.\textsuperscript{158} The Central Executive in distant Australia faced a variety of competing priorities that were not always compatible with Cohen’s. While Cohen was focused upon providing efficient logistical support to the Army with fit and competent personnel, the Society’s leadership wished to avoid draining the military’s pool of suitable manpower while being perceived as a logistical asset to the Army.\textsuperscript{159}

The leadership in Australia, who were obviously unimpressed by Cohen’s questioning of their policy and desire for greater personal control over the Unit, summoned him home in October 1941.\textsuperscript{160} Cohen stalled for time in the Middle East, but eventually relented and returned to Australia in May 1942.\textsuperscript{161} The Colonel could not resist the opportunity to comment to the Red Cross Central Council that:

\begin{quote}
The question of the relationship between Headquarters and the Unit in the field was most important. Field work had to face difficulties of all kinds and in making decisions Headquarters should keep in mind the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{155} See the discussion of the Australian Red Cross’ legal relationship with the government in Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{156} MCC 8 August 1941, 1.
\textsuperscript{157} MCE 19 August 1941, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{158} MCE 18 November 1941, 3.
\textsuperscript{159} MCE 25 November 1941, 2.
\textsuperscript{160} MCE 28 October 1941, 3.
\textsuperscript{161} MCE 23 December 1941, 4; MCE 6 January 1942, 3; MCE 12 May 1942, 1; MCC 26 May 1942, 1-3.
conditions under which members of the Unit were living and working. It was very difficult at a distance to appreciate local colour, and for that reason he recommended that where major decisions of policy were made, it might often be advisable to confer first with the officer in charge before bringing them into operation.\textsuperscript{162}

Despite the apparent success of his tenure as Commissioner in the Middle East, Cohen’s disagreements with the Central Executive regarding the proper management of the Field Force left him unenthused about further service with the Australian Red Cross.\textsuperscript{163} To the relief of the Central Executive, Cohen resigned in July 1942.\textsuperscript{164} He went on to resume service with the Australian Army, becoming Director-General of Amenities (1943-1944) and finishing the war as a Brigadier in the role of Adjudant-General.\textsuperscript{165}

As a result of the experience with Cohen, direct control of the Field Force units overseas was centralised to the Central Executive.\textsuperscript{166} Cohen’s successor, Assistant Commissioner Selleck, was not permitted the authoritarian powers and independent behaviour of his predecessor. Instead, all Field Force units were monitored and overseen from early 1943 by the Chief Commissioner in Australia and roving Inspectors-General.\textsuperscript{167} The Central Executive obviously concluded from its experience with the Middle East Unit in 1940 and 1941 that centralisation of control of Field Force activities was required. Contrary to Cohen’s submissions, the prevailing view of the Central Executive’s members implied that the judgment of unit commanders did not always serve the best interests of the Society.

The entry of Japan into the war on 7 December 1941 resulted in the commencement of the redeployment of the Sixth and Seventh Divisions of the Second AIF and the Australian Red Cross Middle East Unit to face the threat to

\textsuperscript{162} MCC 26 May 1942, 3.
\textsuperscript{163} MCE 14 July 1942, 1.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} MCE 5 January 1943, 3.
\textsuperscript{167} MCE 22 December 1942, 2.
Australia. Following the Ninth Division’s involvement in engagements in Syria and the Western Desert, the majority of the Second AIF and its accompanying Field Force Unit, including John Nimmo, were redeployed to Australia and the Asia-Pacific. A small staff of Field Force members under Assistant Commissioner Selleck remained in the Middle East to service the remaining Australian troops. This unit remained active in the Middle East assisting hospital ships and former prisoners of war who were en route to Australia via the Suez Canal until late 1945.

The Middle East provided the Australian Red Cross with a proving ground to test its Field Force unit organisation and activities. This unit demonstrated that the Field Force could be successfully embedded within the Australian Army’s operations in the field. Some challenges, such as the difficulty in selecting personnel for Field Force service who were physically and psychologically suitable, remained difficult to resolve throughout the war. Other challenges, such as the logistical requirements of transporting personnel and supplies over long distances through harsh terrain, provided the basis for improvement when the Field Force commenced operations in the Asia-Pacific region. From an organisational perspective, the Middle East experience taught the Central Executive that if it wished to control the activities of the Field Force despite the tyranny of distance, it required pliable unit Commissioners and a definitive legal basis to direct field activities. While the Middle East Unit demonstrated the Australian Red Cross’ ability to provide practical logistical support to the Army, the Society’s unit in Malaya simultaneously underwent a similar test in the Asia-Pacific. The fate of the Malayan Unit, however, was a dramatic contrast to its counterpart in the Middle East.

170 ARCAR 1941-42, 14-15; MCE 7 April 1942, 2; MCC 27 April 1943, 1.
171 MCE 13 October 1942, 3; MCC 22 February 1944, 8-9; MNE 19 September 1944, 1; MNC 21 November 1944, 2; MNC 28 August 1945, 3; “Red Cross Unit to Service POWs Released from Italy,” *The Argus*, 11 September 1943, 8; “Red Cross Practically Saved Lives of POWs in Italian Hospitals,” *The Argus*, 3 November 1943, 3; A.E. Field, “Prisoners of the Germans and Italians” in Maughan, *Tobruk & El Alamein*, 755-822.
The Malayan Field Force Unit

The Australian Red Cross’s Field Force unit in Malaya demonstrated another facet of the Society’s integration into the Allied war effort. The Malayan Unit provided logistical support to all the armed forces of the British Empire who were stationed in the colony. This unit was imprisoned with other Australian military forces and exhibited a capacity to continue operating in captivity after the fall of Singapore. The high-profile role that the Australian Field Force unit played in Malaya tangibly demonstrated the Society’s acute sensitivity to its public reputation and the importance of the Field Force in building and maintaining this reputation.

Australian forces were sent to the strategically valuable British colony of Malaya in 1940 to bolster the defences of Singapore.172 Twenty thousand Australians served in Malaya during the Second World War with the Second AIF and the British and Australian navies and air forces.173 The British Red Cross did not establish a unit in Malaya, despite the strategic importance of this area.174 This neglect of the welfare of troops in Singapore was symptomatic of the British Empire’s view of the Asia-Pacific as a region of lesser importance than Europe and the Middle East.175 It was also a reflection of Churchill and Roosevelt’s ‘Germany First’ strategy which provided for efforts to be focused upon defeating Germany first in the event of Japan entering the war.176 Following consultation between the British and Australian governments, and their respective Red Cross Societies, an Australian Red Cross Field Force unit was established in Malaya in 1941 to provide service to all British Empire forces in the colony.177 The Malayan Field Force unit acted as the proxy for other national Red Cross Societies, such as the British, by providing logistical support for the British

172 Walker, Middle East & Far East, 492-521; Kurt Offenburg, Japan At Our Gates: The Thermopylae of Australia is at Singapore (Sydney: Gayle Publishing Co., 1942).
174 ARCAR 1940-41, 18.
176 Ibid. This strategy is also referred to as the ‘Europe First’ strategy.
177 ARCAR 1940-41, 17; MCE 22 April 1941 2; Walker, Middle East & Far East, 496; “Women & The Red Cross in Malaya,” The Argus, 3 May 1941, WM13.
Empire’s war effort.\textsuperscript{178} Basil Burdett, a well-known art critic with the Herald & Weekly Times Ltd, was recruited for Field Force service in December 1940.\textsuperscript{179} Burdett became the commander of the Malayan Unit in July 1941 and was promoted to the rank of Commissioner in the Far East in September 1941.\textsuperscript{180}

Lady Gowrie proudly proclaimed in the Society’s Annual Report of 1940-41 that the Australian Field Force Unit in Malaya effectively provided service on behalf of both Australian and British organisations in a region that was strategically critical to the British Empire.\textsuperscript{181} The situation on the ground in Malaya starkly contrasted with the glowing picture of efficiency and imperial cooperation painted by Lady Gowrie. By August 1941, the Central Executive became concerned about reports of poor progress and performance in defence preparations for Malaya, of which the Field Force unit was a part. The Australian Red Cross leadership was so concerned about the adverse effect that the situation could have upon the reputation of the Society that John Roxburgh took the step of travelling to Malaya via Darwin between 17 August and 15 September 1941 to observe conditions and provide direction to the Field Force.\textsuperscript{182} Roxburgh’s report constituted such an indictment on the performance of the Field Force and the British Empire in the Asia-Pacific that access to it was restricted to members of the Central Executive and the report was not permitted to leave the Red Cross headquarters.\textsuperscript{183}

Roxburgh’s report was characteristically frank in its assessment of the abilities of Malayan Unit’s personnel. The Society’s Treasurer was generally pleased with the status-enhancing performance of Basil Burdett as leader of the unit, and reported to the Central Executive that:

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{180} MCC 4 December 1940, 1; MCE 1 July 1941, 1-2; MCE 22 September 1941, 3.
\textsuperscript{181} ARCAR 1940-41, 6.
\textsuperscript{182} MCC 18 September 1941, 1-2.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.; MCE 30 September 1941, 4.
Burdett is exceptionally well regarded by all the people of importance and his manner and approach permit ready entree into the higher quarters. He is completely natural and at ease in any company from the Governor down, and has the ability to command the respect of those he is with. All the foregoing qualifications are extremely important in the Far East where the question of ‘status’ is one of constant consideration. Unfortunately, none of Burdett’s staff shows the slightest sign of having similar attributes.\textsuperscript{184}

Roxburgh was obviously unimpressed by the personal qualities of the Field Force members in Malaya under Burdett’s command. Roxburgh wrote scathingly that:

Apart from Burdett, the personnel we have sent to Malaya leave much to be desired. Burdett reported to me that when these men arrived they appeared to be chiefly concerned with their personal problems including the adjustment of their finances... There also appeared to be a lack of harmony amongst them upon arrival, due largely to financial problems on the trip.\textsuperscript{185}

Several of the Malayan Unit’s personnel were singled out by Roxburgh as being particularly unsuited to work with the Society as Field Force members.\textsuperscript{186} Even Burdett did not escape some criticism from Roxburgh, who was concerned that there be no doubt as to the source of the logistical support that the Australian Red Cross provided to the troops. He declared that:

A man lying in bed in a Field Ambulance Unit, Casualty Clearing Station or even General Hospital, is getting so little by way of Red Cross issues that he almost completely fails to appreciate that the Society is doing anything for him. The man in bed does not appreciate that we have spent £86,000 on supplying ambulances or thousands of pounds in other

\begin{footnotes}
\item[185] Ibid., 36
\item[186] Ibid., 37.
\end{footnotes}
directions in supplying equipment (which should rightly have been supplied by the Army) and, although it may afford him some indirect relief, it is not visible to him... What the sick man does appreciate is rather the small luxuries which Red Cross can supply him and the lack of this side of our service is deplorable. Actually we get all our publicity from overseas from this end of our service and, therefore, if we fail in this important section of our work, it must ultimately reflect against us. I do not think it would be possible for us to draw too liberal a scale of these luxury items...My strong recommendation is that the present rate of issue be doubled.  

The Treasurer understood the critical relationship between the perception of the troops in the field that the Red Cross was providing them with generous service, and the Society’s ability to raise funds from the public in Australia by publicising this service to the troops. In Roxburgh’s view, the Field Force was falling short in this regard in Malaya. The Field Force’s utility extended beyond that of simply acting as the field arm responsible for delivering logistical support to the military on behalf of the Australian Red Cross. The provision of Red Cross service to troops in theatres such as Malaya and the Middle East had a dual purpose. While the Field Force units provided needed comforts and logistical support to servicemen, these activities served the equally important purpose of providing an attractive and active public image of the Society that assisted publicity, fundraising and political support. As Roxburgh perceptively noted, donations of medical equipment to the Army were vitally important to the military medical services, but were unlikely to excite much public interest or praise of the Australian Red Cross. Conversely, images and reports of the Field Force distributing comforts to the troops close to the fray were likely to prove more tangible and publicity-worthy due to the human interest that such material aroused.

187 “Report of the Honorary Treasurer John Roxburgh on a Survey of Red Cross Work in Malaya 19 September 1941,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 34-35. The Australian Red Cross provided small luxuries such as shaving equipment, chocolates, cigarettes, books, and writing materials to sick servicemen.
The importance of the positive image of the Field Force in Malaya and the Middle East to that of the Society as a whole was one which some of the Central Executive, including Roxburgh, had come to appreciate by mid-1941. The level of training and quality of personnel who were selected to perform this crucial role of representing the Australian Red Cross in the field left much to be desired.\(^{188}\) Roxburgh and Newman Morris understood, however, that the failings of the Field Force in Malaya could not be entirely attributed to the unit’s personnel or commander. Rather, responsibility for the lack of training and deficiencies in selection of personnel in Field Force units lay with the Society’s leadership in Australia. Roxburgh concluded that:

> Unfortunately Burdett, like many others who have been sent overseas, was not made conversant enough with Red Cross work and, what is more important, we failed to see that he was made what might be termed ‘Red Cross minded’ before he left Australia. This has resulted in him giving service only up to the point which he understood, instead of giving the more comprehensive service as I see it.\(^ {189}\)

Roxburgh’s use of the term ‘Red Cross minded’ probably referred to a desire on the part of the Society’s leadership that the Field Force provide the Australian military with generous logistical support to the extent of each unit’s capacity. Following Roxburgh’s critical report, measures were taken by the Central Executive to improve the performance of the Australian Red Cross’ unit in Malaya and the level of service provided to all Imperial forces in the region. The swift Japanese invasion of Malaya, Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies in December 1941 prevented these plans from being realised.\(^ {190}\)

The Malayan Unit was able to provide some relief to survivors when the pride of the British Navy in the Asia-Pacific, the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, were

\(^{188}\) Ibid., 36-37.  
\(^{189}\) Ibid., 32  
sunk by Japanese aircraft off the coast of Malaya.\textsuperscript{191} Disaster struck a few days before Japanese forces captured Singapore when Commissioner Burdett was killed in an air accident in the Netherlands East Indies while exploring the option of opening a depot south of Singapore to enable the work of the Australian Red Cross to continue despite the deteriorating situation in Malaya.\textsuperscript{192} Thus, the member of the Malayan Unit in whom the Australian Red Cross leadership held the most confidence was lost at the critical moment of Singapore’s fall and the capture of the defending British Empire forces. Most of the 20,000 Australians in Malaya were captured, many of whom were members of the Eighth Division of the Second AIF.\textsuperscript{193}

Assistant Commissioner Campbell Guest took on leadership of the Malayan Unit after Burdett’s death.\textsuperscript{194} Guest was faced with the task of mitigating the losses of the unit in the face of imminent capture by the Japanese.\textsuperscript{195} The Field Force members were scattered throughout various Japanese prisoner of war camps but maintained relatively good health.\textsuperscript{196} Even as prisoners of war, the Malayan Field Force Unit continued to provide logistical support to Australian military forces in the face of Japanese obstruction.\textsuperscript{197} The Australian Red Cross’ representatives coordinated the issuing of essential medicines and the local purchase of stores with the assistance of Hans Schweitzer, the International Committee of the Red Cross’ delegate in Singapore.\textsuperscript{198} Service was usually confined to hospital patients as stocks could only be obtained from the Society’s original store in Singapore, occasional purchases during 1942 and 1943, and from a limited Japanese canteen facility during 1943. Particular effort was made

\textsuperscript{191} MCE 16 December 1941, 3.
\textsuperscript{192} The pilot of the aircraft was seriously injured in the crash that killed Burdett - Ibid.
\textsuperscript{193} Beaumont, ed., \textit{Australian Defence: Sources \& Statistics}, 345. In addition to his loss to the Australian Red Cross, Burdett’s death was a blow to Australian art and publishing in which he played an active part - Gerraty, ”Basil Burdett: Critic and Entrepreneur“; Burdett, \textit{The Felton Bequests}; Basil Burdett & James MacDonald, \textit{Australian Landscape Painters of Today} (Sydney: Art in Australia, 1929).
\textsuperscript{194} MCE 3 February 1942, 1; ”Mr Campbell Guest Appointed Red Cross Assistant Commissioner in Malaya,” \textit{The Argus}, 9 October 1941, 4.
\textsuperscript{195} MCE 3 February 1942, 1.
\textsuperscript{196} ARCAR 1944-45, 47; ”Red Cross Unit Believed Still in Singapore,” \textit{The Argus}, 21 February 1942, 3; ”Red Cross Work Carried on at Singapore,” \textit{The Argus}, 18 March 1942, 3.
\textsuperscript{197} MNC 25 September 1945, 3; MNE 16 October 1945, 1; MNC 23 October 1945, 1-3; Towle, Kosuge & Kibata, \textit{Japanese Prisoners of War}.
\textsuperscript{198} MCE 18 September 1945, 1-2; ”Red Cross Comforts and Supplies for 8\textsuperscript{th} Division in Captivity in Changi and Singapore Island,” AWM54, 554/11/2, 4 & 10, NAA.
to acquire food and vitamins that supplemented the diet of sick prisoners, essential drugs, medical equipment, and a limited supply of sporting and concert party material that serve to improve morale. 199

The welfare and activities of the Australian Red Cross’ Malayan Unit was unknown to the National Headquarters, who were forced to presume its Field Force members had been taken prisoner. 200 In the following years of the war, the Society received occasional unconfirmed reports that the Malayan Unit’s members continued to carry out Red Cross services while prisoners of war. 201 In September 1945, the Malayan Unit’s members were recovered by Allied forces. 202

Prior to their capture, the experiences of the Malayan Field Force members provided the Australian Society with an opportunity to act as the leading Red Cross agency in operational theatre of strategic importance to the British Empire. John Roxburgh’s review of the Malayan Unit reinforced the need to ensure that Field Force personnel were suitably selected and trained before deployment. The realisation by the Central Executive that the behaviour of the Field Force would visibly reflect upon and affect the entire Society was underscored by the Malayan Unit’s performance in the field. This realisation led to a desire to create a more professional Field Force, just as the Central Executive sought to professionalise the administration of the Society. 203 The ignominious fall of Singapore to Japanese forces prevented the refinement of the Malayan Unit’s personnel and operations, but the observations made by Roxburgh were applied to later incarnations of the Field Force. Even in captivity, the Malayan Unit discharged the Society’s commitment to support the Australian military medical services. The importance of the International Committee of the Red Cross, albeit restrained by Japanese resistance, was demonstrated by the cooperative assistance of Hans Schweitzer with Campbell

199 Ibid.
200 MCE 3 February 1942, 1.
201 ARCAR 1942-43, 28; MCC 26 January 1943, 7; MCE 7 March 1944, 1; MNE 16 January 1945, 1.
202 MCE 18 September 1945, 2.
203 In regard to the increasingly professional nature of the Australian Red Cross administration, see Chapter 1.
Guest’s efforts. The work of the Malayan Field Force unit in Japanese hands demonstrated the persistence of the utility of the Red Cross to the Australian military while in captivity. The International Committee played an essential role in this success, as the neutral Swiss were able to harness the very limited remnants of humanitarianism that the Japanese military authorities possessed to assist the Australian Red Cross’ personnel.\footnote{MCE 18 September 1945, 1-2.} As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the limited ability of the Red Cross movement and Allied governments to provide assistance to prisoners of war in Japanese hands dealt a blow to the reputation that the Australian Society had carefully constructed with the assistance of the Field Force.

The Australian Red Cross’ Logistical Role in Ceylon

While the captured Field Force unit toiled in Malaya, some of their colleagues worked in far more pleasant circumstances on the nearby island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Ceylon was strategically crucial as it linked Britain, the Middle East, India, Asia, the Pacific and Australia. The Field Force in Ceylon demonstrated the culmination of the work that been commenced by the Australian unit in Malaya. The Ceylon Field Force Unit provided a fully developed logistical support service to British Empire forces in the absence of competent assistance from the British and Indian national societies. The extent of the Australian Society’s sophisticated integration into the war effort of the British Empire and Australian government was most clearly apparent by the activities of the Ceylon Unit at the conclusion of the war.

An Australian Field Force unit was established in Ceylon in January 1941 to support the Society’s shipping of goods to, and wounded from, the Middle East. When virtually all Australian troops had been shipped back to Australia or the Asia-Pacific from the Middle East in 1942, the Field Force unit in Ceylon remained.\footnote{ARCAR 1943-44, 13-14; MCE 13 October 1942, 2-3.} The primary role of the Australian unit in Ceylon was to provide service to the whole island, which remained a strategic shipping hub, and to

\footnote{\textit{18 September 1945, 1-2.}}
develop Red Cross services in India for the assistance of sick or wounded troops of the British Empire.\textsuperscript{206}

The establishment of the Allied South East Asian Command (SEAC) under the English Lord Mountbatten in August 1943 added to the importance of the Australian Field Force unit in Ceylon.\textsuperscript{207} By 1944 the Ceylon Unit serviced over 60 Imperial military units on the island, operated a convalescent home, provided assistance to ships in the busy port, and developed the capacity to provide limited relief in India and the surrounding ocean.\textsuperscript{208} As British forces struggled to contain the Japanese advance towards India through Burma, Ceylon acted as a supply and command centre. The difficulties of jungle terrain and limited supply access in Burma were similar to those encountered by Australian forces in New Guinea.\textsuperscript{209} The British and Indian forces fighting in Burma did not, however, have access to the lavish American supply system in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{210} Nor did they have an integrated and developed Red Cross service such as that provided by the Australian Red Cross in New Guinea.\textsuperscript{211}

By November 1943 the Australian Red Cross was concerned that the British Red Cross was providing inadequate service to Imperial forces in the South East Asian Command.\textsuperscript{212} Instead, the British Society provided some service in Ceylon and very limited Red Cross assistance was provided by the Indian

\textsuperscript{206} ARCAR 1943-44, 13-14.
\textsuperscript{208} MCC 22 February 1944, 1-2.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{212} MCE 9 November 1943, 2.
Society outside the Ceylon area. John Roxburgh noted that by February 1944, the discussions between the Australian and British Societies regarding the state of Red Cross service in India and Burma were anything but fruitful:

The outcome of our negotiations with BRCS [regarding service in India and Burma]... has resulted in our being well and truly snubbed by that Society... Boiled down, it means that BRCS had never thought of giving any service to these troops and that if their base were in India, they intended relying upon the service which the Indian Society was capable of rendering - this is negligible.

