# In a State of War

## Women's Experiences of the South Australian Home Front, 1939–45

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Submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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# Abstract

Using South Australia as a case study, this thesis explores how wartime constructions of gender affected the experiences of civilian women during World War II. Internationally, World War II historiography is at a crucial juncture, more likely than ever to acknowledge that the war's social and economic effects cannot be understood without reference to gender. This thesis situates itself within this body of literature to explain how feminine norms were defined and enforced by the press, government, employers and other institutions between 1939–45, and how these shaped women's responses and experiences of the war. It argues that wartime constructions of womanhood aimed to maintain traditional gender relations, but that sometimes women adapted these gendered expectations to make their own social, economic and personal gains. In doing so, it demonstrates the pervasiveness and power of gendered discourses, which were ubiquitous to all areas of women's wartime lives, including their employment in civilian industries, involvement in wartime voluntary work, the regulation of their behaviour and sexuality, and in the treatment of those deemed enemy aliens. My focus on civilian women re-balances popular and academic studies that draw inordinately on the experiences of servicewomen, who, despite now dominating the public imagination of Australian women at war, constituted a small fraction of Australia's total female population.

My thesis also reveals compelling reasons to focus on South Australia. Despite rapid wartime industrialisation, it retained a highly gendered division of labour. Women's workplace participation increased in South Australia between 1939–45, but not at a rate consonant with the popular claim that the war marked a watershed for women. Their employment in munitions factories and the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA) was frustrated by inadequate pay and substandard working conditions. Outside of work, South Australian women married and had children earlier and at a higher rate than those in other states and had a minimal presence in the state's post-war workforce. My thesis considers why these circumstances existed and what they add to our knowledge of women's experiences of World War II overall, illuminating the function of gender in ways that previous overviews of women on the home front have not.

# Abbreviations

AAES – Australian Army Education Service

AANS – Australian Army Nursing Service

AAMWS – Australian Army Medical Women's Service

ACA – Adelaide City Council Archives

ARP – Air Raid Precautions

ANZAC – Australian and New Zealand Army Corps

ARCS – Australian Red Cross Society

AWAS – Australian Women's Army Service

AWLA – Australian Women's Land Army

AWM – Australian War Memorial

AWU – Australian Workers' Union

CIB – Commonwealth Investigation Branch

FFCF – Fighting Forces Comfort Fund

FIA – Federated Ironworkers Association

NAA – National Archives of Australia

NBAC – Noel Butlin Archives Centre

NHMRC – National Health and Medical Research Council

NSDAP – National Socialist German Workers Party

RAAFNS – Royal Australian Airforce Nursing Service

RANNS – Royal Australian Navy Nursing Service

SAPD – South Australian Parliamentary Debates

SLSA – State Library of South Australia

SRSA – State Records of South Australia

UELCA – United Evangelical Lutheran Church

VAD – Voluntary Aid Detachment

YMCA – Young Women's Christian Association

WAAAF – Women's Auxiliary Australian Airforce

WCTU – Women's Christian Temperance Union

WEB – Women's Employment Board

WRANS – Women's Royal Australian Naval Service

WVNR – Women's Voluntary National Register

WWSC – Women's War Service Council

# Introduction

In January 1943, 21 year-old Sylvia Hearne of Toorak Gardens resigned just two days into her employment as a munitions worker at Islington Railways Workshops, where women were tasked with the assembly of aircraft components. "I dislike to say," she wrote a few days later to her employer, "but I don't think you were quite fair with me when I asked you if the work was heavy … you should have told me first, then it would have [been] a fair go for me".[1] She argued that the true nature of work at the factory had been concealed. Sylvia's letter comes from a corpus of resignation letters from Islington Railway Workshop from 1939-45, all of which provide a rich insight into civilian women's wartime labour and the difficulties they experienced. Sylvia's letter is unique among them as she worked at Islington for a far shorter time than any other female employee. But it shares the attitude of many other letters from women, who—whether it be resigning on health grounds, upon the return of their husbands from active service, or through inability to balance domestic duties with shift work—felt that minimal provision was made for them. Together, they present compelling evidence for the way that femininity shaped women's experiences of the war and suggest broader questions. Did women in other civilian occupations feel the same way? How did femininity affect the wartime experiences of all civilian women in South Australia?