As the Australian Red Cross had a Field Force Unit established in Ceylon since the commencement of the Middle East deployment, and had extensive experience in field operations, the Australian Society was an obvious candidate to remedy the logistical deficiencies of the British and Indian Societies in the South East Asian Command. The attitude of the British Red Cross to the state of service in the South East Asian Command revealed much about that Society’s priorities. Just as the strategic policy of the Australian Red Cross usually reflected that of the Australian government, so too the strategic policy of the British Red Cross was in accord with that of the British government. Churchill’s government poorly concealed the secondary importance it placed upon the conflict with Japan in comparison to the struggle for Europe and the Middle East. The British government regarded the war in Europe to be a matter of life and death, whereas the war in the Asia-Pacific region was a subsidiary matter of maintaining imperial power.

In the absence of the British Red Cross, the Australian Society filled the breach in the Empire’s logistical efforts. Despite the developing importance of operations in Burma during 1944, which led to a successful British-Indian
campaign to rout the Japanese forces from the region, the British Red Cross continued to treat its operations in Ceylon and India as far less than a priority. Rather than dispatching a senior, experienced and active British Red Cross officer to the South East Asian Command, in late February 1944 the British Society appointed the retired Major General Telfer Smollett to consult with the Indian Red Cross about improvement of service. The Australian Field Force leader in Ceylon reported that:

General Telfer Smollett has practically unlimited administrative and spending powers, but he lacks any previous experience in Red Cross work… Although impressed with what he saw in Ceylon of Red Cross work, he had nothing constructive to offer by way of suggestions.

As usual, John Roxburgh was less diplomatic. He was scathing of the British Red Cross’ efforts:

There is no doubt that [the British Red Cross] idea of service to the sick and wounded in hospital is vastly different from ours. BRCS has at last sent someone to India, a retired General, who has never had anything to do with Red Cross but was called down from Scotland where he has a farm, asked if he would accept the position, put on the boat and sent out there knowing nothing.

The Australian Red Cross attempted to assist the British and Indian Red Cross Societies in July 1944 when it became apparent to the British Society that inadequate stores and shipping were available for India. The Ceylon Unit allowed Smollett to draw upon its prepared stocks, rather than enduring a long delay in the delivery of supplies that would have been created if the British Red

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218 MCE 29 February 1944, 1.
219 MCE 16 May 1944, 1.
220 “Letter from John Roxburgh to Wilfred Johnson 25 August 1944,” Box 2.58, ARCNA, 7.
221 MNE 18 July 1944, 2.
Cross attempted to acquire them itself.\textsuperscript{222} This situation led to a full conference of all Red Cross bodies in South East Asia being held in Delhi 16 and 17 August 1944 to exactly define the future spheres of operation of each Society.\textsuperscript{223} This conference of Societies was a fore-runner to the post-war attempts by the International Federation of the Red Cross to coordinate the activities of National Societies in providing relief.\textsuperscript{224} The outcome of the Delhi conference was a pooling of the Red Cross resources of the British Empire in the region. The Australian Red Cross agreed to supply the majority of ‘white personnel’, the British Red Cross provided most funds and the Indian Red Cross was responsible for obtaining most supplies.\textsuperscript{225} In this manner, greater integration of activities was achieved amongst the British Empire’s Red Cross Societies and the work of the Australian unit was extended to many hospitals in Ceylon.\textsuperscript{226}

In late 1944, the commander of the Ceylon Unit entered discussions with British authorities to ensure that service could be provided in conjunction with a new civil administration when Malaya was recaptured from the Japanese.\textsuperscript{227} The Field Force Unit in Ceylon was primarily responsible for the packing and distribution of 50,000 ‘Release Kits’ containing essential supplies and clothing outfits for released prisoners of war between Colombo and Manila. In addition, 140,000 release kits were packed for use in the Netherlands East Indies. It was not until the cessation of war with Japan in August 1945 that the Release Kits and clothing outfits could be distributed across South East Asia.\textsuperscript{228} Colombo was used as a base, along with Darwin, New Guinea and Morotai, for this rapid distribution of emergency relief to locations such as Borneo and Manila.\textsuperscript{229} The preparedness of the Field Force enabled the Australians to be the first Red Cross Society to provide aid to French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Formosa.\textsuperscript{230}

\textsuperscript{222} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{223} MNC 25 July 1944, 2; MNC 22 August 1944, 3.
\textsuperscript{224} Haug, \textit{Humanity for All}, 73-97, 163-199, 352-372.
\textsuperscript{225} MNE 8 August 1944, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{226} MNE 30 January 1945, 1.
\textsuperscript{227} MNC 21 November 1944, 2.
\textsuperscript{228} MNC 28 August 1945, 3.
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{230} MNC 23 October 1945, 4.
The Field Force Unit in Ceylon demonstrated the Australian Red Cross’ commitment to logistically supporting the British Empire’s war effort. Although Ceylon was a British colony, rather than an Australian territory, the Australian Society took the place of its distracted and disorganised British counterpart. Despite Australian resentment regarding the British Red Cross’ inertia in properly supporting operations from Colombo, the conclusion of the war saw some direct benefit to Australia from the presence of the Field Force Unit in Ceylon. The infrastructure that had been developed in Ceylon to support the British Empire’s faltering efforts against the Japanese was used to deliver rapid relief to Australian prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific. Thus, the Ceylon Unit was ultimately capable of supporting Australian military personnel as well as bolstering the British Empire’s logistical requirements.

The Field Force and Military Logistics in Australia

It was on the Australian mainland that the Field Force consolidated the lessons of the Middle East, Malaya and Ceylon to refine its system of logistical support to the Australian government and military. The outbreak of war with Japan caused a major shift in the focus of the Australian government, military and Red Cross to northern Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. In this context of increasing pressure to deliver efficient logistical support to the Army as the Australian mainland was under threat, the Society’s leadership consolidated control of the national body over the Field Force. This consolidation of national management of the Field Force was consistent with the national leadership’s policy of controlling other aspects of the Australian Red Cross’ operations, such as fundraising and financial management. This centralisation was for the purpose of ensuring the efficient delivery of support to the Australian government’s war effort, at the expense of eroding the authority and autonomy of the Society’s State and Territory Divisions.

Following Japan’s entry into the war, the Field Force’s personnel and stores were concentrated in Queensland and New Guinea for the immediate and
future support of Australian and American military forces.\textsuperscript{231} By April 1942 there were 38,000 American troops, 104,000 Second AIF personnel and 265,000 militia located in Australia.\textsuperscript{232} The State of Queensland was transformed into a military staging area for operations north of Australia and was therefore of importance to the Australian Red Cross.\textsuperscript{233} The quality of the Queensland Division, and the Field Force Unit in that State, became the subject of intense scrutiny after March 1942.\textsuperscript{234} Some members of the Central Executive and the Chief Commissioner of the Field Force were concerned that inadequate Field Force Representatives and Searchers had been appointed.\textsuperscript{235}

The operations of the Field Force in Queensland remained problematic. In January 1943 the Townsville Branch of the Society expressed a desire to control Field Force activities in the surrounding area.\textsuperscript{236} This desire was utterly contrary to the Central Executive’s policy of increasing the centralisation of control of Field Force activities following the experiences of the Middle East Unit. In addition, it was naïve of the local Branch to expect that it would be granted control of Field Force activities in such an important operational area when its members did not possess the high level military and political connections of the Central Executive.\textsuperscript{237}

The importance of smooth Field Force operations in the militarily operational Queensland area made the swift return of harmony within the Division a priority for the Society. Following a conference with the Chairmen of all State Divisions

\textsuperscript{231} ARCAR 1942-43, 12.
\textsuperscript{232} Dudley McCarthy, \textit{Australia in the War of 1939-45, Series 1, Volume V – South-West Pacific Area: the First Year} (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1959), 12-13, 24, 29, 31
\textsuperscript{234} MCE 31 March 1942, 2.
\textsuperscript{235} Ibid.; MCE 22 August 1942, 1.
\textsuperscript{236} MCE 12 January 1943, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{237} Ibid.; Powell, \textit{The Shadow’s Edge}. See also Chapter 1 regarding the political, social and military connections of the national Red Cross leadership.
in January 1943, the Central Executive moved quickly to assert its dominance over the activities of the Field Force. In a resolution that conferred broad powers to the Chief Commissioner of the Field Force, who reported to the Central body, the Central Executive declared that:

Field Force personnel will work in the closest possible co-operation with Divisions, especially when operating in areas under Divisional control, but the responsibility for the general direction of Field Force activities will be vested in [the] Executive acting through the Chief Commissioner [of the Field Force].

To make it patently clear that attempts like that of the Townsville Branch to interfere with the activities of the Field Force at a local level would not be tolerated, the Central Executive summarised its position:

To ensure success of the Society's Field Force operations full and complete co-operation of all Divisions is essential. [The power of the Chief Commissioner to terminate or discipline personnel] was particularly inserted to avoid any misunderstanding on this point.

The Chief Commissioner of the Field Force proceeded to tour Northern Queensland in March 1943, finding that the Field Force service throughout Northern Queensland consisted of sufficient Representatives, Searchers and Hospital Visitors to provide logistical support to the military in this critical operational theatre. An infrastructure of stores, transport, accommodation and clerical personnel was developed to support the Field Force activities in Northern Queensland.

Despite these steps to enhance the control and resources of the Field Force in Queensland, John Roxburgh was not satisfied that the State Division was

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238 MCE 11 January 1943, 2.
239 Ibid., 3.
240 MCE 16 March 1943, 2.
241 Ibid.
sufficiently competent and obedient to the Central Executive’s directions. In March 1943 he opined that:

The Queensland Division are really hopeless and I have come to the conclusion… that [the Divisional Chairman] is largely responsible and he is two-faced about a lot of the decisions and information given to us. I hear… that the Red Cross service has broken down hopelessly in Queensland… In spite of the opposition that I know would take place, my own recommendation will be that if this report is as bad as it sounded, we should definitely take over full control of the activities in the Queensland area north of Brisbane and completely ignore the Queensland Division.  

Roxburgh’s authoritarian recommendations were not implemented. The Central Executive shared enough of the Treasurer’s concerns, however, to send a delegation to Queensland in May 1943 to ensure that maximum efficiency of service was being achieved. The undeclared objective of this delegation was to reinforce the dominance of the Central Executive and force reform upon the Queensland Division. As a result of the visit, the Queensland Division agreed to fuse its Field Force and Divisional Stores and place them under the direction of a Divisional Stores Committee that included representatives from the wholesale and retail trades. Having fine-tuned the Divisional structure that supported the Field Force, the delegation also achieved the secondary objective of obtaining the resignation of the Queensland Division’s Chairman during their visit.

The Chief Commissioner of the Field Force, Colonel Russell, undertook a survey of the Society’s field operations within Australia in December 1943. His findings in Queensland vindicated the Central Executive’s reforms of the Field Force and Divisional management in that State. Russell reported that, despite the frequent drain of stores and personnel from Queensland to the front

242 “Letter from John Roxburgh to Wilfred Johnson 15 March 1943,” Box 2.58, ARCNA, 2.
243 MCE 11 May 1943, 3; MCE 14 May 1943, 1
244 MCE 8 June 1943, 3
245 MCE 8 June 1943, 3.
in New Guinea, the Field Force in Queensland was operating effectively under the leadership of the able John Nimmo.\textsuperscript{247} Promoted to the rank of Deputy Commissioner in June 1943, Nimmo had proven himself to be a valuable Field Force officer during the Middle East and New Guinea campaigns.\textsuperscript{248} Colonel Russell found that stores in Queensland were being effectively provided to forward areas, the 2/14\textsuperscript{th} Australian General Hospital in Townsville was extensively serviced by the Red Cross, and there was no suggestion of disruptive behaviour by the Queensland Division or local units.\textsuperscript{249}

The experiences of the Field Force in the Middle East, Malaya and Queensland provided the Central Executive with the impetus for a change in the manner in which its field operations were managed. The activities of the Field Force in the Middle East and Malaya had been primarily dominated by each Unit’s Commissioner. The Society’s policy began to evolve to one of centralised control over field operations as the Field Force expanded within Australia and the Divisions attempted to influence the activities within their States. This motivated the Central Executive to express its unequivocal control over the Field Force and subordinate the State Divisions. However, the evolution of the Society’s policy of control over the Field Force was not yet complete. The challenges that faced the Field Force in New Guinea and beyond prompted further reforms that assisted in the efficient delivery of logistical support to the Australian military.

**The Field Force in Papua, New Guinea & the Island Campaigns**

Operations in Papua, New Guinea and the islands north of Australia required the Field Force to further hone the Society’s field operations in support of the Army. The Field Force developed the capacity of its Representatives and implemented systems that enabled the Society to provide logistical support to the military despite the difficult conditions in which they operated. The

\textsuperscript{247} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{248} Sir John Nimmo Interview, 17-18.  
Australian Red Cross leadership further centralised control of the Field Force as a means of ensuring that the Society could efficiently support the war effort. The activities of the Field Force in Papua, New Guinea and the island campaigns at the conclusion of the war were characterised by an unprecedented level of integration of the Society’s members with military units. When the Field Force struggled to provide the Army with the level of service it demanded, the Society’s leadership again exhibited its sensitivity to adverse publicity and acted decisively to meet the military’s expectations.

The true extent of initial defeats of the British Empire and United States at the hands of the Japanese in the East and Pacific rapidly became apparent in 1942 and 1943. With the loss of Singapore and the Eighth Division of the Second AIF went Australia’s theoretical strategic shield. The Australian government scrambled to establish forces in New Guinea as a military and territorial buffer against further Japanese advances. Elements of the Second AIF and Militia units ensonced themselves in New Guinea in early 1942 and proceeded to halt the Japanese advance towards Port Moresby. By September 1942 there were around 30,000 Australian and American troops operating in New Guinea against up to 10,000 Japanese opponents. Throughout the long and arduous campaigns by Australian and American forces to establish control over Papua and New Guinea between 1942 and 1945, the Australian Red Cross provided logistical support up to the front line. The Field Force provided searcher services, relief and medical supplies to Australian hospitals, convalescent depots, casualty clearing stations and regimental aid posts. In addition, some Red Cross services and supplies were provided to civilian hospitals in New

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250 Day, The Politics of War, 1-7, 27-30; H Gordon Bennett, Why Malaya Fell (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1944); Hall, The Fall of Singapore; Hack, Did Singapore Have to Fall?.
251 Dexter, The New Guinea Offensives; Brune, A Bastard of a Place; Peter Brune, Those Ragged Bloody Heroes – From the Kokoda Trail to Gona Beach (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005); Peter Brune, 200 Shots – Damien Parer, George Silk and the Australians at War in New Guinea (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998); Peter Dennis & Jeffrey Grey, eds., The Foundations of Victory: The Pacific War (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2004); Ryan, Fear Drive My Feet.
252 McCarthy, South-West Pacific Area: the First Year, 234.
253 ARCAR 1942-43, 12; “Red Cross Unit Served Front Line Men,” The Argus, 8 May 1942, 3.
Guinea, in recognition of the cooperation displayed by the indigenous population.\textsuperscript{255}

On arrival in Australia from the Middle East, John Nimmo attempted to trace the fate of men missing in Malaya and Singapore.\textsuperscript{256} He was then transferred to the Field Force Unit in New Guinea, where he served in New Guinea between 3 November 1942 and 29 June 1943.\textsuperscript{257} Based at Rouna Falls outside Port Moresby, Nimmo was engrossed in the demanding task of tracing the missing and interrogating survivors from the Kokoda Trail campaign.\textsuperscript{258} The rugged terrain of New Guinea provided great obstacles to the transport of men and materials.\textsuperscript{259} Despite his experience of the difficult environment in the Middle East, Nimmo was shocked by the harsh terrain, tropical climate, long lines of communication and prevalent disease that Australian troops faced in New Guinea.\textsuperscript{260} The tropical environment made it very challenging for Red Cross personnel to trace the fate of missing soldiers and identify the dead, whose bodies and soft identification tags had often disintegrated by the time Field Force searchers reached where they had fallen.\textsuperscript{261}

Nimmo himself became a victim of the harsh, disease-ridden environment in New Guinea. He recalled that:

I went down with an obscure tropical disease. It was a type of malaria... I was hospitalised on 27\textsuperscript{th} May 1943 with malaria and it was an unpleasant experience. I had been over at the front. I’d been over beyond Wau and Mubo. I’d been working with the 2/7\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Battalion at the time and we were attacking a Japanese post, a stronghold, and one of our lads

\textsuperscript{255} ARCAR 1943-44, 13.
\textsuperscript{256} Sir John Nimmo Interview, 14.
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{258} Ibid., 15; Peter Fitzsimons, Kokoda (Sydney: Hodder Headline Australia, 2004); Frank Sublet, Kokoda to the Sea – A History of the 1942 Campaign in Papua (McCrae: Slouch Hat Publications, 2000).
\textsuperscript{259} Dexter, The New Guinea Offensives; Brune, A Bastard of a Place; Brune, Those Ragged Bloody Heroes.
\textsuperscript{260} Sir John Nimmo Interview, 16.
\textsuperscript{261} Ibid., 26.
was wounded and I came out with him and the bearer train – the ‘fuzzy wuzzy angels’ – and it was a long march through mud and slush.\textsuperscript{262}

His use of the phrase ‘we were attacking a Japanese post’ made it clear that Nimmo regarded himself as part of the attacking Second AIF force, rather than a neutral humanitarian intermediary. In answer to probing by his interviewer in 1990, Nimmo denied every being tempted to take up arms and fire a shot at the enemy.\textsuperscript{263} He did not, however, regard such action to be completely beyond contemplation. Nimmo recalled with some admiration the story of a couple of pragmatic doctors:

who took down their protective epaulettes and when the Japanese were moving towards their field ambulance... they took machine-guns and went out and held at bay the Japanese. They said ‘No way are they going to get our field ambulance’. But they were men of real conscience and character, because they removed all their protective insignia.\textsuperscript{264}

Despite Nimmo’s approval of this behaviour, the \textit{Geneva Convention} did not contemplate the concept of medical personnel’s neutrality and protection coming and going with their Red Cross epaulettes. Such behaviour amounted to an abuse of the \textit{Geneva Convention}, as active combatants were sheltered under the protection of the Red Cross until it suited them to shed that protection. Nimmo and the doctors concerned, however, would undoubtedly have justified their behaviour on pragmatic grounds and pointed out that the Japanese had not ratified or complied with the spirit of the \textit{Geneva Convention}.\textsuperscript{265}

As the harsh terrain led to air transport and landing strips becoming critical to the New Guinea campaign, the Australian Red Cross ensured that services and comforts were supplied on military transport planes and at air strips.\textsuperscript{266} At the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid., 17. \\
\textsuperscript{263} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid., 18. \\
\textsuperscript{265} Towe, Kosuge & Kibata, \textit{Japanese Prisoners of War}. \\
\textsuperscript{266} ARCAR 1942-43, 12. 
\end{flushleft}
busiest air strips from which wounded patients were evacuated, Field Force Representatives provided service on a 24 hours a day basis. Access was obtained to remote coastal areas in which Australian troops were operating by using small boats and ships. The Australian Red Cross developed a fleet of aircraft, ships and trucks that facilitated the delivery of supplies and evacuation of wounded soldiers throughout New Guinea.

In December 1942 and January 1943 the Field Force Unit in New Guinea was plagued with difficulties. Fierce fighting between Australian and Japanese forces in the harsh conditions of the tropical wet season proved a trial for the Australian military medical services and the Red Cross Field Force Unit that served as their auxiliary. Supplies were low, staff sick and indigenous carriers scarce due to illness and wounds. The Field Force Selection Committee concluded that the challenges of terrain, weather and sickness in tropical areas would continue to result in considerable loss of personnel fit for active service. The Society’s policy of only employing men in the Field Force who were physically unsuitable for Army service exacerbated the rate at which personnel were lost from service and required replacement.

Field Force Commissioner Caro was dispatched to New Guinea in January 1943 to report on the state of the Unit in New Guinea. Caro found that the Field Force Assistant Commissioner in charge of the New Guinea Unit had worked hard under trying conditions in the earlier part of the campaign, but had failed to cope adequately with the challenges of December 1942. In particular, the Assistant Commissioner was criticised by Caro for conserving stocks rather than liberally distributing them to the hard-pressed military hospitals, casualty clearing stations and field ambulances. Military officers, including General Blamey, criticised the conservative approach to distributing relief to the Army that had been taken by the Field Force in New Guinea during December

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267 ARCAR 1943-44, 13.
269 MCE 12 January 1943, 2.
270 Ibid.
271 MCE 26 January 1943, 5.
272 MCE 2 February 1943, 1.
The concerns of Caro were consistent with John Roxburgh’s findings regarding the Malayan unit under Basil Burdett. In both cases, the Society recognised the important role that the Field Force played in constructing and maintaining the Australian Red Cross’ public image and ability to raise funds.

Sensitive to the critical reports of Caro and Blamey, the Central Executive recognised the need for urgent reform of the Field Force’s operations if the Society was to adequately support the Army in challenging environments such as New Guinea. As a result of experiences in the Middle East, Malaya and Queensland, the need to centralise control of the Field Force and reduce the influence of individual Divisions had been identified by the Central Executive. Centralisation of control of the Field Force under the Society’s Chief Commissioner and Central Executive in Australia also had the benefit of ameliorating the potentially detrimental effects of Unit Commissioners who displayed maverick or unorthodox behaviour.

The evolution of centralised control was accelerated after the criticisms of Caro and Blamey, which resulted in a system of precautionary inspections of all forward areas. The powers of the Chief Commissioner of the Field Force were specifically expanded and defined by the Central Executive, whose dominance over both the State Divisions and Unit Commissioners was explicitly asserted. The Chief Commissioner was granted the power to appoint, promote or discharge field personnel, terminate their contracts and exercise summary disciplinary procedures. The Central Executive utilised its greater control over the management of individual Field Force Units, through the office of Chief Commissioner, to remove without hesitation the Assistant Commissioner whose performance had been criticised in New Guinea. This reinforced the Central Executive’s distinctly firmer approach towards Unit Commissioners that had developed as a result of the conflict with Colonel

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273 MCE 2 February 1943, 2.
274 “Report of the Honorary Treasurer John Roxburgh on a Survey of Red Cross Work in Malaya 19 September 1941,” Series NO14, ARCNA.
275 MCE 9 February 1943, 1.
276 MCE 11 January 1943, 3.
277 Ibid., 2.
278 MCC 23 February 1943, 6.
regarding management of the Middle East Unit. The days of Field Force Units operating as the personal fiefs of as strong-willed Commissioners such as Colonel Cohen were over.

In addition to the program of centralisation, the Central Executive sought to address the difficulties of the Field Force in New Guinea by increasing the number of personnel in the field and enhancing access to supplies.\textsuperscript{279} The \textit{Manpower Regulations} were relaxed by the government to assist the Society in the recruitment of personnel.\textsuperscript{280} The terms of employment under which Field Force personnel were employed, including rates of pay and allowances, became standardised in a similar vein to that of the Army.\textsuperscript{281} As Australian troops moved to a more aggressive strategy in New Guinea in late 1943, the necessity for young and fit Field Force personnel who could keep pace with the Army became even more important.\textsuperscript{282} A larger number of Field Force personnel allowed a system of regular rotation between tropical and temperate climates, thus reducing the loss of men due to sickness and exhaustion that accompanied extended service in tropical areas.\textsuperscript{283} The reforms in management of the Field Force rapidly drew tangible results. By early March 1943 the reputation of the New Guinea Unit was redeemed as favourable reports were received from military sources. The supply and transport infrastructure of the Field Force was sufficiently improved to allow the delivery of fresh fruit and eggs to the troops in New Guinea.\textsuperscript{284}

The experiences of the Field Force in New Guinea were critical to the honing of the Society’s field operations in support of the Army. The difficult terrain, tropical environment and fierce fighting in New Guinea provided the Australian Red Cross’ Representatives with an opportunity to develop skills and systems that enabled the provision of logistical support to the Army under difficult conditions. The Field Force developed an ability to gather, organise and move large quantities of stores so as to be able to keep up with the movements of

\textsuperscript{279} MCE 2 February 1943, 2.  
\textsuperscript{280} MCE 13 April 1943, 4; Butlin, \textit{War Economy 1939-1942}, 475-487.  
\textsuperscript{281} MCE 20 April 1943, 2-3.  
\textsuperscript{282} MCE 2 November 1943, 2.  
\textsuperscript{283} MCC 23 February 1943, 4.  
\textsuperscript{284} MCE 2 March 1943, 3.
Australian military medical units.285 This ability to provide service in a difficult and dynamic environment was to serve the Australian Red Cross well as Allied forces moved north from New Guinea.

As Allied forces conducted their ‘island hopping’ campaign north of Australia towards Japan in 1944 and 1945, the Australian Red Cross’ Field Force moved with Australian troops.286 Service was provided to Army medical units, released civilian internees, indigenous hospital patients and RAAF medical units that were sometimes very far forward in the Allied advance.287 By May 1945 there were 90 Australian Red Cross personnel operating with military units north of Australia from the Society’s established base in New Guinea.288 It was anticipated that after assisting the advancing Army and liberated prisoners of war, the Field Force units would provide services under the direction of the civilian administrators who were attached to the military in British colonies such as Borneo and Malaya.289 In agreeing to provide these units, the Australian Red Cross effectively elected to support the British Empire’s policy of recolonising Borneo and Malaya as Japanese masters were replaced by British ones.

Despite the challenges of the tropical environment, increasing distances from established bases, shipping difficulties, far-flung personnel and proximity to military engagements, the Field Force was reported to have acquitted itself well in its operations beyond New Guinea. Many testimonials were received by the Society indicating that its level of field service was of a generally high standard.290 This quality of service was achieved as a result of the Society’s extensive experience of field operations in the Middle East and New Guinea. The deployment of the Field Force beyond New Guinea was characterised by the embedding of Australian Red Cross personnel with each military hospital,

286 MNE 27 March 1945, 1; Peter Charlton, The Unnecessary War - Island Campaigns of the South West Pacific 1944-1945 (Melbourne: Macmillian, 1983); Alan Walker, Australia in the War of 1939-45, Series 5 Medical, Volume 3 - The Island Campaigns (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957).
287 MNE 27 March 1945, 1.
288 MNE 15 May 1945, 5-6.
289 MNC 26 June 1945, 5-6.
290 MNE 15 May 1945, 6.
casualty clearing station and Field Ambulance unit.\textsuperscript{291} The difficulty of transport and communication in the island region required this diffuse deployment of personnel, as it was not possible to operate on the basis of a centralised unit as had often been the case in the Middle East. The isolation of each Field Force unit from other Red Cross personnel influenced the Field Force to become further integrated with the military unit to which they were attached. Thus, the operations of the Australian Red Cross’ beyond New Guinea marked the peak of both the complexity of the Field Force’s operations in support of the war effort and the embedding of personnel into military units.

The Field Force and the UNRRA

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Australian Red Cross’ participation in the United Nations Relief & Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) scheme served as an extension of the Australian government’s post-war policy and the Society’s plans for future dominance of the humanitarian field. The UNRRA was established by the fledgling United Nations on 9 November 1943 to coordinate immediate post-war reconstruction and ease the plight of refugees.\textsuperscript{292} One of the United Nations’ earliest and most active bodies, it was contemplated that the UNRRA would be invited into areas by the victorious Allied military or civilian governments to participate in the distribution and organisation of relief and rehabilitation supplies.\textsuperscript{293} The Australian Red Cross reaped a dividend as a result of its involvement in the UNRRA, ensuring the Society remained relevant to the Australian government and the post-war humanitarian landscape.

The Australian Red Cross was extremely keen to establish itself as the dominant Australian influence in the activities of the UNRRA, whose Asian and

\textsuperscript{291} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{293} MNC 22 August 1944, 10; ICRC, \textit{Report of the ICRC Volume 3: Relief Activities}, 380-382.
Pacific operations were based in Sydney.\textsuperscript{294} In the post-war world, the Australian government wished to establish itself as a dominant power in the Pacific. This desire for Australian influence in the Pacific was expressed publicly and privately by Dr Herbert Evatt, External Affairs Minister of the Labor government.\textsuperscript{295} The Australian Red Cross’ role as a key element of UNRRA programs in the Pacific furthered the government’s post-war policy by linking Australian relief efforts to areas of political interest.

The withering of the Australian Red Cross in the peace following the First World War held lessons that were not lost to the Society’s Second World War leadership\textsuperscript{296} The Australian Red Cross was determined to dominate the Australian Council for UNRRA and to place its Field Force units within, or as an adjunct to, the field activities of the United Nations’ organisation.\textsuperscript{297} In addition to enrolling and training specific individuals for service with the UNRRA, the Australian Red Cross offered self-contained Red Cross relief units under the general direction of the UNRRA.\textsuperscript{298} This measure allowed the Society to maintain its Field Force units with distinct Red Cross identities while maintaining strong connections to the military and not completely linking the Australian Red Cross’ fate to that of the untested UNRRA.\textsuperscript{299}

The Australian Red Cross proceeded to cooperate with the UNRRA in Greece. As had been the case during the war, providing humanitarian relief to Greece was a politically popular policy for the Australian government.\textsuperscript{300} The Australian Red Cross served as the primary vehicle by which this policy was implemented. By February 1945 three urgently needed Australian Red Cross units were

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{294} MNC 22 August 1944, 9.
\bibitem{296} MCCEC 25.9.39, 2.
\bibitem{297} MNC 22 August 1944, 10, “Australian Council for UNRRA – Relief Supplies from ARC,” A1006, ER45/6/8/27, NAA.
\bibitem{298} MNC 22 August 1944, 10.
\bibitem{299} MNC 26 September 1944, 2-3.
\bibitem{300} MNE 7 November 1944, 3; “Red Cross Relief Unit for Greece,” \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 27 September 1944, 7; “Red Cross Aid to Greece,” \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 20 January 1945, 4. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the Australian Red Cross’ strategically selective provision of support to Greece during the Second World War.
\end{thebibliography}
selected, trained and ready to embark for service with the UNRRA in the Middle East and Greece.\textsuperscript{301} Similar Red Cross Field Force units operating under the auspices of the UNRRA or reconstructed British colonial governments were planned for post-war operations in Europe, the Pacific, Borneo and Malaya.\textsuperscript{302} The selection of these regions for the participation of Australian Red Cross relief teams in conjunction with the UNRRA accorded with the post-war foreign policy interests of the Australian government and remnants of the British Empire.

The participation of the Australian Red Cross in UNRRA programs marked a new era in the Society’s policy regarding relief activities in the field. The Society’s participation in UNRRA activities furthered the post-war foreign policy interests of the Australian government and ensured that the vitality of Australian Red Cross by means of an active overseas relief program. In addition, however, cooperation with the UNRRA resulted in a shift of emphasis to internationally coordinated civilian relief. The activities of the UNRRA were certainly influenced by United Nations member governments. However, the relationship between the UNRRA and cooperating voluntary relief organisations such as the Australian Red Cross was direct.\textsuperscript{303} The previously dominant ‘middle man’, in the form of the Australian or British government, was not formally interposed between the UNRRA and the Australian Red Cross. This form of direct international relief coordination between humanitarian agencies developed into the modern organisation model of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of the Red Cross.\textsuperscript{304}

\textsuperscript{301} MNE 30 January 1945, 2; MNE 6 February 1945, 2; “Australian Council for UNRRA – Relief Teams from ARC, Journey of Mr Gaden to Greece to Resolve Difficulties,” A1066, ER45/6/8/7/2/3, NAA.
\textsuperscript{302} MNC 24 October 1944, 5; MNC 23 January 1945, 1; MNE 18 September 1945, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{303} MNC 22 August 1944, 10.
\textsuperscript{304} Haug, \textit{Humanity for All}, 73-97, 163-199, 352-372.
Proxies for the Australian Public

During the Second World War, the Australian Red Cross was embedded with the Australian military, providing logistical support in the form of goods and services. While boundaries regarding the extent of this integration were occasionally imposed by both parties, significant limitations to the support provided by the Australian Red Cross to the military were infrequent. The searcher service demonstrated the extent to which the Society’s activities could be of tangible value to the Army and Australian public. Simultaneously, however, the value of information gathered by the Field Force was an exemplar of the limits to which the Red Cross would be permitted to integrate with the Australian military.

The Field Force was the most tangible demonstration of the Society’s logistical integration into the Australian government and British Empire’s war effort. The paramilitary character of the Field Force’s organisation, personnel and operations allowed it to directly participate in the conflict. The members of the Field Force were proxies for the Australian civilian public who did not personally participate in military operations. Non-combatant members of the public who provided donations to the Australian Red Cross took a vicarious part in the war effort, as their funds were used to finance the Field Force. The Society’s Representatives in the field conveyed the support of civilian donors by providing direct logistical aid to the Army.

The means by which the Field Force acted as proxies for the Australian public in the war effort transformed over the course of the conflict. Operations in the Middle East and Malaya provided the Society with proving grounds for the Field Force. These proving grounds demonstrated that Red Cross personnel could be successfully integrated with the Army in the field, but improvements were necessary. Significant challenges were posed by the Central Executive’s desire to retain control of Field Force Units over a vast distance and with limited ability to communicate directions or receive accurate reports. Management of the supply chain from the donor to a beneficiary in the field was complicated by harsh terrain, vast distances, limited transport resources and unsuitable
personnel. The lessons of the Middle East and Malaya, particularly those of centralised control of the Field Force and improved supply arrangements, were implemented in Queensland. The challenges that faced the Field Force in New Guinea and beyond prompted further reforms in organisations, personnel management and logistics. Operations north of Australia were characterised by improved attempts to reduce attrition of Field Force personnel and stores due to the tropical climate. Innovations in delivering logistical support to the Army in the front line were implemented in conjunction with increased integration of the Society’s field Representatives with the Army. The transformation of the Field Force over the course of the war culminated in the refinement of a system that allowed non-combatant members of the Australian public to vicariously participate in the war effort through the auspices of the Australian Red Cross.
Chapter Four

Prisoners of War:

Holy Grail or Poisoned Chalice?

This Red Cross parcel covered with labels in many languages is one of six next-of-kin parcels packed and despatched by the Australian Red Cross Prisoner-of-War Packing Department in Flinders Street which was returned from the International Red Cross Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, some three years after it was despatched from Australia. The prisoner-of-war in North Africa to whom the parcel was despatched was repatriated before delivery. The contents were reported to be in perfect condition when opened (The Herald, 9 August 1944, AWM 141550).
The public rightly expected the society to place the relief of our prisoners of war in Europe and the Far East in the forefront of its program... It is a source of great regret to us all that we were never able to do what we planned for our boys who were prisoners of war in Japanese hands.¹

- Mr ASH Gifford, Australian Red Cross Treasurer, Address to Annual Meeting of the Australian Red Cross, 19 November 1945.

Prisoner of war services formed the second great sphere of operations, alongside logistical services to the military in the field, which dominated the Australian Red Cross’ agenda during the Second World War. The welfare of prisoners of war was an issue of central concern to the Australian Red Cross and its counterparts. The Red Cross’ integration with the Australian government and military enabled it to harness the energies of the Society and Australian public to the Allied war effort. This chapter will demonstrate the manner in which the Australian Red Cross raised funds for, and provided services to, Australian prisoners of war. The provision of these services provided the Australian Red Cross with an opportunity to cooperate with other Allied Red Cross Societies and the International Committee to advance the interests of Allied prisoners and governments. In contrast to the activities of the Field Force and other logistical support provided by the Society to the government, the Red Cross was unable to enjoy consistent success and uncritical public support in its attempts to provide relief to prisoners of war. As this chapter will reveal, the Australian Red Cross raised significant funds for prisoner of war relief but was generally unable to spend these donations for the benefit of prisoners held by Japan. This dilemma illustrated the strengths and weaknesses of the Australian Red Cross as a result of its embedding with the Australian government and military.

¹ARCAR 1944-1945, 9-10.
The relative success of prisoner of war relief efforts in Europe compared to the Asia-Pacific region will be discussed through the prism of the principle of ‘reciprocity’. The principle of reciprocity was critical to the general success of international Red Cross efforts to alleviate the suffering of prisoners of war and civilian internees in Western Europe during the Second World War. Inherent in this principle was recognition of the mutual benefits that could be obtained by warring states if each nation treated captured members of the enemy humanely and allowed the Red Cross access to provide humanitarian relief.\(^2\) In doing so, each belligerent made an assumption that its compliance with the *Geneva Conventions* and enabling Red Cross services to enemy citizens in its power would be reciprocated. This involved a calculation that no warring state would benefit significantly more than another from compliance with international humanitarian law and the delivery of aid to prisoners of war.\(^3\) If the factors necessary to balance this equation of mutual interest were absent, the principle of reciprocity failed. A failure of reciprocity was accompanied by a failure of the international Red Cross movement’s efforts, to the detriment of prisoners of war and civilian internees. The relatively benign treatment of prisoners by the Western Allies and Axis in Western Europe was an example of the successful application of the principle of reciprocity in Red Cross operations. The extremely poor treatment meted out by Japan to its prisoners has been attributed to many factors, including a Japanese culture that placed little value on the welfare of prisoners of war, limited Japanese resources, an imbalance of prisoner numbers between Japan and the Allies, and an understandable perception that Red Cross aid was to be used for the benefit of belligerent governments.\(^4\) The absence of conditions of mutual interest in the protection of prisoners or war frustrated Red Cross efforts to provide assistance to prisoners of the Japanese. It will be argued in this chapter that because the interests of governments and national Red Cross societies were so closely aligned, effective delivery of


\(^3\) Ibid.

humanitarian relief to prisoners of war could only occur if the national governments involved recognised a reciprocal benefit in doing so.

**Australian Prisoners of War in the First & Second World Wars**

The fate of Australian servicemen who were captured by the enemy during the Second World War was simultaneously inspiring and tragic. The narratives of prisoners of war, particularly those held by the Japanese, comprise one of the most stirring aspects of the Australian wartime experience. The extent of the military, political and humanitarian challenges posed by Australian prisoners of war during the conflict was not anticipated by the government. As was the case during the First World War, the Australian government delegated much of the responsibility for organising and financing services for prisoners of war to the Australian Red Cross. This was consistent with the roles assigned to other national Red Cross Societies, such as the British, Americans, Germans and French.

The Australian Red Cross was formally responsible for the majority of Australian prisoner of war services on behalf of the government. It was made clear by the Department of the Army at a meeting with the Society’s leaders in May 1939 that it intended to leave any organisation in relation to prisoners of war and missing persons in the hands of the Red Cross. The Department’s abdication of its role in relation to prisoners of war and missing persons was indicative of an expectation that, in the event of Australian forces being committed to war, few servicemen would be lost by being captured or going missing in action.

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8 “Mr McCahon’s Notes on Conference on Wednesday 24th May 1939 at Victoria Barracks,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1.
The Department of Defence’s view may be justified by the relatively small number of Australians who were taken prisoner in the First World War - 4,084 prisoners compared to 58,637 deaths and over 150,000 wounded.\(^9\) Mortality rates amongst Australian prisoners were at the relatively low figure of 8.8 per cent.\(^10\) This provides a partial explanation for the Department of the Army’s disinterest in the welfare of those taken prisoner. In addition, the Army Medical Services prioritised the needs of those servicemen who were wounded and in need of urgent medical treatment, rather than caring for men who were lost to the enemy by death or capture.\(^11\) This ‘triage’ method of prioritising the Army Medical Service’s needs left the Australian Red Cross with responsibility for prisoners of war and missing persons, an area in which the Army’s Director General of Medical Services was not particularly interested.\(^12\) By the conclusion of the Second World War, 28,756 Australian servicemen had been taken prisoner.\(^13\) This figure, which dwarfed the number of Australians who were captives during the First World War, resulted in the delegation of prisoner of war matters to the Australian Red Cross being a far more critical decision than was originally appreciated by the Army.

**Australian Prisoners of War in Europe**

Australian servicemen became prisoners of war in Europe primarily as a result of their participation in the Mediterranean campaign or the air war over Europe.\(^14\) The ebb and flow of campaigns in North Africa, the Middle East, Greece and Crete resulted in the capture of Australians by the Germans and

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\(^10\) Ibid., 338.
\(^12\) “Mr McCahon’s Notes on Conference on Wednesday 24th May 1939 at Victoria Barracks,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1.
The debacle of defeat in Greece and Crete was particularly costly in terms of Australians lost as prisoners of war. The air war over Europe did not result in the surge of prisoners that followed Allied defeats in the Mediterranean. Instead, the participation of thousands of Australians as aircrew via the Empire Air Training Scheme resulted in a steady rate of attrition. By mid 1943, the official prisoner of war list held by the Australian Red Cross indicated that 7,502 Australian servicemen were held as prisoners of war in Europe.

The Australian Red Cross developed a reciprocal arrangement with the British and Canadian Societies for the provision of relief packages to prisoners of war in Europe. Australian prisoners of war were fed and clothed with the contents of parcels packed by the Canadian and British Red Cross. In exchange for packing between 5,000 and 10,000 parcels per week for Australian prisoner of war relief during 1941 and 1942, the Australian Society forwarded cash and goods to the Canadians and British. In April 1943, the number of food parcels packed and delivered to Europe on behalf of the Australian Red Cross increased to 10,000 per week. This increase reflected the growing number of Australian prisoners of war held in Europe and the need to build an adequate reserve supply of parcels in Geneva in anticipation of future disruption of shipments due to the chaos of war. Such disruptions occurred during 1944 and 1945 as Allied operations began to shatter the Axis hold on Western Europe, disrupting transport routes.

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15 “Request by ARC for Information Regarding Location of POW Camps in Italy,” A989, 1943/925/1/46, NAA; Maughan, Tobruk & El Alamein, 755-822; Long, Greece, Crete & Syria, 72-319.
16 Gillison, Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942, 79-89; Herington, Air War Against Germany and Italy 1939-1943, 107-128, 444, 534-5, 546-7, 663 and passim.
17 ARCAR 1942-43, 17. This figure was not entirely accurate. Official post-war assessments concluded that a total of 7,289 Australian prisoners of war were held as a result of the entire conflict in Europe and the Mediterranean - Vamplew, Australians - Historical Statistics, 416-417; Beaumont, Australian Defence: Sources & Statistics, 345.
19 ARCAR 1940-41, 27.
20 MCE 30 March 1943, 2; MCE 13 April 1943, 3-4; MCC 27 April 1943, 2.
21 Ibid.
22 MNC 22 August 1944, 5.
The Australian Red Cross established a London Committee that was responsible for coordinating the delivery of Red Cross service and supplies to Australian prisoners of war in Europe and personnel in British hospitals. The London Committee included Sir Thomas Dunhill, a distinguished Australian surgeon, and Sir Harry Twyford, the former Mayor of London. These notable members of British society who represented the Australian Red Cross in the United Kingdom operated with minimal reference to, or supervision by, the Central Executive in the early stages of the war. In addition to ensuring the smooth delivery of relief supplies flowing to and from Britain for the benefit of Australian servicemen, the London Committee obtained access to meetings of the Imperial Prisoner of War Committee and provided reports on these proceedings to Australia. The London Committee established an Australian Bureau for Enquiries for Wounded, Missing and Prisoners of War which performed searcher work from July 1940. This London Bureau supplemented the work of the Central Bureau in Melbourne and laid the foundation for Field Force searchers to operate from the United Kingdom as the war concluded.

**International Red Cross Delivery of Aid to Prisoners of War in Europe**

Prior to the outbreak of war, the International Committee of the Red Cross had less direct relevance to the Australian Red Cross than its imperial parent, the British Red Cross. The International Committee of the Red Cross’ capacity to

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24 MCC 25 June 1940, 2; MNC 28 August 1945, 2; ARCAR 1942-43, 24; MCC 29 March 1943, 1. Sir Harry distinguished himself by ensuring he attended the London Committee office during the German bombing of London, despite the fact that he was aged in his seventies and had to sleep under his billiard table every night – “Report of Mrs Cresswick to National Council on Her Mission to the United Kingdom 23 April 1945,” Series NO14, AARCNA, 1-2.
26 MCE 9 July 1940, 1.
27 For further discussion of the Australian Red Cross’ relationship with the British Red Cross, see Chapter One. When the International Committee requested formal Australian representation at a conference regarding the provision of services to civilian casualties of war in Geneva on 22 November 1939, little action or enthusiasm was displayed by the Australian Red Cross - MCCCEC 16 October 1939, 2, 4. It was noted by Geneva at the conclusion of the conflict that the ties between the International Committee and National Societies ‘…were sometimes variable and did not always cover the Committee’s work as a whole… the setting up of relations between the International Committee of the Red Cross and the National Societies depended on the cooperation which they were willing to pursue with Geneva.’ - ICRC, *Report of the ICRC Volume 1 - General Activities*, 65.
act as an agent in providing relief to prisoners of war was of secondary relevance to the Australian Red Cross, which was focused upon becoming an effective paramilitary organisation that directly supported the Australian and British Empire’s armed forces in the early phases of the war.  

Pursuing inquiries regarding civilians in Europe helped to forge the initial active relationships between the Australian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Second World War. The invasion of Poland and domination of other Eastern European countries from September 1939 prompted relatives in Australia to inquire with the Australian Red Cross as to means of communicating with those in peril. These inquiries caused the Australian Red Cross to realise that the connections and information networks of the International Committee of the Red Cross on the European continent were far broader and more relevant than those of the British Red Cross. Consistent with other aspects of Red Cross activity, the Australian government and military dictated the terms on which the Australian society dealt with the International Committee. The Defence Department directed that the Australian Red Cross should communicate limited information to the International Committee through the Swiss Consul or Swiss Government. The military’s concern to limit opportunities for espionage and the transmission of politically or militarily valuable information to enemy territory took precedence over the humanitarian impulse to allow unfettered communications, which may have been more reassuring to relatives.

29 “Request by P S Barna for Permission to Send Cable Through Red Cross re Parents in Hungary,” A1539, 1944/W/2493, NAA; “Messages from Enemy Lands,” The Argus, 21 January 1941, 2.
30 The International Committee’s transmission of messages into Europe became even more valuable when the Consuls of occupied countries, such as Poland, announced that they would not facilitate the forwarding of messages to or from Australia for anyone other than German nationals. Therefore, the International Committee of the Red Cross’s service was the only remaining means of communicating private messages into Europe with a degree of reliability - MCE 18 January 1940, 1.
31 MCE 23 February 1940, 2
32 Communications from the Australian Red Cross to Geneva were restricted to messages containing the names of aliens resident in Australia, advice that they were well, and a request that the message be transmitted to those in enemy occupied territory - MCCEC 4 October 1939, 3.
As the defeat of Allied forces in Greece and Crete during April and May 1941 resulted in a great increase in the number of Australian prisoners of war in German and Italian hands, the International Committee of the Red Cross suddenly acquired tangible relevance to the Australian Red Cross.\textsuperscript{33} There were initial difficulties in arranging for prisoner of war relief parcels to reach Germany and Italy.\textsuperscript{34} The brutal war in the Atlantic and Mediterranean was intended by both the Axis and Allies to choke each other’s economies and communications.\textsuperscript{35} This war at sea made transportation of Red Cross relief parcels a perilous task.\textsuperscript{36} The solution lay with the International Committee of the Red Cross, who arranged for neutral merchant ships to collect relief parcels from England and deliver them to neutral ports such as Lisbon in Portugal. From the neutral port of delivery, the relief parcels were usually transported by road or rail to Geneva. Having arrived in Switzerland, the relief supplies were taken over by a Swiss commercial control body that ensured the goods were applied for their intended purpose. The contents of each relief shipment were sorted in Switzerland and allocated to prison camps. The International Committee of the Red Cross then organised the delivery and distribution of food and clothing parcels to Allied prisoners of war, including Australians.\textsuperscript{37}

The International Committee oversaw a pool of relief parcels, to which each Allied country contributed resources for a number of packages in proportion to that country’s number of prisoners of war. In this way, each Red Cross Society of the British Empire cooperated in the war effort by forwarding relief parcels to Geneva for distribution amongst the European Allied prisoner of war pool.\textsuperscript{38} The raging Battle of the Atlantic, with its massive loss of merchant shipping,
highlighted the risk of the supply route to prisoners of war being cut.\textsuperscript{39} To
ameliorate this threat, more parcels were sent each month to Geneva than the
number expected to be distributed in Europe during that period. Therefore, a
reserve supply of relief parcels was built up with the International Committee of
the Red Cross in case of a breakdown in the ability to send consignments to
Europe.\textsuperscript{40} While there were some periods in which the delivery of mail or parcels
to prisoners of war in Europe was disrupted due to military action or supply
chain problems, Red Cross parcels generally reached Allied prisoners of war in
German or Italian hands on a relatively regular basis.\textsuperscript{41}

By mid-1941, most Australian and British prisoners of war in Germany and Italy
were receiving a supplementary food parcel each week.\textsuperscript{42} Those servicemen
who had recently been taken captive by the Germans or Italians were provided
with ‘Capture Parcels’ containing extra clothing, toiletries, cigarettes, stationary
and foodstuffs as quickly as possible after news of their capture and location
was received.\textsuperscript{43} The Society sought to utilise feedback obtained from repatriated
servicemen to improve the contents and frequency of Red Cross relief parcels
to prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{44} In addition, recreational equipment such as books, games
and sporting gear were supplied via Geneva to ensure the troops had
something to occupy them during the monotony of captivity.\textsuperscript{45} University-
accredited study program for prisoners of war in Europe were instituted during 1944 and 1945.\textsuperscript{46} As a means of supplementing the parcels that were funded and supplied by the Allied Red Cross Societies, the Australian Red Cross instituted a system of ‘next of kin parcels’.\textsuperscript{47} These parcels allowed the families of Australian prisoners of war whose location in Europe was known to forward personally selected goods, clothing and messages to their imprisoned family members on a quarterly basis. By 1944, the Australian Red Cross Central Bureau for Prisoners of War had packed and forwarded 42,790 next of kin parcels to Europe.\textsuperscript{48} In the case of next of kin parcels that did not amount to the full permissible size and weight, the Australian Red Cross added chocolate, other food or clothing supplements to the packages prior to dispatching them.\textsuperscript{49}

So popular were the Red Cross parcels received by Australian prisoners of war in Europe that some captured servicemen engaged in schemes to obtain more. In June 1943 it was reported by the Australian Prisoner of War Parcels division that:

Disturbing messages have reached the Society recently from Australian POW in Europe that the New Zealanders are getting a much better parcels service than they, particularly in relation to additional clothing parcels. It is now interesting to note that the New Zealand Red Cross Society is receiving similar statements from their men, saying that the Australian service is much better than the New Zealand. This indicates that apparently prisoners are simply doing their best to get something more than the settled and approved normal parcels service.\textsuperscript{50}

The growing relevance of the International Committee was reflected by the Australian Red Cross’ financial contributions to it. While relatively small grants

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\textsuperscript{46} ARCAR 1943-44, 21.
\textsuperscript{47} "Parcels From Next of Kin," \textit{The Argus} (3 March 1942), 3.
\textsuperscript{48} ARCAR 1941-42, 16-17; ARCAR 1942-43, 18; ARCAR 1943-44, 21.
\textsuperscript{49} ARCAR 1941-42, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{50} MCC 23 June 1943, 6.
were made by the Australian Society to the International Committee in the early years of the war, a £10,000 contribution was made in May 1943, followed by another £10,000 grant in June 1944. In addition, the Australian Society increased the volume of its correspondence with the International Committee and sent officers to Geneva as the war concluded. These financial contributions, visits and correspondence coincided with the enhanced level of service provided by the International Committee to Australian prisoners of war in Europe.

As Red Cross service levels peaked, however, the imminent conclusion of the war in Europe created chaos that curtailed services to prisoners of war by late 1944. The advance of Allied forces into Germany and Italy drove the Axis powers to move prisoners of war to areas where they were less likely to be liberated. Meanwhile, the Allied onslaught contributed to the breakdown of the infrastructure in Europe that allowed Red Cross parcels to be delivered. Supply routes through Switzerland and Sweden to Germany remained open, but distribution of relief to prisoner of war camps was disorganised due to the crumbling state of the German government and military. While the Allied advance ultimately culminated in the liberation of prisoners of war, it caused short term privations and dangers for prisoners held by the crumbling Axis authorities.

51 MCE 19 November 1940, 7; MNE 20 June 1944, 4.
53 “Australian POW in Europe – Conditions in Camps,” A1066, IC45/5/2/4, NAA; “Statement on Stoppage of POW Parcels to Germany,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 12 August 1944, 4.
54 ARCAR 1943-44, 32; “Movement of Prisoners of War in German Hands,” A705, 32/6/1, NAA; Baudot, The Historical Encyclopedia of the Second World War, 395-396; Shirer, The Rise & Fall of the Third Reich, 1307, 1323.
55 MNE 6 February 1945, 2; Moorhead, Dunant’s Dream, 464.
56 MNC 23 January 1945, 2; Baudot, The Historical Encyclopedia of the Second World War, 395.
The importance of regular Red Cross assistance to Allied prisoners of war held in Europe is borne out by both statistics and anecdote. John Nimmo reported to the National Council from London that:

> Without exception, every ex-prisoner [I] met stated that he owed his life to the work of Red Cross and that without Red Cross parcels he would not have come out alive.

With the assistance of the International Committee and other Allied Red Cross societies, the Australian Red Cross was able to meet public expectations that it had deliberately raised that the Society would provide relief to Australian prisoners during the war in Europe. As will be further discussed below, this success could not have been achieved if both Axis and Western Allied governments had not permitted reciprocal Red Cross services in their territories.

**Red Cross Relief Following the Conclusion of the War in Europe**

As the liberation of prisoners of war in Europe became likely following Allied victories in 1944, the Australian Red Cross recognised the need to fully prepare for the reception of prisoners in England during their repatriation. Once again, the Australian government relied upon the resources of the Red Cross to provide the necessary logistical support to smooth the passage home for former prisoners of war. In the case of Australian prisoners in Russian hands, the application of Australian Red Cross resources was limited in accordance with the post-war political priorities of the Australian government.

While the Society's London Committee had developed some Red Cross service infrastructure, it was insufficient to cope with the thousands of liberated Australian prisoners of war who were expected to pass through England on their way home. The Society established a Field Force Unit for operations in the

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57 “Letters of Appreciation to the ARC,” MP508/1, 282/701/177, NAA.
58 MNC 25 September 1945, 1. See also MNC 22 May 1945, 2. Nimmo was posted to London as second-in-command of the United Kingdom Field Force Unit.
United Kingdom. Arriving in England in September 1944. This Unit initially consisted of 32 personnel under the command of Brigadier George F Langley, a military man in the mould of Colonel Cohen whose rank and military connections were expected to assist his relations with the status-conscious British authorities. After his successful completion of roles in New Guinea and Northern Queensland, John Nimmo was appointed as second in command to Brigadier Langley.

By October 1944, the first large group of repatriated troops arrived at United Kingdom ports such as Liverpool to great receptions. At the same time, Brigadier Langley was authorised to make all arrangements for reception of prisoners of war in the United Kingdom without the approval of the London Committee. This authorisation effectively stripped the London Committee of its relevance and power, placing control of operations in the United Kingdom in the hands of the Field Force and the National Executive which oversaw field activities. The devolution of authority over the United Kingdom Field Force from the London Committee was necessary to ensure that Langley was not subjected to conflicting instructions from the Committee and the National Executive. This accorded with the National Executive’s policy of centralising control over the Society’s field activities to the National body, which could then ensure that the Field Force’s work aligned with the interests of the Australian Red Cross and Australian government. Consolidation of control over field activities in Britain to the National Executive was particularly important in light of the tendency of the British to isolate and manipulate their Dominion colleagues to the benefit of the British Empire.

60 MNC 25 July 1944, 1-2
61 MCE 29 June 1943, 3; MCE 13 July 1943, 2; MNE 19 September 1944, 2.
62 MNE 10 October 1944, 1.
63 MNE 3 October 1944, 1-2.
Stella Bowen, Brigadier George Furner Langley, DSO Head of Australian Red Cross in Britain, May 1944 - February 1946 (London, 1945) (ART26273, AWM)
The United Kingdom Field Force Unit’s personnel visited Australians in hospitals and repatriation camps with the assistance of Australian women volunteers in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.\(^65\) Red Cross clubs and hostels were established throughout England, providing Australian troops with a recreational ‘home away from home’.\(^66\) Both the Field Force members and the Australian former prisoners of war they assisted faced difficulty in obtaining suitable accommodation in the busy London area.\(^67\) The pressure caused by the inconvenient conditions under which Field Force members had to work was compounded by the danger of V-2 rockets fired from the European coast towards London.\(^68\) While no Field Force members were injured by these weapons prior to their launch sites being overrun by the Allies, there were some significant near-misses of Australian Red Cross personnel by V-2 rockets.\(^69\)

As a means of supplementing the work of the Field Force Unit in the United Kingdom, John Nimmo was assigned to Europe as the representative for the British and all Dominion Red Cross Societies at the Headquarters of the Red Cross Commission in Brussels in late 1944.\(^70\) Under Nimmo’s direction, a small delegation of Field Force personnel constituted an official Australian expedition which attempted to provide Red Cross service to as many released prisoners of war and civilian internees on the European continent as possible.\(^71\) Following the Allied victory in Europe and Germany’s surrender on 7 May 1945, John Nimmo reported that the liberated Australian prisoners of war he had seen in European transit camps were:

\(^{65}\) ARCAR 1943-44, 34; MNC 26 September 1944, 1.
\(^{66}\) ARCAR 1943-44, 34; ARCAR 1944-45, 15; MNC 20 March 1945, 2.
\(^{67}\) Ibid.
\(^{68}\) Ibid.
\(^{69}\) Ibid.
\(^{70}\) ARCAR 1944-45, 15. Nimmo was, in fact, appointed Commissioner with a role to direct all base and field activities in the Far East in October 1944. The failure of the Allies to achieve the release of Australian prisoners of war in the Far East in 1944, followed by their extremely rapid repatriation in 1945, left little scope for Nimmo to perform this role. Therefore, he was assigned to work in Europe - MNE 10 October 1944, 3
\(^{71}\) ARCAR 1944-45, 15; MNC 21 November 1944, 1-2.
somewhat low in condition physically, they all appeared to be very
normal mentally and in great heart, and paid a great tribute to Red Cross
service to them while they were imprisoned.\footnote{MNC 22 May 1945, 2.}

The condition of Australian prisoners of war compared very favourably to the
scene John Nimmo encountered when he reached the notorious Belsen
concentration camp with leading elements of the British Army. He recalled:

when we go into the camp, which had been inhabited by 50,000
internees, 10,000 were already dead. Their naked bodies were stacked
like sardines in a tin in some camp huts. Others were in heaps, all naked,
just like wood heaps, stacked in heaps in the camp. There were women
running around with newborn babies – they were quite insane… [Others]
were down on all fours like beasts of the field and they were just skin and
bone.\footnote{Sir John Nimmo Interview, 20.}

This scene engendered nightmares that remained with Nimmo following his
return to Australia in September 1945.\footnote{Sir John Nimmo Interview, 26; MNE 11 September 1945, 4.}

While the majority of Australian servicemen who had been prisoners of war
streamed through France and the Low Countries on their way to England,
others made their way to freedom through Switzerland and Italy or Russia.\footnote{MNC 21 November 1944, 2; “ARC Enquiries Regarding Persons in USSR and Russian Occupied Territory in Europe and Asia,” A1066, IC45/48/15, NAA.} In
conjunction with Allied Repatriation Units, a chain of stations was established in
Italy where released or escaped prisoners of war were provided with succour.\footnote{ARCAR 1944-45, 16.}
Around 500 Australian former prisoners of war utilised these stations, which
were provided with supplementary stores and comforts by the Australian Red
Cross.\footnote{Ibid.}
Those Australian prisoners of war who were liberated from camps by the Russians provided the Australian Red Cross with challenges in determining the appropriate level of service to be provided.\textsuperscript{78} The attitude of the Australian Red Cross to Russia in 1945 accorded with that of the Australian and British governments. Ready assistance and encouragement was given to Russia by the Americans and British Empire earlier in the war, including substantial gifts of woollen clothing by the Australian Society.\textsuperscript{79} As Stalin’s Red Army overran the majority of Eastern Europe and Germany, the bonds of wartime allegiance were dissolved by the conflicting interests of the victors. As the foundations of the Cold War were being laid, suspicion of Russian intentions was manifested in the behaviour of the Australian and British Red Cross Societies.\textsuperscript{80} It was determined at a conference of these Societies in February 1945 that Next of Kin parcels should not be forwarded to camps known to be overrun by the Russians, on the grounds that it was assumed any prisoners of war would be dispersed by the time the packages arrived.\textsuperscript{81} In addition, the Australian and British Societies were not permitted to send representatives to accompany a military mission to Russia for discussions regarding prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{82}

The reluctance to send further relief packages into Russian territory, and the desire to dispatch Red Cross officers to monitor the repatriation of servicemen, was rooted in practical, political and ideological concerns. On a practical level, the barbaric conditions and ruthless behaviour of combatants on the Eastern Front gave reason for concern regarding the ability of former prisoners of war from British Empire countries to make their way home.\textsuperscript{83} As legions of German prisoners were ushered East to an uncertain fate, it was desirable that the same outcome was not met by former Allied prisoners of war in the chaos of the war’s conclusion. On an ideological level, the leaders of the Australian Red Cross

\textsuperscript{78} Some Australians who were released by the Russians made their way to Cairo via Odessa. They were met in Egypt by the remainder of the Middle East Field Force Unit which provided accommodation and Red Cross service while the former prisoners awaited a ship home - ARCAR 1944-45, 16; “Recovered POW via Odessa,” B3856, 144/1/205, NAA; “Prisoners of War Recovered by Russian Repatriated via Odessa,” MP742/1, 255/15/1013, NAA.
\textsuperscript{79} ARCAR 1941-42, 5.
\textsuperscript{80} MNE 20 February 1945, 1.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} “Australian POW in Europe: Treatment of POW Liberated by the USSR,” A1066, IC45/6/2/1, NAA; Keegan, \textit{The Second World War}, 127-239, 450-535.
were members of a social elite that did not admire Russian communism.\textsuperscript{84} Ideological foes, in the form of parliamentarianism and communism, had temporarily set aside their struggle to face the common enemy, fascism.\textsuperscript{85} As Allied victory was imminent, the parliamentary democracies of the West sought to mould the post-war world in the manner of their choosing.\textsuperscript{86} Sending Red Cross relief supplies into Russian-controlled territory could only serve to strengthen the communist economy that was to be the post-war foe of the parliamentary democracies. Allowing liberated servicemen of the British Empire to be unsupervised and exposed to the Russians for significant periods supposedly risked communist indoctrination of the sons of the Empire. Acting in concert with the Australian government’s post-war policy towards Russia, the Australian Red Cross limited relief sent to Russian territory and sought the rapid repatriation of Australian servicemen to territory controlled by the Western Allies.\textsuperscript{87}

The speed with which Australians who had been prisoners of war in Europe were repatriated was impressive.\textsuperscript{88} Many repatriated soldiers who were assisted by the Australian Red Cross in the United Kingdom expressed great appreciation for the services provided to them.\textsuperscript{89} Within three months of the German surrender in May 1945, the majority of Australians who had been held by the Axis in Europe had been returned to Australia on hospital ships, other ships capable of carrying passengers or aircraft.\textsuperscript{90} This rapid repatriation resulted in the National Executive terminating the work of the London Committee on 31 August 1945.\textsuperscript{91} Lady Hilda Owen, a long-serving member of the Society’s National Council who was attached to the London Committee,

\textsuperscript{84} With regard to the social composition of the Australian Red Cross leadership, see Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{85} Bobbitt, The Shield of Achilles, 34-44.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 45-64.
\textsuperscript{87} “Australian POW in Europe: Treatment of POW Liberated by the USSR,” A1066, IC45/6/2/1, NAA; “Repatriation of POW ex Southern Europe and/or Recovered by Russia,” MP729/8, 44/431/26, NAA.
\textsuperscript{88} “Repatriation of POW in Europe,” AWM54, 799/9/3, NAA; “Repatriation of Released POW in Europe,” MP742/1, 255/18/247, NAA.
\textsuperscript{89} “Letters of Appreciation to the ARC,” MP508/1, 282/701/177, NAA; MNC 28 August 1945, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{90} MNC 26 June 1945, 2-3; ARCAR 1944-45, 29.
\textsuperscript{91} ARCAR 1944-45, 35.
remained as the Australian Red Cross’ Liaison Officer in London until 1949. The Australian Society thus ensured the continuation of a close association with its British parent in the aftermath of the war.

**The Success of the Principle of Reciprocity**

While 25 per cent of Australian prisoners of war were held in Europe, only 3 per cent of Australian prisoner of war deaths occurred in Europe in comparison to 97 per cent of prisoner of war deaths that occurred in the Asia-Pacific. Of the 7,289 Australian prisoners of war in Europe, only 234 died in captivity. These mortalities comprised 84 killed by enemy weapons or presumed dead, 55 deaths due to combat wounds and 95 due to sickness, injury or disease. There was little that Red Cross supplies could do to help those servicemen killed by enemy weapons. Given that many captured Australian servicemen may have been sick or wounded when they came under Axis control, the remaining 150 deaths due to combat wounds, sickness, injury or disease was a relatively low number. That the mortality rate of Australian prisoners of war in Europe was so low is a testament to the general application of the *Geneva Conventions* by the Axis powers and the availability of Red Cross relief supplies in that theatre of operations.

The success of the Australian Red Cross in providing relief to prisoners of war in Europe was due to the policy of Allied governments, application of the principle of reciprocity and a humanitarian culture that was shared between the Western Allies and European Axis powers. A fundamental decision of humanitarian policy lay behind the choice of the Allies to allow Red Cross relief parcels to be forwarded to prisoners of war held by Germany and Italy. The doctrine of ‘total war’ precluded Allied governments from dispatching significant quantities of aid to beleaguered civilians under Axis rule in Europe. To do so

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94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Chickering & Förster, *Shadows of Total War*; Chickering & Förster, *A World at Total War*. 

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Stella Bowen, Repatriated Prisoner of War is Processed (London, 1945)  
(ART26272, AWM)
Two central soldier figures, possibly a portrait of Alexander Paton. The soldier facing away from the viewer represents the soldier at war, while the hatless soldier facing the viewer, with arms folded, is about to be repatriated. In the background the artist focuses on six pairs of hands engaged in activities representing each stage of the repatriated soldier's processing, including medical checks, dental checks, sending of messages to family members and provision of new uniforms - ART26272, AWM.
would have undermined the economic war against the Axis. An exception to this rule was made in the case of Allied prisoners of war in Europe. Providing imprisoned Allied servicemen with relief parcels carried the risk of diluting the economic warfare campaign by taking partial responsibility for the burden of sustaining these prisoners. To not have done so, however, entailed the possibility of increased casualties amongst Allied prisoners of war and politically damaging criticism on the home front if imprisoned troops were seen to be abandoned by the government. The Australian government's delegation of prisoner of war assistance to the Australian Red Cross allowed the government to provide the aid to captured Australian servicemen that was permitted by Allied policy and expected by the Australian public, without having to draw upon government resources. The Australian government garnered the benefit of approving assistance to prisoners of war in Europe while shifting the administrative and financial burdens of doing so to the Red Cross.

Despite the obvious connection between the Allied Red Cross Societies and their national governments, the German and Italian governments permitted the extensive delivery of humanitarian aid to their territory by means of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The European Axis governments recognised the mutual benefits inherent in this arrangement. Allowing Red Cross relief to be delivered to prisoners of war in occupied Europe relieved some of the burden of providing for prisoners of war in Axis hands. In addition, compliance with international humanitarian principles would result in reciprocal treatment of Axis citizens who were held prisoner by the Allies. The Australian Red Cross and International Committee's provision of service to Axis prisoners of war and civilian internees in Australia is discussed in Chapter 2. It was these examples of reciprocal Red Cross service that minimised casualties amongst prisoners held by the Western Allies (including Australia) and the European Axis powers. With the notable exception of the Eastern Front, on which
humanitarian norms were cast aside, the conflict in Europe generally demonstrated the successful application of the principle of reciprocity between belligerent nations.\textsuperscript{100}

On the whole, the efforts of the Allied Red Cross Societies to provide relief to prisoners of war in Europe were successful. With the exception of Russian and Eastern European prisoners, who were savagely treated on the Eastern Front, Allied prisoners suffered a low casualty rate due to mistreatment or malnutrition.\textsuperscript{101} Prisoners of war from the British Empire and United States were generally well-treated by means of reciprocal application of the norms of international humanitarian law by their European Axis captors.\textsuperscript{102} There were, of course, exceptions to the general pattern of compliance with the principles of the \textit{Geneva Convention}, such as Hitler’s order that Allied commandos be shot on sight.\textsuperscript{103} With the exception of the Eastern Front, however, the reciprocal implementation of the laws of war and access by elements of the international Red Cross movement was a humanitarian success. This success may be ascribed to a mutual acknowledgment of the value of reciprocal Red Cross service. In addition, a lack of strong racial or cultural indifference to the fate of prisoners was important to the success of Red Cross efforts between the Axis and Western Allies. Military imbalances and cultural indifference to the fate of prisoners on the Eastern Front and in the Asia-Pacific led to cruelly different outcomes. In particular, the treatment of prisoners in the Asia-Pacific demonstrated the limits of the principle of reciprocity.

\textsuperscript{100} Haug, \textit{Humanity for All}, 64-68; Gitta Sereny, \textit{Albert Speer - His Battle With Truth} (London: Macmillian, 1995), 334, 385; Moorhead, \textit{Dunant’s Dream}, 377, 397-399, 415, 459.


\textsuperscript{102} “Australian POW in Europe – Conditions in Camps,” A1066, IC45/6/2/4, NAA; “Australian POW – POW Camps in Europe and Italy,” AWM54, 779/1/23, NAA; “Exchange of Sick & Wounded POW with Germany,” A1066, IC45/6/2/4/14, NAA; “POW Relief Supplies in Europe,” B3856, 144/18/31, NAA.

\textsuperscript{103} Baudot, \textit{The Historical Encyclopedia of the Second World War}, 116-117.
International Red Cross Principles & Prisoners of War in the Asia-Pacific

As was the case in Europe, the Australian Red Cross was responsible for Australian prisoners of war who were held by the Japanese in the Asia-Pacific region. The contrast between the success of international Red Cross efforts in Europe and their failure in the Asia-Pacific was stark. A reciprocal application of mutually beneficial Red Cross humanitarian principles in the face of the expediencies of war was displayed between the European Axis powers and Western Allies in Europe. The converse was true in the conflict with Japan.

The Japanese Red Cross did not adopt the Western and implicitly Christian humanitarian culture of Allied national Red Cross societies, or attempt any serious charade of independence from government. Military expediency trumped humanitarianism in an environment where Japanese forces did not identify with, and saw little benefit in, reciprocal application of humane principles of prisoner of war treatment. In addition, Japanese military personnel lived in harsh conditions, particularly with the success of the Allied naval campaign in the closing years of the war. This resulted in Japanese military authorities sometimes being unable to provide the prisoners they held with living conditions that would be regarded as adequate by Allied standards. The failure of the principle of reciprocity, the lack of a shared humanitarian culture and limited resources resulted in the Red Cross being unable to deliver substantial aid to prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific without the assistance of Allied military force. This did not, however, prevent the Red Cross from using its public profile as a guardian of prisoners of war to raise extensive funds that the Society became increasingly aware it would be unable to expend on the purpose for which the money was raised.

106 Ibid.
107 "POW and Internees in the Far East," A989, 1944/925/1/43 Parts 1 & 2, NAA.
The defeat and capture of the British Empire’s forces in Malaya and Singapore amounted to a cataclysm for the Imperial defence policy upon which Australia had relied.\(^{108}\) With the surrender of Singapore to Japan on 15 February 1942, the Australian 8\(^{th}\) Division and associated reinforcing elements brought from the Middle East were swept into Japanese captivity.\(^{109}\) The Australians joined a total of 80,000 British Empire troops who were surrendered by British General Arthur Percival in circumstances that remain controversial.\(^{110}\) The fall of the Netherlands East Indies, which was partially garrisoned by Australian forces, added to Japan’s tally of prisoners.

The International Committee of the Red Cross was initially optimistic regarding the attitude that the Japanese would take towards prisoners of war. In December 1941 the Committee informed the Australian government that although Japan was not a party to the 1929 *Prisoner of War Convention*:

> This should not prevent the transmission of usual lists of names of War Prisoners provided reciprocity is agreed upon by the parties at war, or provided the parties declare themselves prepared to apply de facto provisions contained in the 1929 Convention.\(^{111}\)

The International Committee had the historical example of Japanese behaviour during the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 on which this optimistic


\(^{110}\) Ibid.

\(^{111}\) MCE 16 December 1941, 3. Emphasis added.
assessment of the likely attitude towards prisoners of war was based.\textsuperscript{112} The Japanese had treated captured members of the Russian Tsar’s army with a spirit of chivalrous hospitality. Changes in Japan’s military and political cultures in the interval between the Russo-Japanese War and Second World War led to a transformation of the attitude towards prisoners of war. The militaristic ‘Bushido’ culture that permeated the Japanese Army during the Second World War had little respect or concern for the welfare of prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{113} In addition, the harsh living conditions of Japanese military personnel, and privations caused by economic and naval warfare, limited the capacity of Japan to provide adequately for its captives during the Second World War.\textsuperscript{114} At the time of the war and its aftermath, however, these factors which contributed to the Japanese treatment of prisoners were not generally appreciated.\textsuperscript{115}

The International Committee initially experienced difficulty contacting the Japanese Red Cross to discuss safe conduct and distribution of Red Cross relief in areas controlled by Japan.\textsuperscript{116} Dr Fritz Paravicini, a Swiss medical doctor who had tended the foreign legations in Tokyo for decades and served as the International Committee’s delegate to Japan in the First World War, was appointed in February 1942 as the International Committee of the Red Cross’ delegate in Tokyo. This appointment gave some cause for hope that the physical presence of an International Committee delegate would aid in persuading the Japanese government to cooperate with Red Cross prisoner of war relief efforts.\textsuperscript{117} On 5 February 1942 the Japanese government advised the

\textsuperscript{112} Checkland, \textit{Humanitarianism and the Emperor’s Japan}; Ethel McCaul, \textit{Under the Care of the Japanese War Office} (London: Cassell, 1904); Moorhead, \textit{Dunant’s Dream}, 473.


\textsuperscript{116} MCE 3 February 1942, 4; “Japan and the Red Cross,” \textit{The Argus}, 17 April 1942, 1.

\textsuperscript{117} Despite his extensive experience in working with the International Red Cross, Dr Paravicini came to be regarded by Allied governments and Red Cross Societies as insufficiently forceful or energetic to positively advance the agenda of the Red Cross in the face of Japanese intransigence. When he died in 1943, Dr Paravicini’s loss was not mourned by Allied governments, Red Cross Societies or the prisoners he represented – “Appointment and Reports
International Committee and Allied governments that it would apply the 1929
*Geneva Convention mutatis mutandis*[^118] and:

> Observe the terms of the Prisoners of War Convention *taking into account national and racial customs*.[^119]

This was a superficially significant achievement that resulted from Geneva’s lobbying, as Japan had signed but not ratified the *Prisoners of War Convention*.[^120] The proviso that the 1929 *Geneva Convention* would be applied *mutatis mutandis* provided Japan with a legalism allowing it to assert that it was abiding by international humanitarian law while simultaneously modifying these obligations when convenient.[^121] The assurance that prisoners would be treated in accordance with Japan’s national and racial customs was no assurance at all, as these customs provided for very little respect to be accorded to prisoners of war.[^122] The limited resources of the Japanese, when combined with reluctance to smooth the passage of supplies from the International Committee or Allied Red Cross Societies, further exacerbated the poor conditions of Japan’s prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific region.[^123]

**Initial Red Cross Relief Efforts for Prisoners of War in the Asia-Pacific**

By January 1942, Allied Red Cross Societies had developed plans for the provision of Red Cross relief supplies to the Allied prisoners and civilian internees held by the advancing Japanese.[^124] The Australian and British Red Cross Societies intended to deliver 20,000 weekly 10 pound relief packages to prisoners held by Japan - a system which had proven successful for Allied

[^118]: MCE 17 February 1942, 3. Emphasis added.
[^123]: MCE 6 January 1942, 2.
prisoners of war in Europe.\textsuperscript{125} Cooperation was sought from the American, Canadian and Argentine Red Cross Societies to assist in the implementation and sharing of costs of this relief program.\textsuperscript{126} It was planned that shipments of supplies would be made to neutral ports, such as Macao, at which point they would be transferred to Japanese ships for distribution under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross.\textsuperscript{127}

The plans of Allied Red Cross Societies to provide a prisoner of war and civilian internee relief program in the East proved extremely difficult to implement. Given the logistical demands posed by the global war on shipping, it was difficult for the Allied Red Cross Societies to procure suitable vessels that could sail under a neutral flag to deliver relief supplies to prisoners of the Japanese.\textsuperscript{128} By mid-January 1942, it became apparent that Japanese authorities would be uncooperative in consenting to supply shipments, or arranging the distribution of relief.\textsuperscript{129} While the Japanese government gave assurances in January 1942 that it would provide information regarding prisoners in its power to Geneva, this information was not readily forthcoming.\textsuperscript{130} Without information regarding prisoner numbers, names and locations, the Allied Red Cross Societies faced a daunting task in estimating how much relief it should attempt to provide and where it should be delivered.\textsuperscript{131}

The Japanese announcement in February 1942 that they would adhere to the 1929 Prisoner of War Convention provided impetus for the further development of plans for relief shipments to the Asia-Pacific region.\textsuperscript{132} Allied Red Cross Societies decided in March 1942 that an initial shipment amounting to 3,000 tons of prisoner of war relief should proceed from America to the East China coast, followed by a second 5,000 ton shipment from Australia to Malaya.\textsuperscript{133}

\textsuperscript{125}Ibid.; MCE 13 January 1942, 1.
\textsuperscript{126}MCE 6 January 1942, 2; MCE 3 February 1942, 4.
\textsuperscript{127}MNE 10 October 1944, 17; Moorhead, \textit{Dunant’s Dream}, 472.
\textsuperscript{128}MCE 13 January 1942, 1.
\textsuperscript{129}Ibid.; MCE 27 January 1942, 4.
\textsuperscript{130}MCE 20 January 1942, 5; MCE 28 April 1942, 4; MCC 26 January 1943, 9; MCC 29 March 1943, 3.
\textsuperscript{131}For the detailed Swiss account of efforts to provide relief shipments to the Far East see: ICRC, \textit{Report of the ICRC Volume 1 - General Activities}, 455-457.
\textsuperscript{132}MCE 17 February 1942, 3.
\textsuperscript{133}MCE 3 March 1942, 1.
The proposed Australian shipment was to be financed by the Australian government, making clear the convergence of the government's interest with the Red Cross' relief to prisoners of war. The Australian government financed the shipment despite the fact that this risked the prisoner of war relief on board being rendered beyond the protection of the Geneva Conventions as it could not be characterised as a neutral Red Cross shipment.\footnote{MCE 10 March 1942, 1.} This risk was explicitly recognised by both the Australian government and Red Cross. The Society's Central Executive:

Recommended that when publicity [was] permitted it should state the shipment is being sent by the Red Cross and not by the Government, as any suggestion that the shipment is being made by the Government would entitle the Japanese to seize the goods.\footnote{MCE 3 March 1942, 1.}

This legal sleight of hand soon degenerated into a debacle. Prime Minister John Curtin could not resist generating political capital with the Australian public by announcing in mid-March 1942 that the government would send a shipment of foodstuffs to Singapore.\footnote{MCE 17 March 1942, 1.} As the Australian Red Cross rapidly pointed out to the government, the Prime Minister's announcement was the converse to that which the Society and government required to ensure that relief shipments would be allowed safe passage by the Japanese.\footnote{Ibid.} The damage was done, however, and in late March 1942 the Japanese government advised the International Committee of the Red Cross that it would not allow shipments of food and medicine to be delivered for the benefit of prisoners of war to the East China coast or Malaya.\footnote{MCE 24 March 1942, 2.} Curtin's attempt to make political hay from the shipment must have served to reinforce the Japanese view that National Red Cross Societies were a branch of government to be wielded for the war effort.\footnote{Moorhead, Dunant's Dream, 292-293, 297.}

Further shipments to the China Coast and Malaya that were planned for 1942 by the Allied Red Cross Societies foundered for months on the obstacle of Japan's refusal to grant safe conduct or approve distribution of relief. It was not
until late November 1942 that approval was granted for a single Japanese ship, the *Asama Maru*, to travel to the neutral Portugese colony of Laurenco Marques for the purpose of collecting a pooled Allied shipment of relief supplies. This shipment was then forwarded to Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Yokohama for distribution by the Japanese Red Cross under the supervision of the International Committee’s delegates.\(^{140}\) The vast reservoir of publicly-funded Red Cross supplies that was accumulated by Allied Societies continued to be contained by Japan’s recalcitrance.\(^{141}\)

**The International Committee’s Frustration in the Asia-Pacific**

By Christmas 1942, the International Committee of the Red Cross’ delegates had operated in Japan’s sphere of influence for a year. Dr Morel advised the Australian Society that:

> Everything possible was being done by the International Committee's delegates in the Far East… the prisoners were cared for to the best of the delegates’ ability and were in good spirits.\(^{142}\)

The veracity of positive reports of Japanese camp conditions that came from the International Committee’s delegates was the subject of doubt by Allied governments, Red Cross Societies and even within some quarters in Geneva. It was suspected that the International Committee’s delegates has been shown ‘model camps’, as had been the case in Germany, in an attempt to deflect criticism of Japanese treatment of prisoners of war. In addition, there was concern that the reliability of the information provided by the Swiss delegates was tainted by threats of personal physical consequences if critical reports came to the notice of Japanese authorities.\(^{143}\)

In late January 1943, the unreliable nature of the positive Christmas 1942 reports became apparent when the International Committee revealed that the diet of the prisoners in the Asia-Pacific region was extremely poor and little

\(^{140}\) MCE 28 April 1942, 2; MCE 20 October 1942, 1; MCE 28 October 1942, 5; MCE 17 November 1942, 1; “Red Cross Ship to Sail For Japan,” *The Argus*, 2 July 1942, 3.

\(^{141}\) MCE 28 October 1942, 5.

\(^{142}\) MCE 5 January 1953, 2.

\(^{143}\) Moorhead, *Dunant’s Dream*, 472-480.
information was provided by the Japanese regarding their captives.\textsuperscript{144} John Roxburgh advised Wilfred Johnson, that:

In a report received only this week from the International representative at Shanghai, there is the reverse of any hope… even being considered. Incidentally, this report was a most distressing one to read and conditions in the Shanghai area are apparently appalling.\textsuperscript{145}

The Australian Red Cross became dissatisfied with the failure of the International Committee’s delegates to make significant and verifiable progress in improving the conditions of prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific region. Dr Morel was invited to the Society’s Central Council meeting on 23 February 1943, at which a resolution was passed demanding stronger advocacy by the International Committee to improve the conditions of prisoners held by the Japanese.\textsuperscript{146} The Council’s resolution implied that the International Committee was not doing enough to cajole Tokyo towards meeting standards of international humanitarian law.\textsuperscript{147} Thus, Europe’s example of an active, successful and cooperative role for the International Committee and national societies began to degenerate in the Asia-Pacific region as frustration led to tension in the international Red Cross movement. The full price of this frustration was, however, yet to be paid by the Red Cross.

By mid-1943, John Roxburgh had already given up hope of further diplomatic progress being made by the Swiss in the Asia-Pacific region. He summarised the reasons for his conclusion when he confided to Wilfred Johnson, Chairman of the New South Wales Division of the Society, that:

I am afraid that it is only wishful thinking that the Japanese will ever permit of foodstuffs being sent to our prisoners. I would not like you to

\textsuperscript{144} MCC 26 January 1943, 9.
\textsuperscript{145} “Letter from John Roxburgh to Wilfred Johnson 2 July 1943,” Box 2.58, ARCNA, 2.
\textsuperscript{146} MCC 23 February 1953, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{147} In fact, the resolution passed by the Council was less vehement than that which John Roxburgh would have preferred. Roxburgh unsuccessfully sought to make a further statement seeking that the International Committee show further interest in Asia-Pacific prisoners of war - MCC 23 February 1953, 2-3.
mention this outside, of course, but after all, it is now 17 months since
the fall of Singapore and at this stage they have not even agreed to the
appointment of an International Red Cross representative in Malaya,
Java, Burma and the Philippines... They have refused permission for
ships to enter Japanese controlled waters with neutral crews and have
also refused to allow International Red Cross ships manned and
controlled by the International Committee of the Red Cross to enter their
waters. I am afraid that I am so pessimistic... I think they have such a
total disregard for the lives of their own people that they are not going to
worry about the lives of their own captives.148

Despite Roxburgh’s pessimism, the International Committee and Allied Red
Cross societies continued diplomatic efforts to reinforce awareness of Japan’s
international legal obligations. The Allied Red Cross Societies called for
prisoners of war under Japanese control to be given full Red Cross service and
asked for constructive advice as to the best means of transporting relief
supplies to prisoners.149 The International Committee supported the demands of
the Allied Societies with a further cable to all belligerents on 30 December 1943.
The International Committee emphasised article 2 of the 1929 Geneva
Convention, which prohibited reprisals against prisoners of war, and requested
that nations not modify in any way the legal status of prisoners of war and
civilian internees.150

Once again, however, Japanese authorities failed to reply to Red Cross
requests for service to prisoners of war and approval of routes for relief
shipping.151 The subordination of the Japanese Red Cross society to Japan’s
Ministry of War compounded the delays and difficulties faced by the Swiss
when attempting to operate in territory controlled by Japan.152 The International
Committee’s delegates in South East Asia remained unrecognised by Japanese

148 “Letter from John Roxburgh to Wilfred Johnson 2 July 1943,” Box 2.58, ARCNA, 2.
149 MCC 26 October 1943, 4-5; MCC 28 March 1944, 3.
150 MCC 11 April 1944, 4.
151 MCE 9 November 1943, 3; MCC 28 March 1944, 3; “Japan’s Ban on Relief Ships: Red Cross
    Cannot Meet Appeals,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 October 1943, 4; “Japan Ignores POW
    Rules: Red Cross Barred from Camps,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 15 October 1943, 7.
authorities until after their capitulation in August 1945, limiting their ability to obtain access to prisoners.\(^{153}\)

The ongoing refusal by Japan to approve Red Cross shipments, or otherwise comply with the spirit of the *Geneva Conventions*, had the capacity to harm both prisoners of war and the Red Cross movement itself.\(^{154}\) This risk became acute following public statements in January 1944 by the Allied governments criticising Japanese treatment of prisoners of war.\(^{155}\) These statements were based in part on the International Committee’s reply to demands from the Australian government for detailed information regarding the number and condition of prisoners of war in Japanese hands.\(^{156}\) Geneva admitted there was little that the Swiss organisation could do to relieve poor conditions in prisoner of war camps operated by Japan.\(^{157}\)

**Allied Prisoner of War Relief Policy in the Asia-Pacific**

While frustration with the International Committee’s prisoner of war relief efforts in the Asia-Pacific developed, the relationships between the Australian Red Cross, the Australian government and Allied governments were also tested by similar challenges. As an adjunct to the frustrated efforts of the International Committee, the Australian government and national Red Cross society attempted to cooperate with their British Empire and American counterparts in an attempt to bring about regular relief shipments to the Asia-Pacific region.\(^{158}\) These efforts illustrated the extent of the symbiotic relationship between national governments and Red Cross societies, and the tensions within these


\(^{154}\) “US Red Cross Offer to Send Ship Loaded with Supplies for Prisoners Not Accepted by Japs,” *The Argus*, 14 February 1944, 12.

\(^{155}\) MCC 22 February 1944, 3.

\(^{156}\) “Cable from Australian Ministry of External Affairs to ICRC 31 October 1943,” Gouvernements – Australie, G 85/014, Document 10, ICRC. A similar request was made in: “Cable from Australian Ministry of External Affairs to ICRC 5 January 1944,” Gouvernements – Australie, G 85/014, Document 12, ICRC.


\(^{158}\) ARCAR 1943-44, 23.
relationships. The failure of Allied efforts to achieve substantially improved conditions for prisoners of war held by Japan, in comparison to the attempts of the International Committee, demonstrated the inherent flaws in the Red Cross movement’s reliance upon the principle of reciprocity. The close relationship between national Red Cross societies and belligerent governments was both a strength and a weakness of the international Red Cross movement. These relationships allowed the national societies and governments to assist each other, yet resulted in Japan frustrating the activities of the Red Cross, which it reasonably equated with the wartime efforts of the Allies.

An Empire Red Cross Standing Conference was established in London in February 1943 as a forum for discussing prisoner of war matters between British Empire Red Cross Societies, with an emphasis on the situation in the Asia-Pacific region.\(^\text{159}\) While inter-governmental negotiations had been taking place since the outbreak of war with Japan to arrange the transport of food to prisoners of war, the national and international components of the Red Cross were excluded from these discussions.\(^\text{160}\) The discussions between Allied governments presumed the compliant cooperation of their national Red Cross societies on the basis that:

\[
\text{The machinery will be Red Cross and the costs largely Governmental, as the task in relationship to the Far East would be beyond the combined resources of the National Red Cross Societies.}\quad \text{\textsuperscript{161}}
\]

The conference in London formed the foundations for a Standing Conference in Washington at which Red Cross representatives from America and the British Empire met with the object of discussing proposals for the delivery of relief to prisoners of war in Japanese hands.\(^\text{162}\) The Washington Standing Conference became the peak body of Allied Red Cross Societies concerned with assisting prisoners of war. The Australian Central Executive understood the importance

\(^{159}\) MCE 16 February 1943, 3.
\(^{160}\) MCE 13 April 1943, 3-4.
\(^{161}\) Ibid.
of decisions made at the Washington Conference, yet meekly accepted the British Empire Red Cross Standing Conference’s appointment of Sir Kerr Fraser-Tytler as representative of all Dominion Red Cross Societies at the Washington Conference.\textsuperscript{163} While he had not been approved by the Australian Society, Sir Kerr had all the attributes that the British Red Cross and Anglophile London Committee were likely to find. In addition to having been British Minister to Afghanistan for many years, Sir Kerr was a Lieutenant-Colonel and had been awarded a swag of decorations including a CMG, KBE and MC.\textsuperscript{164}

Reducing the representation of all the Dominions to one ambassador at the Washington Conference removed the ability of countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada to advance policies in their particular national interests.\textsuperscript{165} While this measure provided the basis for smoother progress at the Washington Conference, it also reduced the opportunity for the Dominions to exercise independent judgment or express dissenting views from those of the British. As had been made clear by Japan’s success in 1942, the Imperial defence policy of successive British governments in the Asia-Pacific region did not necessarily coincide with Australia’s interests. The isolation of Australian Red Cross representatives from the making of key wartime decisions mirrored the exclusion of the Australian government from many of the war councils held between the British and Americans. Australian politicians and their representatives found themselves subject to isolation and selective consultation by the powers of London and Washington. As national Red Cross Societies were closely integrated with their respective governments, the manner in which Allied governments communicated and cooperated with each other was replicated by their Red Cross Societies.\textsuperscript{166} Relief efforts that benefited British or American prisoners may not necessarily have been in the best interests of prisoners of war from Dominion countries. As most Australians and New Zealanders were held by the Japanese in South East Asia, for example, relief

\textsuperscript{163} The London Committee was heavily influenced by its close integration with the British Red Cross and was unlikely to agitate for separate representation of Australia at the Washington Conference - MCE 15 February 1944, 4.
\textsuperscript{164} MNC 24 October 1944, 5-6; “Sir Kerr Fraser-Tytler Diary and Correspondence”, Box 1.94, ARCONA.
\textsuperscript{165} MCE 15 February 1944, 4.
shipments to North Asia or the East China Coast provided little succour for them.\footnote{167}

A lack of consultation by the dominant British and Americans, the delivery of outdated progress reports by Sir Kerr, and the formulation of relief plans that stood little chance of benefiting Australian prisoners of war continued to frustrate the Australian Red Cross until the conclusion of the war.\footnote{168} The Australian Society was briefly represented by the Chairman of the National Stores Committee, G A Caro, and the Secretary-General, Alfred Brown, at the Washington Conference between August and October 1944.\footnote{169} Caro and Brown did not achieve significant changes in the policies or procedures of the Washington Conference.\footnote{170} Following their departure, the Australian Red Cross did not establish a permanent independent representative.\footnote{171} As was the fate of many Australian political expeditions to London and Washington during the war, the Australian representatives were successfully placated, distracted, diverted and delayed by their British and American counterparts.\footnote{172} The Australians left their councils with the more powerful Allies with only a sliver of the assurances and progress they had traveled so far to obtain.\footnote{173}

It was a measure of the frustration of Allied Red Cross societies and governments that Caro and Brown brought back from Washington a bold and desperate strategy for delivering relief to prisoners of the Japanese. As a means of countering the obstructionist delays that ensued from waiting for Japan to approve shipments and provide a suitable vessel, it was proposed that the onus be put on the Japanese to accept a relief ship that was sailed into their

\footnote{167} Even in the case of Thailand, where many Australian prisoners were held, the Australian Red Cross was willing to defer to the judgment of the British Red Cross and International Committee in the coordination of relief efforts - MCE 14 March 1944, 1-2. It was estimated by British authorities that 5,000 British and 2,000 Australians were held in Java, while 2,000 British and 1,500 Australians were prisoners in Borneo and Sarawak. The proposed shipments by the northern route were of little assistance to these men - MNE 17 October 1944, 3.

\footnote{168} MCE 9 May 1944, 2; MNE 30 May 1944, 2; MNE 4 July 1944, 2; MNE 12 July 1944, 2; MNE 18 July 1944, 2; MNE 14 August 1945, 4; “Sir Kerr Fraser-Tytler Diary and Correspondence”, Box 1.94, ARCNA.

\footnote{169} MNE 12 July 1944, 3; MNE 1 August 1944, 2; MNC 22 August 1944, 2.

\footnote{170} MNC 24 October 1944, 5.

\footnote{171} MNE 17 October 1944, 3.

\footnote{172} MNC 24 October 1944, 5.

This was obviously a desperate proposition, as such a shipment risked being sunk, rejected or impounded by Japanese authorities. Nevertheless, it was felt at the Washington Conference that such a bold and perilous decision to force relief supplies for prisoners of war upon Japan was justified by the failure to make adequate progress through other means. By late 1944, those at the Washington Conference believed that the traditional diplomatic methods of negotiation and offers of reciprocal services to secure relief to prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific region had been exhausted.

The Integration of Military Victory & Prisoner of War Relief

Two developments occurred in late 1944 that put a stop to the perilous concept of forcing relief shipments upon Japan. After a year of frustrating negotiation and bureaucratic wrangling, the first shipment of relief between Vladivostok and Kobe was completed in November 1944 aboard the *Hakusan Maru*. The contents of this first shipment were distributed amongst British Empire, American and Dutch prisoners. Sir Kerr Fraser-Tytler advised the Australian Society that the International Committee was attempting to ensure that some of the shipment was transferred to prisoners of war in South East Asia. While the cargo of the *Hakusan Maru* could only represent a mere sliver of the relief required by prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific, the vessel’s voyage provided a basis for hope of further shipments. This took the heat from the argument that direct and unauthorised shipments of relief were necessary.

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174 MNC 24 October 1944, 5.
175 Alternative plans made at the Washington Conference to drop supplies from the air into areas where prisoners of war were interned had a similar air of desperation about them. Air drops of supplies would have required control of both the area surrounding the prisoner of war camps and the air above them. If these preconditions were available, the prisoners themselves could have been liberated. Japan was unlikely to approve the flight of aircraft over its territory, even those of an ostensibly neutral Red Cross character, due to the military intelligence opportunities such flights could potentially provide the Allies. In the unlikely event that approval of prisoner of war supply flights was granted, the Japanese had previously demonstrated little evidence that the supplies would be provided to prisoners when they reached the ground - MNE 7 August 1945, 1; “Sir Kerr Fraser-Tytler Diary and Correspondence”, Box 1.94, ARCNA.
176 MNC 24 October 1944, 5.
177 MNC 21 November 1944, 3.
178 MNE 3 July 1945, 1.
179 MNC 21 November 1944, 3.
180 In fact, the exigencies of naval warfare rapidly caused this source of comfort to founder. In April 1945, a United States Navy submarine sank the *Awa Maru*, a Japanese ship that was returning from the distribution of Red Cross supplies to prisoners of war. The *Awa Maru* was a
More significantly, military victories over Japan in the Pacific, New Guinea and the Philippines raised hopes that the Allied Red Cross societies would soon be able to provide relief to prisoners of war as their camps were overrun by Allied forces. This accorded with a pragmatic policy that the Australian Red Cross had formulated earlier in 1944. In March 1944 the Central Executive determined, but did not publicise, that the Society should make concerted preparations for Field Force units to descend upon prisoners of war as they were liberated. The Society’s leadership thereby acknowledged that preparing to provide extensive Red Cross services to prisoners upon their liberation was likely to be a more fruitful use of resources than the uncertain benefits that could be derived from sending irregular shipments of supplies to an uncertain Japanese reception.

In May 1944, the Australian Red Cross convened the Australian Standing Conference (Far East) of all organisations interested in the practical and political problems inherent in delivering relief to prisoners of the Japanese. This conference was privately acknowledged by the Central Executive as an exercise in defending the reputation of the Society and promoting its approach of delivering Red Cross aid in the wake of military force. The Central Executive noted that the objectives of the Australian Standing Conference (Far East) were:

casualty of the United States Navy’s relentless, and increasingly successful, campaign to strangle Japanese military and economic power by sinking its transport fleet. Nevertheless, a small number of relief shipments from Vladivostok continued to successfully navigate their way through Japanese bureaucracy and American torpedoes. These shipments ceased by July 1945 when the diplomatic uproar created by the sinking of the Awa Maru was inflamed to the point where Japan refused to approve the transit of further supplies from Vladivostok - MNE 13 March 1945, 2; MNE 17 April 1945, 1; MNE 15 May 1945, 2; MNC 24 July 1945, 3; “Sir Kerr Fraser-Tytler Diary and Correspondence”, Box 1.94, ARCNA; Roger Dingman, The Ghost of War – The Sinking of the Awa Maru and Japanese – American Relations 1945-1995 (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997); United States Strategic Bombing Survey, The Campaigns of the Pacific War (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969); Donald Macintyre, The Battle for the Pacific (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1966); Fletcher Pratt, Fleet Against Japan (New York: Harper, 1946); ICRC, Report of the ICRC Volume 1 - General Activities, 460; Joan Beaumont, “Victims of War: The Allies & The Transport of Prisoners of War By Sea,” Journal of the Australian War Memorial 2 (April 1983), 1-7.


MCE 21 March 1944, 2.

MCE 16 May 1944, 2; ARCAR 1943-44, 23; ARCAR 1944-45, 28; “ARC Reports on Standing Committee on POW and Internees in the Far East,” A1066, IC45/48/9, NAA.
To relieve to some extent the anxiety of relatives who feel that not sufficient is being done; to promote better relations between Red Cross and other bodies; and, if possible, to discuss plans which it may be possible to put into effect as the war in the Pacific moves onwards.\textsuperscript{184}

The final objective of the Conference, ‘to discuss plans which it may be possible to put into effect as the war in the Pacific moves onwards’, was a significant but tacit development of the Society’s relief policy. In conjunction with other Allied governments, national Red Cross societies and the International Committee, the Australian Red Cross had previously pursued a policy of attempting to persuade the Japanese to approve the delivery of relief supplies to prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific region.\textsuperscript{185} As international diplomatic appeals were consistently frustrated, the Australian Red Cross moved to an unpublicised policy of preparing to deliver relief to prisoners of war upon their liberation by Allied military forces. The Australian Red Cross negotiated with the Army, Australian government and Netherlands East Indies government-in-exile to develop relief plans upon the liberation of prisoners held by the Japanese.\textsuperscript{186} The Society’s leadership saw that Allied victories in the Pacific were a precursor to Japan’s defeat, which would gradually provide physical access to prisoners. This was, in effect, an acknowledgment that any illusions that Japan would abide by the legal terms of the \textit{Geneva Conventions} had been shattered. Instead, Red Cross relief was to be delivered to prisoners of war in the wake of military force.\textsuperscript{187}

Whereas the Allied governments and armies relied upon the Red Cross to deliver aid to prisoners of war in Europe, the relationship was reversed in the

\textsuperscript{184} MCE 21 March 1944, 2.
\textsuperscript{186} MNE 6 March 1945, 2-3; MNC 27 July 1945, 4; MNC 28 August 1945, 2; “Report of Speeches Delivered at 31\textsuperscript{st} Annual Meeting of the ARC 19 November 1945,” Series NO13, ARCNA, 6; “ARC Proposal for Collaboration with Government in Relief of Liberated POW and Internees,” A1066, IC45/48/4, NAA; Day, \textit{The Politics of War}, 479-480.
\textsuperscript{187} MCE 4 April 1944, 3; MCE 23 May 1944, 2.
Asia-Pacific region. The national Red Cross societies followed in the wake of the Allied armies with which they were embedded to deliver assistance to prisoners of war held by Japan.\textsuperscript{188} This policy exposed the inherent flaw in the international Red Cross movement’s claim that it enabled the impartial delivery of humanitarian aid. In the absence of an Allied military victory, the movement possessed no realistic alternative to its traditional method of delivering humanitarian aid to prisoners of war. This approach was reliant upon the national governments involved recognising a reciprocal benefit in doing so. The Japanese pragmatically and understandably equated the efforts of national Red Cross societies and, to some extent, the International Committee with those of Allied governments. When this realisation regarding the integration of Red Cross societies with enemy war efforts was combined with the limited resources of the Japanese military and its hostile attitude to prisoners, the principle of reciprocal humanitarian treatment foundered.\textsuperscript{189}

Despite Japan’s equation of the interests of governments with their national Red Cross societies, the failure of the Red Cross to deliver relief under the aegis of reciprocal humanitarian treatment was not something that the Australian government wished to be associated with. As the day of victory over Japan loomed, the Australian government sought to distance itself from the frustration and inertia that characterised the Red Cross’ prisoner of war relief efforts in the Asia-Pacific region.\textsuperscript{190} A conference was held on 28 February 1945 in Canberra between the Australian government and the Australian Red Cross leaders most concerned with the direction of prisoner of war relief.\textsuperscript{191} The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Army, Francis Forde, chaired the meeting in the presence of the Secretary of the Department of Army, military officers and External Affairs Department officials.\textsuperscript{192} John Newman Morris sought details of

\textsuperscript{188} MCE 21 March 1944, 2; ARCAR 1943-44, 23; “ARC Reports on Standing Committee on POW and Internees in the Far East,” A1066, IC45/48/9, NAA; ICRC, Report of the ICRC Volume 1 - General Activities, 455-457; Waterford, Prisoners of the Japanese in World War II; Towe, Kosuge & Kibata, Japanese Prisoners of War.
\textsuperscript{190} “ARC Proposal for Collaboration with Government in Relief of Liberated POW and Internees,” A1066, IC45/48/4, NAA.
\textsuperscript{191} MNE 6 March 1945, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid. Forde was later a caretaker Prime Minister from 6 July 1945 to 13 July 1945 between
official plans for giving service to prisoners of war and internees held by Japan so that the Red Cross could assist the government’s efforts.\textsuperscript{193} Forde and Mr Sinclair, the Secretary of the Department of Army, evasively advised that while the government desired to provide the Red Cross with further information:

The release of and the giving of relief to liberated prisoners of war and internees is a matter for the [Allied] United Nations whose plan has not yet reached the interested governments. In the meantime, the plans of the Australian Army envisage the assistance of the Australian Red Cross and there is no reason to expect that the Society’s interest and work will suffer in any way when the complete plan is known.\textsuperscript{194}

Newman Morris was also informed that the government would not grant permission to send Field Force units attached to the headquarters of General Douglas McArthur and Lord Louis Mountbatten. It had been hoped that the Field Force could advance with Allied troops into the Asia-Pacific region, establishing Red Cross infrastructure and delivering relief to prisoners of war as they were liberated.\textsuperscript{195} The government provided little tangible information regarding what detailed plans, if any, had been made for prisoner of war relief.\textsuperscript{196} It may have been some consolation to the Australian Society that they were not alone in their predicament. Field Force Commissioner Langley reported from London that relations between the British Red Cross and the War Office were similarly vexed.\textsuperscript{197}

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\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 3. Prior to his death on 5 July 1945, Prime Minister John Curtin allowed the Australian Red Cross access to Australian government information regarding prisoners of war by means of weekly meetings with Army authorities. The flow of information was clearly insufficient to enable the Red Cross to clearly determine that the government’s post-war prisoner relief plans – "Report of Speeches Delivered at 31st Annual Meeting of the ARC 19 November 1945," Series NO13, ARCNA, 6; “ARC Proposal for Collaboration with Government in Relief of Liberated POW and Internees,” A1066, IC45/48/4, NAA; Day, \textit{The Politics of War}, 479-480.

\textsuperscript{194} "Report of Speeches Delivered at 31st Annual Meeting of the ARC 19 November 1945,” Series NO13, ARCNA, 6.

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid; MNE 6 March 1945, 2-3; MNC 27 July 1945, 4; MNC 28 August 1945, 2; “ARC Proposal for Collaboration with Government in Relief of Liberated POW and Internees,” A1066, IC45/48/4, NAA; Day, \textit{The Politics of War}, 479-480.

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{197} MNC 28 August 1945, 2.
\end{flushleft}
The Australian government’s failure to involve the Red Cross in the formulation of further prisoner of war relief plans may have been due to an expectation that the Society would simply follow in the Army in the wake of military victory.198 As the principle of reciprocity proved largely ineffectual in dealing with Japan and was replaced by a policy of delivering relief following military force, the Red Cross’ traditional diplomatic advantages offered little benefit to the Australian government. The failure to successfully deliver relief to prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific region without the backing of government-controlled military force tainted the reputation of the Red Cross movement. Governments must have wished to avoid sharing in responsibility for this failure by closely aligning the formulation of their relief policies at the conclusion of the war with the Red Cross. Therefore, while the Australian government and military benefited from logistical integration with the Australian Red Cross in many respects, there was not a pragmatic imperative to closely involve the Society in developing the government’s plans for prisoner of war relief as the conflict with Japan drew to a close.

Opening the Floodgates

By June 1945, Allied military advances on the ground began to reap results for some prisoners of war held by the Japanese. This provided the Australian Red Cross with an opportunity to deliver aid to prisoners of war in the wake of military victories over Japan. The recapture of Rangoon, in Burma, by British Empire forces allowed the recovery of prisoners of war and their evacuation to Calcutta after three and a half years of captivity.199 The Australian Red Cross’ Field Force unit based in Ceylon was instrumental in ensuring the welfare of these men during the early stages of their repatriation.200 The recovery of prisoners from Burma was the initial stage of a massive repatriation operation. In mid-1945, the British Red Cross Mission in Washington estimated that there were 127,000 British Empire prisoners of war and civilian internees in Japanese

198 “ARC Proposal for Collaboration with Government in Relief of Liberated POW and Internees,” A1066, IC45/48/4, NAA.
199 MNE 12 June 1945, 2.
200 Ibid.
hands.\textsuperscript{201} These citizens of the British Empire were accompanied by an estimated 50,000 Dutch and 14,000 American prisoners.\textsuperscript{202} As Burma was returned to the British Empire, the projected reconquest of Borneo and Malaya by Allied forces resulted in the Australian Red Cross being requested to provide Field Force units in these regions.\textsuperscript{203}

Japan’s defeat on 15 August 1945 had an effect on the Australian Red Cross’ ability to provide relief to prisoners of war that may be likened to the opening of floodgates.\textsuperscript{204} Allied military victory was followed by the sudden release of a vast hoard of accumulated supplies, personnel and money when it became possible to access prisoners and internees in the Asia-Pacific region. The Allied Red Cross societies and air forces rapidly arranged to drop £1,250,000 worth of stores, medical supplies, food and clothing by air to previously identified prisoner of war camps.\textsuperscript{205} The Society’s field personnel accompanied Australian Army prisoner of war Reception Units and Royal Navy ships that rapidly descended into Manila, Borneo, Singapore, Shanghai, Formosa and Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{206} The Reception Groups comprised a mix of male and female Red Cross personnel who were assisted by seconded Army personnel.\textsuperscript{207} Field Force members were finally able to directly provide tons of food and clothing relief to prisoners of war and civilian internees. A shipment of 4,500 tons of relief supplies was delivered from Australia to Singapore aboard the steamer \textit{Admiral Chase} in October 1945.\textsuperscript{208} Australian Red Cross supplies and personnel were the first to arrive in most Asia-Pacific areas, while the British and Indian Red Cross Societies cooperated in providing supplementary goods and assistance.
under the leadership of Lord Louis Mountbatten. In addition, the American Red Cross agreed to pool supplies and other resources with the British Empire Red Cross Societies to provide extensive service in the Philippines.

Prisoner of War Reception Groups were established in Singapore, Labuan, Morotai and Bangalore and became the concentration points of liberated prisoners of war during their repatriation. John Newman Morris visited these prisoner of war centres, ostensibly for the purpose of supervising field relief efforts, in September 1945. The Chairman’s visit was distinctly characterised by the Society as a public relations exercise. The Australian Red Cross was conscious that the conclusion of the war heralded the era in which the Society had to publicly demonstrate its beneficial activities and expenditure of public donations. Having endured years of self-doubt, speculation and criticism of its efforts to assist prisoners of war held by the Japanese, September 1945 was the time to deliver relief to the men in whose names so many donations have flowed to the Australian Red Cross. Newman Morris was of the view that the work of the Field Force to the North of Australia enhanced the reputation of both the Society and the Australian nation. He informed the Central Council that:

In all areas I was deeply impressed with the efficiency, initiative and energy of the representatives of the Society. They were obviously doing magnificent work and the prompt and sympathetic relief given did a great deal towards the restoration of the liberated people. Everywhere praise and appreciation was expressed at the work of Australian Red Cross and it is felt that we have performed an excellent ambassadorial service regarding the future prestige of Australia throughout the areas concerned.

209 MNC 23 October 1945, 4; MNC 26 November 1945, 4.
210 MNC 23 October 1945, 4. The Australian Red Cross established a presence of 24 personnel in an American prisoner of war reception camp in Manila following Japan’s defeat - MNC 25 September 1945, 10.
212 Ibid.
213 MNC 25 September 1945, 2.
214 MNE 9 October 1945, 2.
215 MNC 23 October 1945, 3.
The ability of the Australian Red Cross to provide essential supplies and luxuries to released prisoners of war who were awaiting repatriation resulted in newfound respect for the Society by the Army. Colonel Alex Russell, then Chief Commissioner of the Field Force, reported that upon arriving in Morotai on an inspection visit he informed the commanding officer, General Berryman, of shortages of Red Cross stores and personnel in Manila. In response, Berryman made available a Liberator bomber to transport seven Field Force personnel and stores to Manila the next day. Russell was of the view that:

This is a very good indication of the rather different view Army is now taking of our efforts. It was not so long ago that transport of any sort for our personnel and stores was almost impossible to get through Army channels, and wherever I went throughout this tour I felt that the work of the Australian Red Cross Society was very much better appreciated.

When the Army found a pressing need for Red Cross service to assist the repatriation of former prisoners, the equipment required by the Society to deliver that relief was obtained from military resources. Between the Japanese surrender on 2 September 1945 and late November 1945, a total of 104,193 former prisoners of war and civilian internees were evacuated from 229 Japanese camps. The Australian prisoners who had been recovered first were repatriated on 27 September 1945. At the conclusion of 1945, only those who were unfit to travel remained in prisoner of war reception camps overseas.

The Society’s Field Force personnel provided the supplies, facilities and psychological succour necessary for the transition from captivity to civilian life. This assistance, delivered in the form of both immediate physical relief

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216 MNC 25 September 1945, 11.
217 Ibid.
218 Ibid.
219 MNC 26 November 1945, 4.
220 Ibid.
221 Ibid.
and social work services, was provided in lieu of the Army medical services. In the absence of a comprehensive military or government social service, the Red Cross filled the breach. The Society sought to address the issue of the psychological reactions inherent in the social transition of former prisoners by establishing holiday and rehabilitation homes for servicemen. In addition, the Society’s burgeoning social work service saw to the welfare of physically and psychologically damaged veterans in the aftermath of the war. It was this social service to the combatant victims of the conflict that absorbed much of the Australian Red Cross’ energies following the Second World War.

The Defence of the Red Cross’ Efforts in the Asia-Pacific

Australian Red Cross’ significant efforts to assist prisoners of war following their liberation were soured by the need to defend the Society, and the Red Cross movement in general, from criticism of its efforts during the period of their captivity. The inability to deliver relief to the prisoners of the Japanese, in whose name the majority of funds had been raised, confronted the Australian Red Cross with the challenge of defending its record at the very moment that it became capable of providing relief in the wake of Allied military victories.

The Australian Society consistently made public statements that the international Red Cross movement was doing all it could to deliver relief in the Asia-Pacific region and the failure of these efforts was due solely to the

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223 MNC 25 September 1945, 12; MNE 9 October 1945, 2; “Women Social Workers For Overseas,” The Argus, 5 November 1943, 8.
224 MNC 25 September 1945, 12; MNE 9 October 1945, 2.
227 MCE 1 February 1944, 2; MNC 20 March 1945, 6; “1,500 Tons of Red Cross Relief Stores for POWs in the Far East,” The Argus, 14 May 1945., 8. See also Chapter 1 and below.
A negative view of the Australian Red Cross’ prisoner of war relief efforts in the press was a matter that had the capacity to severely affect the Society’s public popularity and fundraising ability. In 1944 and 1945, the Society became increasingly aware of the need to prevent any criticism in the press that it was not doing enough to relieve prisoners of war in Japanese hands. The Australian Red Cross attempted to mould public opinion and prevent press criticism regarding its prisoner of war services by publishing its own ‘Prisoners of War’ periodical pamphlet from 1944. The publication was specifically designed to inform the families of prisoners about developments in prisoner of war relief. Feeling the heat of public criticism, the Australian Red Cross’ publications were directed towards:

Helping those whose relatives are prisoners of war in Japanese hands to obtain an informative viewpoint of Far East conditions.

By the term ‘informative’, the Australian Red Cross also meant ‘less critical’ of the Society, as an understanding of the difficult conditions would presumably result in a more sympathetic public view of Red Cross efforts to aid prisoners of war. The Society suppressed and diverted criticism of the adequacy of Red Cross efforts in the Asia-Pacific region until its frustration could be transformed into a story of triumph, as Red Cross relief was delivered to recovered prisoners of war in the wake of Allied victory. This approach appeared to be successful, as newspapers such as The Argus and The Sydney Morning Herald were not openly critical of Red Cross efforts to deliver relief to prisoners of war in Japanese hands.

228 For example, see ARCAR 1943-44, 50; ARCAR 1944-45, 29; “Report of Speeches Delivered at 31st Annual Meeting of the ARC 19 November 1945,” Series NO13, ARCNA, 1-2, 9-10.
229 ARCAR 1943-44, 23.
230 Ibid.
231 While there was occasional criticism in the press regarding the Society’s use of resources or the adequacy of service provided to prisoners of war in Europe, this did not extend to open criticism of efforts to provide relief to prisoners held by the Japanese. For examples of press criticism see “Denial That Comforts Ever Sold to Soldiers,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 November 1939, 11; “Alleged Sale of Red Cross Goods,” The Argus, 13 March 1940, 12; “Criticism of Red Cross Society: Lady Dugan in Reply,” The Argus, 25 June 1940, 6; “Lady Dugan on Red Cross: Condemns Critics,” The Argus, 2 July 1940, 2; “Needs of Red Cross: ‘Diversion Fear’,” The Argus, 8 July 1940, 4; “Store Not A Rubbish Dump,” The Argus, 13 July 1940, 5; “Report That Red Cross Recipient Forced to Hand Over Ration Coupons,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 October 1941, 9; “Wasted Energy,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 29 January
At the conclusion of the war, John Newman Morris declared that a:

Steady pressure was maintained on the Japanese at a Government level, backed by all possible Red Cross influence… It was in no way the fault of Allied Governments and Allied Red Cross bodies that prisoners of war and civilian internees in Japanese hands were permitted to starve so pitilessly.232

Not every member of the Australian Red Cross agreed with Newman Morris’ post-war assessment of culpability. Throughout 1944 and 1945, disquiet grew regarding whether the Red Cross was doing enough to assist prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific region. Caro and Brown’s mission to Washington in 1944 for discussions with Allied Red Cross representatives regarding efforts to relieve the plight of prisoners of war in Japanese hands was a manifestation of this concern.233 Despite his public pronouncements in support of the Australian Red Cross’ efforts to aid prisoners of war held by the Japanese, John Roxburgh did not personally believe that the Society was aggressive or independent enough in its approach.234 While an Australian Red Cross Far East Prisoner of War Committee that consulted other Red Cross organisations and governments had been instituted in September 1944, John Roxburgh did not find its work impressive.235 Exuding bitterness after resigning his post as the Society’s Treasurer, Roxburgh explained to Wilfred Johnson in April 1945 that:

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1942, 2; “Denial That Letters to POW Read or Censored,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 21 January 1942, 11; “Denial of Kenneth Slessor’s Statement Regarding Parcels for POW in Germany,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 May 1942, 11. It is unclear whether this lack of criticism of Red Cross efforts for prisoners of war held by Japan was the result of acceptance of the Red Cross’ version of events, official censorship or voluntary censorship on the part of editorial staff. See the discussion of Australian government censorship, propaganda and the Red Cross in Chapter Two. For further discussion of censorship and propaganda in Australia during the Second World War, see Hilvert, Blue Pencil Warriors; Coleman, Obscenity, Blasphemy, Sedition; Gott & Linden, Cut It Out; Spigelman, Secrecy, Political Censorship in Australia; Hasluck, The Government & The People 1942-45, 355-6, 388, 397, 399-414, 745-50. On American censorship in the same period, see Sweeney, Secrets of Victory.

233 ARCAR 1944-45, 43.
234 ARCAR 1943-44, 50.
235 ARCAR 1944-45, 28; MNC 26 September 1944, 5; “Letter from John Roxburgh to Wilfred Johnson 9 April 1945,” Box 2.59, ARCNA, 1.
For years now, I have fought [John Newman] Morris and others at Headquarters on this question of POW relief and it is only now that they are beginning to take action along the lines for which I was pressing. Frankly, it would not surprise me if the Society came in for some criticism at a later date for not taking more active and progressive steps for the relief of these men in the Far East. The Society has been completely dominated by [the Army liaison officer to the Red Cross] for years and, instead of making strong representations [on prisoner of war issues], it has accepted his say so.236

Roxburgh possessed enough experience and information to make credible his allegation that the Society too easily acquiesced to the policy of the Army regarding prisoner of war efforts. On the other hand, Roxburgh’s criticism came at a time when he had been relegated to the sidelines of the Australian Red Cross’ policy making following his resignation in December 1944. Therefore, if he had been indiscrete enough to make his assertions public, the Society could have attempted to dismiss his criticisms as the discontented grumblings of one whose time had passed.

As the Honorary Treasurer of the Society for most of the war, Roxburgh was well placed to appreciate the tension between the means by which the Red Cross raised funds and its inability to deliver the benefits of this fundraising to prisoners of war who were held by Japan. The Society expended around £8,380,000 of the £12,250,00 raised the during the war.237 Ultimately, only £3,500,000 was spent on relief to prisoners of war in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.238 This was less than a quarter of the total funds raised by the

236 “Letter from John Roxburgh to Wilfred Johnson 9 April 1945,” Box 2.59, ARCNA, 1.
237 The amount of Red Cross funds that were expended increased as the war progressed and donations increased. In the first year of the war, the Society spent £158,000 of the funds raised. This expenditure was increased to £500,000 in the second year and £1,000,000 in the third year of the conflict. The extent of the Australian Red Cross’ activities and infrastructure resulted in £2,000,000 being spent in each of the fourth and fifth years of the war. As fundraising peaked in the final year of the war, so too did expenditure in the amount of £2,725,000. See ARC, “Annual Financial Statements 1939-45,” Series NO13, ARCNA.
238 See ARC, “Annual Financial Statements 1939-45,” Series NO13, ARCNA. By comparison, the Society spent a total of £1,250,000 on the Field Force and £2,000,000 on stores by the conclusion of the war – ARC, “Annual Financial Statements 1944-1945,” Series NO13, ARCNA, 9-10.
Society during the war. The majority of these funds were expended on relief efforts for prisoners of war in Europe. The amount directly spent for the welfare of prisoners of war in Japanese captivity was a pittance in comparison to the magnitude of this issue for the Australian people and total amount of funds raised by the Australian Red Cross.

At a conference of Divisional Chairmen and Treasurers in March 1945, Mr Gifford, who had become National Treasurer after Roxburgh’s resignation, pointed out:

The danger inherent in overbalanced collections for POW funds which may at some later stage prove embarrassing to the Society because of the Trusts involved.239

The Australian Red Cross faced a challenge of accountability in fundraising. That is, the publicly-stated and implied purposes for which the Society raised money varied from the manner in which these funds were expended. The Red Cross was extremely successful in raising funds under the auspices of assisting prisoners of war, but only marginally successful in expending those funds for the benefit of the prisoners. While large sums were spent on providing relief to Australian prisoners of war in Europe, this activity by no means exhausted the Society’s funds which had been swelled by the Australian public’s concern for the plight of prisoners of war held by the Japanese.

If the Australian Red Cross had continued to raise large sums for general use by utilising publicity focused upon prisoners of war, or raised funds specifically for prisoner of war relief, and it became public knowledge that the Society was unable to spend those funds in the manner the public expected, two detrimental consequences were likely. Firstly, there was likely to be a backlash of public opinion against the Society. The Australian Red Cross risked being viewed as an organisation that siphoned money from the public by appealing to their emotive fears and humanitarian impulses, yet spent those funds on activities

239 MNC 20 March 1945, 6. In relation to Roxburgh’s resignation and his replacement by Gifford, see MNC 14 December 1944, 1-2; MNC 9 January 1945, 2.
unrelated to those that the public believed the money would be applied to. This detrimental consequence was similar to that the Australian Red Cross faced in 2003 when, in the wake of raising funds related to the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002, the Society was accused of not expending the money raised in the manner expected by the public donors.\textsuperscript{240}

Secondly, the Society risked allegations of improperly dealing with trust funds if the money donated for prisoner of war relief was formally allocated for such relief, then spent on general Australian Red Cross activities. Such allegations held the potential for expensive and embarrassing legal action that would compound any public relations backlash related to the manner in which the funds for prisoner of war relief were expended. The Society had faced a similar problem following the First World War, when significant sums were held in trust to be expended on veterans of that conflict. When the Australian Red Cross leadership formed the view that this money from the First World War was needed to support activities in the Second World War, access to those funds for expenditure on general activities was blocked because the money was held in trust. Extensive legal manoeuvring and amendments to the Society’s statutory rules were required to enable the release of First World War funds into the Australian Red Cross’ general funds.\textsuperscript{241}

Despite these risks, there were significant disincentives for the Australian Red Cross to publicly admit that it could not expend funds on services for Australian prisoners of war held by the Japanese. To do so would have undermined Red Cross fundraising campaigns and the morale of the Australian community. The work of the Society had significant value to the government in retaining the morale of Australian servicemen and civilians – particularly those who had an


\textsuperscript{241} “Report by the Honorary Treasurer John Roxburgh on Legal Position as to Funds,” Series NO14, ARCNA; ARCAR 1939-40, 45.
interest the fate of Japan’s prisoners. Any action by the Australian Red Cross that degraded morale during wartime would not have been supported by the Australian government and military with which the Society was embedded. Therefore, the Red Cross was placed in a dilemma to which there was no satisfactory solution. Neither admitting nor concealing the inability of the Society to expend funds on the prisoners of war held by Japan, in whose name money had been raised, could have shielded the Australian Red Cross from criticism.

In May 1945, a belated attempt was made to minimise the detrimental effects on the Society that would be caused by continued appeals for funds to assist prisoners of war. The Australian Red Cross published a public notice that concluded:

> It has been decided to cease to appeal for funds under Prisoner of War collection schemes and to ask those who have hitherto earmarked their contributions primarily for Prisoners of War to now make them available for all the general activities of the Society. A number of prisoners of war, however, may require, for some time following liberation from European as well as Japanese camps, all the careful and skilled auxiliary attention which the Society can provide. In order that this service by the Society may be carried on effectively, the generous support of the Australian public will still be needed. The Society for its part undertakes that if monies now in its hands primarily earmarked for Prisoner of War relief should prove to be inadequate, the general funds of the Society will be available to complete its responsibilities to Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees.

The Australian Red Cross thus attempted to reduce its potential exposure to embarrassment due to an excessive accumulation of prisoner of war funds. Despite these efforts, the Australian Red Cross was subject to post-war litigation regarding entitlements to funds that had been raised, but not spent, for the benefit of prisoners of war – see Oppenheimer, “Volunteers in Action”, 373.

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243 MNC 22 May 1945, 7. See also “POW Fund Closing,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 May 1945, 4.
244 Despite these efforts, the Australian Red Cross was subject to post-war litigation regarding entitlements to funds that had been raised, but not spent, for the benefit of prisoners of war – see Oppenheimer, “Volunteers in Action”, 373.
war to maintain public donations to the general funds by emphasising the attention prisoners would need from the Australian Red Cross upon their release from captivity. The Society’s undertaking to utilise general funds for the relief of prisoners of war if specifically donated funds were insufficient was an easy offer to make, as the problem the Australian Red Cross faced was an excess of prisoner of war funds that were unlikely to be rapidly exhausted.

The success of the Australian Red Cross in raising funds and resisting political impulses to control or restrain its financial resources was due, in great measure, to the emotional basis of the Society’s call for support of prisoners of war. As its close attention to the public perception of the Field Force demonstrated, the Red Cross was particularly sensitive to its public image. The sophisticated publicity unit of the Australian Red Cross emphasised to the public that their donations would be used to assist Australian prisoners of war. While this was particularly the case for fundraising campaigns which were specifically for the benefit of prisoners of war, the publicity that accompanied fundraising for general purposes placed an emphasis on the plight of Australian prisoners. Although there was certainly publicity regarding the Society’s assistance to sick and wounded soldiers who were not prisoners, the emotive emphasis of the Australian Red Cross’ fundraising message was upon the plight of prisoners of war in German or Japanese captivity. Excess funds could be applied to post-war humanitarian relief, but this anticipated feature of the Society’s work did not figure in fundraising publicity. The Australian public who donated to the Australian Red Cross during the Second World War could have reasonably expected that the Society would utilise the bulk of funds to provide relief to prisoners of war. This expectation was not consistently met. The means used to raise the funds, namely the plight of prisoners of war, did not accord with the manner in which such funds were expended.

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245 See Chapter Two.
246 See Chapter Three.
247 MNE 13 March 1945, 1; “ARC Publications,” A1066, IC45/48/1, NAA.
248 See Chapter Two.
The Limits of Reciprocity

After the war, the Australian Red Cross defensively acknowledged that it was unable to provide substantial relief to these prisoners until the military defeat of Japanese forces. Society’s Treasurer, Mr Gifford, announced on 19 November 1945 that:

The public rightly expected the Society to place the relief of our prisoners of war in Europe and the Far East in the forefront of its program... It is a source of great regret to us all that we were never able to do what we planned for our boys who were prisoners of war in Japanese hands. Some relief, however, was afforded them... The Society made repeated efforts to extend its service to these men but the Japanese simply would not play. It was not until their capitulation in August last that substantial relief could go forward.  

The human cost of Japan’s brutal approach to prisoners of war, and the international Red Cross movement’s failure to obtain significant access to prisoners, is one of the enduring horrors of the Second World War. Of the 132,134 Allied prisoners of war held by Japanese forces, a total of 35,756 died in Asian camps. The average 27 per cent mortality rate amongst Allied prisoners in the Asia-Pacific was exceeded by Australians, whose 7,602 deaths from a total of 21,467 prisoners amounted to a 35 per cent mortality rate. While three quarters of Australian prisoners of war were held in Asia, 97 per cent of prisoner of war deaths occurred in the Asia-Pacific. These mortalities comprised 2,194 killed by enemy weapons or presumed dead, 48 deaths due to combat wounds and 5,360 due to sickness, injury or disease. As had been

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249 ARCAR 1944-1945, 9-10. See also “£3,500,000 Still Held By Red Cross Says Mr Gifford,” The Argus, 2 April 1946, 3; “£1,291,000 POW Fund For Red Cross,” The Argus, 19 June 1946, 12.
251 Ibid.; Vamplew, Australians: Historical Statistics, 416-417. There are minor differences between sources in exact mortality rate numbers due to variances in accounting methods.
252 Ibid.
253 Ibid.
254 Ibid.
the case in Europe, there was little that Red Cross supplies could do to help those servicemen killed by enemy weapons. The high number of Australian prisoners killed by enemy weapons reflected the harsh disciplinary regime in Asian camps, Japanese cultural disdain for captured warriors, and Japan’s very poor practical adherence to the principles of the Geneva Conventions. A horrifying number of Australian servicemen succumbed to treatable sicknesses, injuries or diseases in Asia. This extremely high mortality rate was a result of the harsh tropical climate, limited resources available to the Japanese military, Japanese neglect of prisoners’ welfare, and a refusal to allow the supply of Red Cross parcels containing important medicine and supplementary food supplies.

The international Red Cross movement and Allied governments were faced with a Japanese policy and military culture that placed extremely low value on the fate of prisoners of war. Japan had not ratified the relevant Geneva Convention during the Second World War, and Japanese interpretations of international humanitarian law were at odds with Western conceptions. The Red Cross could only operate in Japanese-held territory with the consent of the Imperial Army authorities. Poor progress was made in the face of Japanese intransigence and bureaucratic delaying tactics regarding prisoner of war relief. Critically, the Japanese Red Cross was unashamedly viewed by the Japanese government as a tool to be utilised for the national war effort.

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255 Towle, Kosuge & Kibata, Japanese Prisoners of War.
257 Ibid.
258 The refusal of states to implement the 1934 Tokyo Draft for a Geneva Convention that provided protection to civilian victims of war removed the opportunity for the International Committee’s delegates to operate with unequivocal legal authority to assist civilians. While some belligerents agreed to the application of the Tokyo Draft’s principles for the protection of internees, this informal agreement did not carry the weight of a ratified Geneva Convention - ICRC, Report of the ICRC Volume 1: General Activities, 35; Haug, Humanity for All, 58-59. Similar arguments were used by the International Committee after the war in response to criticism of its failure to do more to help the victims of the Holocaust - Jean-Claude Favez, The Red Cross and the Holocaust (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
259 Moorhead, Dunant’s Dream, 297, 471, 475-477; Towle, Kosuge & Kibata, Japanese Prisoners of War.
a tool of belligerent governments. The pragmatic and poorly concealed use of the Japanese Red Cross as a tool of the Japanese government contrasts with the efforts of Allied national societies to obscure the fact that they played essentially the same role. National Red Cross societies of Western European origin, including the Australian Red Cross, cloaked their activities with rhetoric regarding their independence from government and were steeped in implicit Christian humanitarian values. The Japanese Red Cross did not adopt such a culture or attempt any serious charade of independence from government. Therefore, there was little basis for sympathetic Japanese assistance or cooperation with the Allied Red Cross Societies, who were also extensions of their own governments’ war efforts.

While the desire of Allied Red Cross Societies to avoid casting their resources into the unpredictable maw of Japan’s bureaucracy is understandable, these organisations were not short of funds. It could be argued, as John Roxburgh did in the midst of his disillusion, that ‘desperate times require desperate measures’. The Allied Red Cross Societies, and the prisoners of war who awaited their relief, had much to gain and comparatively little to lose by participating in novel schemes that attempted to break the cycle of intransigent delay in the Asia-Pacific region. Such schemes included the plans to send unauthorised shipments of relief under the aegis of the Red Cross into Japanese territory in the hope that they would be accepted and distributed where needed, and a successful attempt by the International Committee to dispatch parcels of vitamins to Japan via Moscow. Even with the benefit of hindsight, however, such desperate measures clearly had limited application due to the small amount of supplies that alternative schemes would have

260 See Chapters 1 to 3.
261 Moorehead, Dunant’s Dream, 297, 471, 475-477; Towle, Kosuge & Kibata, Japanese Prisoners of War.
262 Haug, Humanity for All, 163-174, 443-490; Max Huber, The Red Cross: Principles and Problems. (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1941). The American Red Cross was a hybrid of Western humanitarian values and the openly pragmatic exploitation by government that characterised the Japanese Red Cross – see Chapter Two and Hurd, A Compact History of the American Red Cross.
263 Moorehead, Dunant’s Dream, 297, 471, 475-477; Checkland, Humanitarianism and the Emperor’s Japan.
264 “Letter from John Roxburgh to Wilfred Johnson 9 April 1945,” Box 2.58, ARCNA, 1.
265 MNC 24 October 1944, 5; “Report by Lady Owen and Commissioner J.A. Nimmo on their visit to Geneva 18th to 30th August 1945,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1-9.
delivered at great risk. The leadership of National Societies, such as the Australian Red Cross, could not reasonably have been expected to send millions of pounds worth of unauthorised shipping, supplies and crew into Japanese waters to face possible sinking or death. Given the close association between the Australian Red Cross and Australian government, it was unlikely that the Japanese authorities would have viewed novel schemes, such as unauthorised shipments, as anything more than an extension of the Australian government’s wartime strategy.266

The International Committee of the Red Cross’ very limited success in delivering relief to prisoners of war and civilian internees held by Japan demanded explanation in the wake of the conflict. In the Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross on its Activities During the Second World War, Geneva was as defensive of its efforts to assist prisoners prior to their liberation as the Australian Red Cross had been.267 The International Committee sought to explain its shortcomings on the basis that the principle of reciprocity could not be effectively applied, arguing that negotiations with the intention of Japan informally applying the Geneva Conventions provisions regarding prisoners:

Succeeded in principle, but the result proved unsatisfactory in practice. Generally speaking, the rules on international law are implemented only on the basis of reciprocity. Practical success depends, however, not only on the principle of reciprocity but also on one national interest balancing with the other. Reciprocity in this interest may exist in interests unlike in kind, but existing in the same moment… The fact that until the year 1944, enemy or originally neutral territory was occupied by Axis powers only, threw the balance of the situation on both sides so far out that the Committee could at first do only very little, and that little only very gradually.268

266 MNC 24 October 1944, 5; MNE 7 August 1945, 1; “Report by Lady Owen and Commissioner J.A. Nimmo on their visit to Geneva 18th to 30th August 1945,” Series NO14, ARCNA, 1-9.
268 Ibid.
The very small number of Japanese prisoners of war held by the Allies militated against the effective operation of the Geneva Convention rules regarding prisoners. It was estimated by the International Committee that in October 1944, there were a mere 6,400 Japanese prisoners of war in Allied hands. In contrast, around 103,000 Allied personnel were under Japanese control. While some Japanese civilian internees and prisoners of war were held in Australia and serviced by the Red Cross, this small-scale reciprocal service was not enough to affect Japan’s approach to the treatment of its prisoners of war. In contrast to the severe attitude displayed towards captured soldiers, Japan held some sympathy for their own and foreign civilians who were interned while in enemy territory. Therefore, Japanese authorities showed interest and concern for the welfare of their civilian citizens who were interned in Australia. However, when the relatively small number of Japanese civilians held by the Allies was combined with limited resources and contempt for soldiers who allowed themselves to be captured, faint hope was offered to Japan's prisoners of war by the traditional concept of reciprocal treatment.

**Holy Grail or Poisoned Chalice?**

When the Australian government and military allocated responsibility for prisoner of war relief to the Australian Red Cross, it appeared that the Society had been given a holy grail into which poured funds and public support for the sake of prisoners of war. As the Allied governments and Red Cross Societies struggled to deliver humanitarian aid to prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific region, however, this holy grail was transformed into a poisoned chalice. The

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269 Ibid., 439.
failure to deliver substantial aid to prisoners of war in Japanese hands risked significantly damaging the international Red Cross movement, Allied governments and their respective Red Cross societies. Each government and society focused upon chiselling whatever small benefits it could for from the edifice of Japanese intransigence. As was the case with the Allied war strategy as a whole, the diverging interests of the Allied governments and Red Cross Societies became manifest at meetings such as the Washington Standing Conference on Prisoners of War. The British and Americans dominated efforts to provide aid to those in Japanese hands, prioritising efforts that would deliver aid to North Asia, thereby benefiting their countrymen and reduce the growing political cost of failure to assist prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{274} The representatives of the Australian Red Cross were marginalised and any dissenting views suppressed.\textsuperscript{275} This marginalisation was remarkably similar to the fate of other emissaries of the Australian government such as Dr Herbert Evatt, the Minister for External Affairs, and William Robinson, the businessman and ambassador-at-large of the Australian government.\textsuperscript{276}

The limits of the relationship between the Australian government and Red Cross were demonstrated by the difficulty of delivering tangible humanitarian relief to Japan’s prisoners of war. While the Society was initially enthusiastic in supporting the government by providing relief to prisoners of war, both organisations sought to limit the damage wreaked upon them by their inability to do so. The Australian government did not fully consult the Red Cross regarding its plans to deliver relief to the prisoners of the Japanese, as the Red Cross movement’s hopes of successfully applying the principle of reciprocity in the case of Japan proved hollow. Political opportunities were taken by the Australian government to both capitalise on the limited successes of the Red Cross, and to distance itself from the frustration and inertia that came to characterise Red Cross dealings with Japanese authorities. This contrasted

\textsuperscript{274} MCE 14 March 1944, 1-2; MCE 9 May 1944, 2; MNE 30 May 1944, 2; MNE 4 July 1944, 2; MNE 12 July 1944, 2; MNE 18 July 1944, 2; MNE 17 October 1944, 3; MNE 14 August 1945, 4.  
\textsuperscript{275} MNE 17 October 1944, 3; MNC 24 October 1944, 5.  
with the great extent of logistical integration between the Australian Red Cross and government in providing service to the Army by means of the Field Force.

For its part, the Society came to be concerned that the boon of massively increased public donations as a result of concern for prisoners of war would be absconded with by the government if the true extent of Red Cross funds became known. The Australian Red Cross exhibited a distrust of the government in financial matters that was not unreasonable. When the pressures of public and political criticism for failure to deliver relief to prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific region were combined with the financial demands of waging war, increased government control of Red Cross funds was not beyond contemplation. Had the Australian government been fully cognisant of the extent of the Red Cross’ funds, it may have been less enthusiastic in its endorsement of the Society’s fundraising in the name of prisoners of war.277

Ultimately, the Australian Red Cross resigned itself to an unpublicised policy of providing relief to Japan’s prisoners of war upon their liberation, rather than risking the squandering of resources in the face of Japanese intransigence. This pragmatic approach was in accord with that of the Australian government. Despite the inadequacies of communication and cooperation between the Society and government in delivering such relief, the Australian Red Cross acquitted itself well at the conclusion of the war against Japan.

The fact that such a policy had to be adopted, however, demonstrated an underlying flaw in the practical operation of the international Red Cross movement. The successful delivery of humanitarian relief to prisoners of war could only occur if the national governments involved recognised a reciprocal benefit in doing so. This was not the case with Japan. Allied societies such as the Australian Red Cross were regarded, for good reason, as extensions of their national government and military. The same was true in the case of the Red Cross societies of the Axis powers. The extremely close relationship between the Red Cross and the Australian government resulted in the interests and

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277 See Chapter 1.
actions of the national society being equated with those of the government. When this perception was combined with the even more powerful influences of a Japanese culture that placed little value on the welfare of prisoners of war, limited Japanese resources, and the imbalance of prisoner numbers between Japan and the Allies, the principle of reciprocity foundered.
Conclusion

The Australian Red Cross and the Nation-State

Australian Red Cross, Hope For All Mankind in War & Peace (Melbourne 1943) (ARTV05008, AWM)
I know we weren’t paid very much… I’d have been much better off at the Bar, but I regard my five-odd years with the AIF as the most interesting and useful period of my life.¹

- John Nimmo

As Nimmo implicitly acknowledged by referring to his service ‘with the AIF’, the Australian Red Cross was a paramilitary extension of the Australian government during the Second World War. Over the course of the conflict, the Australian Red Cross was transformed from an amateur volunteer society to a professional extension of the Australian government. The organisation legally existed for the benefit of, and at the whim of, the Australian government. The scope of the Society’s wartime activities was directed by the Australian government. The Australian Red Cross was structured in a similar manner to the Australian government. The leadership of the Society was closely aligned with, and behaved in a similar manner to, the Australian government and military. The Society’s embedding within the attitudes and activities of the Australian civilian ‘home front’ served to support the official war effort. In raising funds with the support of, and for the benefit of, the government, the Australian Red Cross cemented itself as an integral component of the Australian nation-state that coalesced during the Second World War.²

The policies of the Australian Red Cross were extensions of the wartime policies of the Australian government. Australians, such as John Nimmo, participated in the Red Cross as a means of engaging in the Australian government's war effort. Overseas aid provided by the Society was an extension of the Australian government’s foreign and military policies. The Australian Red Cross shared and supported the Australian government’s

¹ Sir John Nimmo Interview; 7.
Anglophile policy, which was directed towards maintenance of the British Empire’s influence and the dominance of parliamentary democracies over both fascist and communist forces. At the same time, the Australian government collaborated with, and was influenced by, the other great parliamentary democracy - the United States. Reflecting the behaviour of its national government, the Australian Society collaborated with, and was influenced by, the American Red Cross. The Society implemented Australian government policy regarding enemy aliens and domestic security, implicitly validating this policy with little regard to its humanitarian implications. Similarly, the organisation assisted the Australian government's policy of internment of enemy aliens and prisoners of war in Australia.

The Australian Red Cross was a paramilitary branch of the Australian military forces. It adopted military uniforms, hierarchy, law and rank. Personnel were seconded between the Army and Field Force, which shared communication facilities and a logistical infrastructure. The Field Force leadership, such as Colonel Cohen, had military experience and connections. The Society was an integral part of Australian military logistics. The Field Force and Searcher Service performed welfare and intelligence gathering activities on behalf of the Australian military. The Field Force operated with, and as part of, the Australian Army in the field throughout the Middle East, Europe, Australia, the Pacific and the Asia-Pacific.

The Australian Red Cross assumed primary responsibility for the welfare of prisoners of war on behalf of the Australian government. The Society was responsible for Australian prisoners of war in Europe. The success of the Australian Red Cross in providing relief to prisoners of war in Europe was due to the concerted policy of Allied governments, the application of the principle of reciprocity, and a humanitarian culture that was shared between the European Axis powers and Western Allies.

The Australian Red Cross was also responsible for Australian prisoners of war in the Asia-Pacific region, but found this duty to be more onerous than its European equivalent. The failure of the Australian Red Cross to provide relief to
prisoners of the Japanese was due to the failure of the Allied governments and the Red Cross movement to engage the Japan in a pragmatic application of the principle of reciprocity. This failure was in part due to a lack of shared humanitarian culture, a lack of parity in prisoner numbers between the combatants, and a reluctance to risk a novel solution to relief delivery. Most importantly, however, the Japanese had no doubt that Red Cross societies were a tool in each combatant’s war effort. Therefore, the Japanese government and military displayed little reluctance in exploiting their own national Red Cross society and obstructing those of the Allies and International Committee. In the war with Japan, the exigencies of warfare trumped humanitarian concerns. The failures of the Asia-Pacific region damaged the Australian Red Cross and the Australian government. It was only in the aftermath of the war that the Society redeemed itself by taking responsibility for the welfare of Australian servicemen on their release and repatriation. It was this post-war importance that assisted the Australian Red Cross in consolidating its relevance by supplementing the government’s social work and health care responsibilities.

The Australian Red Cross After the Second World War

The Australian Red Cross made a concerted effort to capitalise upon its wartime success by establishing itself as the nation’s premier, permanently active, peacetime social service and relief organisation. Recognising the pattern of emaciation that had affected the Australian Red Cross following the First World War, the Society’s leadership adopted a policy of reinforcing the organisation’s peacetime importance as the Allies moved towards victory.\(^3\) Integral to this policy was the Australian Red Cross’ attempts to dominate the nation’s decision making process and contribution to the United Nations Refugee Relief Administration (UNRRA). The Australian Red Cross’ relationship with the UNRRA was initially dysfunctional and aggressively defensive, but later developed into a partnership that allowed the Society to assert its dominant role in the field of post-war relief. The work of the Australian Red Cross’ Field Force

in South-East Asia and London served to reinforce the role of the Society as an efficient provider of relief that could be relied upon to closely cooperate with government and military authorities in pursuing national policy. The policy, structure and future direction of the Red Cross movement itself underwent significant review during a number of post-war International Red Cross conferences at which the performance of the International Committee and the national societies was debated. These conferences resulted in some criticism of the International Committee’s role during the Second World War, a strengthening of the bonds between national societies, and a comprehensive revision of the *Geneva Conventions* in light of the lessons of the recent conflict.\(^4\)

By the conclusion of the Second World War, the Australian Red Cross had transformed into a large and active organisation that was increasingly conscious of its importance and independence from the British Red Cross. The Society involved many thousands of Australians as volunteers and affected the lives of thousands more beneficiaries. From an organisation that struggled to maintain its membership and relevance between the wars, the Australian Red Cross transformed itself into an essential institution that performed many quasi-governmental social service functions. The Society was highly structured and organised along the lines of a governmental organisation. The insular and Anglophile view of the Australian Red Cross was partially replaced with an international outlook by the vicissitudes of the Second World War. The operation of the Society in conjunction with the American Red Cross contributed to the development of this international outlook, as did the many international activities of the Australian Red Cross. Whereas the Australian Society had previously been dependent upon the British Red Cross, the Australian organisation expended substantial resources in supporting its British counterpart throughout the war. The Australian Red Cross’ drift from dependence upon the British to an independent but strongly American-influenced international outlook is comparable to the similar changes in Australian society, culture, politics and foreign policy during the Second World War. A noticeable, but less marked, shift was apparent in the Australian Red Cross.

Cross’ increasing cooperation with the International Committee as the war progressed.

Having developed a large, well-organised and experienced organisation, the National Executive of the Australian Red Cross recognised the danger of the Society evaporating when the immediate perils of the war disappeared. Therefore, much of the organisation’s efforts in the closing years of the war focused not upon the winning of the war, about which a cautious confidence was expressed, but on post-war planning and the assertion of the Australian Red Cross’ role in peacetime. The decline of the Australian Red Cross after the First World War was not to be repeated following 1945, as the Society asserted its place in the nation and the world.

‘Champions of Charity’ and the Australian Red Cross in the Second World War

This thesis has demonstrated that many of John Hutchinson’s conclusions in Champions of Charity regarding the scope and functions of the Red Cross within a nation-state remain relevant to the Australian Red Cross during the Second World War. During that conflict, the Australian Red Cross developed into a ‘vast charitable army’, the fourth original objective of the Red Cross movement identified by Hutchinson, but the work and resources of the organisation were channelled to the distinct benefit of the Allied war effort. While the scale of the Society and its fundraising abilities vastly increased during the Second World War, the organisation’s working definition of its ‘humanitarian role’ was, to an extent, increasingly constricted as a result of an even closer relationship with the government and military.

By the time of the Second World War, national Red Cross societies had operated in cooperation with belligerent governments and their armies since 1863. Riesenberger’s argument that the close relationship between Red Cross

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5 This emphasis on post-war planning was also a focus of the Australian government - “Red Cross Conference in Sydney: Planning for Peace,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 April 1945, 5; “1000 Delegates Attend Red Cross Conference,” The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 April 1945, 6.

6 Hutchinson, Champions of Charity, 347.
societies and national governments was pragmatically intended by the original members of the International Committee is not entirely incompatible with Hutchinson’s approach.\textsuperscript{7} The Australian Society took the pragmatic approach that Reisenberger argues was always intended by the founders of the Red Cross movement.\textsuperscript{8} There were few alternative approaches available to the Australian Red Cross. The Society generally applied humanitarian approaches to its action, especially when such action coincided with the patriotic behaviour expected of the upper and upper-middle classes that comprised the leadership of the Australian Red Cross. Therefore, while Hutchinson’s argument that militaristic governments moulded the Red Cross movement for their own purposes is persuasive, it may be partially reconciled with the views of Riesenberger.

The provision of ‘relief’ or ‘comforts’ was a core ‘humanitarian’ activity of the Australian Red Cross during the Second World War. The Society took distinctly different approaches to the provision of relief to Greece, countries that had been occupied by the Axis, and former Axis powers.\textsuperscript{9} Similarly, divergent approaches were taken to the plight of white and non-white citizens of the British Empire in the Asia-Pacific region after the war.\textsuperscript{10} These policies demonstrated that in determining which civilians received humanitarian relief on behalf of the Australian Red Cross, the Society was influenced by political and military imperatives.

When members of the Society spoke of providing ‘relief’ to Allied soldiers or civilians, they were largely concerned with the provision of luxuries and necessities that were not provided by the military or government authorities. The organisation’s definition of which activities fell within its mandate was extremely broad. Relief packages included items such as supplementary food, cigarettes, toiletries, clothing, reading material and medicine. Provision of medical equipment to the military medical services was an activity that relieved the Australian government of the financial burden of such equipment, as well as

\textsuperscript{7} Riesenberger, \textit{Für Humanität in Krieg und Frieden}, 14-50.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{10} See Chapter 2.
providing obvious benefits to patients. Social clubs for soldiers far from home and hospital visiting services provided a form of comfort to Australian military personnel.

The Red Cross’ constricted definition of ‘humanitarian’ activity resulted in a deliberate absence of Australian Red Cross volunteers or officers in the front line of combat. ‘Relief’ and ‘comfort’ were not to be provided by sending ‘bands of volunteers with Christian charitable motives to battlefields to supplement the presumed insufficiency of army medical personnel’.¹¹ With a few accidental but memorable exceptions, such as John Nimmo’s adventures in New Guinea, the Allies’ evacuation of Greece, and the fall of Singapore, the Australian Red Cross’ Field Force members provided logistical support behind friendly lines. Immediate medical relief for the injured was left to military medical personnel. In addition to the now-traditional restriction of Red Cross activities in accordance with the needs of government, this constriction of the ‘relief’ and ‘comfort’ activities of the Australian Red Cross reflected the advances in military medicine and organisation that had been achieved by the time of the Second World War.¹² The age, training, discipline and physical condition of many of the Society’s volunteers and Field Force members did not fall within the standards required by the military of its soldiers in the field, which further limited the desirability of the presence of such personnel on the battlefield. As the Second World War progressed, the Australian Red Cross became increasingly concerned with the provision of social work services to soldiers in need of rehabilitation and displaced civilians. This new focus upon social services reflected the Society’s deliberate attempt to reinforce its dominance of the ‘relief market’ and carve a niche for itself in post war Australia.

The Red Cross and the Nation-State

Having moulded the spirit of the national societies of the Red Cross movement during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, governments then truly harnessed these societies to the task of supporting the ‘total war’ effort of each

¹¹ Hutchinson, Champions of Charity, 347.
¹² Walker, Australia in the War of 1939-45, Series 5 Medical, Volumes I-IV.
nation state during the Second World War. In seeking to ensure their survival and the dominance of their chosen constitutional form, nation-states such as Australia embraced the Red Cross as a means of harnessing the energies of non-combatants to the war effort of the state. The Red Cross national society model provided a very flexible and attractive means of enhancing the nation-state’s military power, regardless of the ideological differences between the Second World War’s protagonists. This flexibility and attractiveness explains the impressive size of resources and membership that national Red Cross societies garnered during the conflict.

John Hutchinson argues that the nation-state embraced the Red Cross and began to define the movement during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This thesis has demonstrated that the forging of national Red Cross societies as we know them was further developed by nation-states during the Second World War. While this thesis concentrates upon the manner in which the Australian nation-state used and developed the Red Cross as an asset in the struggle for supremacy of the parliamentary constitutional form, the same is true of counterparts in fascist and communist nation-states during the Second World War.¹³

The development of the Australian Red Cross and the Australian nation-state during the Second World War involved a symbiotic relationship. While Philip Bobbitt’s work emphasises the importance of the Second World War in the development of nation-states such as Australia, he questions the contemporary and future relevance of the nation-state model that this thesis argues has symbiotically supported the growth of the Red Cross movement.¹⁴ As a result of its successful growth in size and influence during the twentieth century’s ‘Long War’, the international Red Cross movement may now pose a threat to the survival of the nation-states that nurtured it. Bobbitt argues that the authority and legitimacy of nation-states is undermined by international humanitarian principles and laws. The recognition of human rights as a norm that requires

¹³ For more detailed discussion of the strong influence of the fascist (German, Italian and Japanese) and communist (Russian) nation-states on national Red Cross societies see Caroline Moorhead, Dunant’s Dream.
¹⁴ Bobbitt, The Shield of Achilles, xxii.
adherence within all states, regardless of their internal laws, is regarded by Bobbitt as diminution of the sovereignty of states that casts doubt over the entire state system.\textsuperscript{15} Whereas humanitarian principles were often subservient to patriotic considerations during the Second World War, the precedence of nation-states’ interests over human rights is now contested. While the facets of the Red Cross movement do not formally characterise themselves as ‘human rights’ organisations, their role as custodians of the \textit{Geneva Conventions} aligns with that of international human rights laws that seek precedence over state sovereignty. Bobbitt argues that human rights law, in conjunction with a world economic system that increasingly ignores borders, global and transnational threats such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and global communications that penetrate borders undermine the sovereign power of nation-states.\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, Isabel Hilton has asserted that the collective influence of non-government agencies with a humanitarian focus may have the force to change the policies of governments.\textsuperscript{17} Bobbitt is of the view that a new constitutional order will arise that reflects these developments and provides a new form of state legitimacy.\textsuperscript{18}

As Bobbitt points out, one of the primary features of the nation-state is a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence.\textsuperscript{19} Nicholas Berry is of the view that the International Committee of the Red Cross and other ‘non-political’ Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) relief operations undermine the institution of war by limiting its scope and eroding its legitimacy.\textsuperscript{20} Berry’s conclusion, that the influence of international law and opinion wielded by the Red Cross and other NGOs may result in an end to war, seems naïve in light of mankind’s past and present experience of warfare.\textsuperscript{21} Given that warfare between and within states

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Isabel Hilton, “When Does Aid Become a Weapon of War?,” \textit{The Age}, 14 July 2004.
\textsuperscript{18} Bobbitt, \textit{The Shield of Achilles}, xxii.
\textsuperscript{19} Bobbitt, \textit{The Shield of Achilles}, 5-17.
\textsuperscript{20} Berry, \textit{War & The Red Cross}, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, Bobbitt and John Keegan would argue that warfare is a natural phenomenon of human society. See Bobbitt, \textit{The Shield of Achilles}, 5-64 and John Keegan, \textit{A History of Warfare} (London: Pimlico, 1994), 1-60, 386-392. Views concerning the inevitability of human conflict have been modified and challenged, however, by recent biological, neurological and anthropological studies – see Robert Sapolsky, “A Natural History of Peace,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 85, no. 1 (January/February 2006), 104-120.
of various constitutional forms is likely to continue, the international Red Cross movement must grapple with its desire to undermine war and its traditional role, embodied in the role of Red Cross national societies, as an active participant in military logistics.\textsuperscript{22} The national Red Cross societies of the Second World War acted as catalysts that aided their respective nation-states in the waging of war. To the consternation of some governments, the International Committee of the Red Cross has sought to suppress and influence methods of warfare in the twentieth and twenty first centuries.\textsuperscript{23}

The ability of today's national Red Cross societies to successfully resist utilisation as components of a state's war machine is unclear.\textsuperscript{24} How the international Red Cross movement, particularly its national societies, copes with such a fundamental constitutional change amongst nations will determine the future of the organisation and its constituent members.\textsuperscript{25} Whereas national societies such as the Australian Red Cross barely questioned their commitment

\textsuperscript{22} De Weiss, The Role of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent in the Nineties; Forsythe, Present Role of the Red Cross in Protection.


\textsuperscript{24} On 6 November 2001, CNN reported that Dr Bernadine Healy, President of the American Red Cross, informed the United States Congress Energy and Commerce Committee’s oversight panel that the Society’s Liberty Fund which was established in the aftermath of terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 “…is a war fund. It has evolved into a war fund. We must have blood readiness. We must have the ability to help our troops if we go into a ground war. We must have the ability to help the victims of tomorrow.” – “Red Cross Defends Handling of September 11 Donations” available from http://www.apfn.org/apfn/WTC_red-cross.htm, accessed 24 August 2005. See also Hans Haug, “Can the Red Cross Contribute to Safeguard Peace,” International Review of the Red Cross 240 (May-June 1984), 127-139; Moorhead, Dunant’s Dream, 682-716.


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to the national war effort in the Second World War, the current movement towards dilution of nation-states’ power renders such questioning and possible resistance to a paramilitary role more likely. As a movement born to serve nation states but embodied in international law, the Red Cross movement is torn between its past affiliation with nation-states and a future role that may free it from the dominance of those very states that gave it life.
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