Using South Australia as a case study—which in 1943, was home to eight per cent of Australia's female population—my thesis aims to answer the following question: how did constructions of gender affect the social and economic experiences of civilian women in Australia during World War II? It considers how feminine norms were defined and enforced by the press, government, employers and other institutions between 1939-45, and how these norms shaped women's responses and experiences of the war. What discourses of femininity were dominant in South Australia at this time? What relationship is there between wartime constructions of femininity and women's lived experiences and memories of the war? Did gendered constructions change according to women's class, age or ethnicity? How did they shape women's mobilisation for the war effort? To what extent did gendered expectations influence women's private lives and behaviour? And did some women object to or challenge such expectations? Put broadly, I argue that wartime constructions of womanhood in South Australia aimed to maintain traditional gender relations, but in some instances, women were able to *adapt*, and sometimes challenge, gendered expectations in order to make social,

[1] Miss S.B. Hearne, letter, circa 8 January 1943, National Archives of Australia [henceforth NAA], D1743, 1942/3774 PART 4.

economic and personal gains. What makes my thesis particularly significant is its demonstration of how pervasive and powerful gendered discourses were during the war, which I illuminate through original and compelling examples that reveal how some women were able to successfully navigate the gender conventions that were expounded.

There are good reasons to focus on civilian women and on South Australia. Women's entry into, and experiences of, the women's auxiliary services,[2] in addition to being its own field of inquiry,[3] feature centrally in key broader national and international assessments of women's contribution to World War II.[4] But what would a study without servicewomen conclude about the war's effect on women? What would it say about women's supposed emancipation? There is meaningful scope for a gendered study that specifically examines civilian women. The prospect of joining a service was a popular avenue for young women. The Australian War Memorial's official history of World War II provides the figure of 44,707 total enlistments at the war's peak in 1943 (and fewer than 4,000 South Australian women joined the auxiliary services from 1939-45 inclusive).[5] However, servicewomen continue to occupy a disproportionally large part of the public imagination of women at war,

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[2] That is, the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS), the Women's Auxiliary Australian Airforce (WAAAFS), and the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS). Women also served as military nurses in the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS), Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS), Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS), and the Royal Australian Navy Nursing Service (RANNS).

[3] A selection of key works about Australian servicewomen and military nurses in World War II include Catherine Kenney, *Captives: Australian Army Nurses in Japanese Prison Camps* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1986); Clare Stevenson and Honor Darling, eds., *The WAAAF Book* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1984); Enid Dalton Herring, *They Wanted to be Nightingales: The Story of VAD/AAMWS in World War II* (Adelaide: Investigator Press, 1982); Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992); Joyce A. Thomson, *The WAAAF in Wartime Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991); Melanie Oppenheimer, *Red Cross VAs: A History of the VAD Movement in New South Wales* (Walcha: Ohio Productions, 1999); Shirley Genton-Huie, *Ship Belles: The Story of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service, 1941–1985* (Sydney: Watermark Press, 2000).

[4] These include studies by Patsy Adam-Smith, Jenny Gregory, Kate Darian-Smith and Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake in the Australian context, and Margaret and Patrice Higonnet, Penny Summerfield, Philomena Goodman, Deborah Montgomerie, Corinna Peniston-Bird and Emma Vickers in the international context. These works are analysed in my literature review, which begins on page 6.

[5] Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942–45*, Series 4, vol. 2 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1970), 269; National Council of Women, "List of S.A. Women Who Served in World War II," State Library of South Australia [henceforth SLSA], D6862 (T). Patsy Adam-Smith gives the number of 66,178. See Patsy Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War,* 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Five Mile Press, 2014), 376; Eleanor Hancock, "'They Also Served': Exaggerating Women's Role in Australia's Wars," in Craig Stockings, ed., *Anzac's Dirty Dozen: 12 Myths of Australian Military History* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2012), 106–7.

even though they constituted just over one per cent of Australia's total female population.[6] They also accounted for just 0.76 per cent of the total number of military personnel who served outside Australia and approximately 4.8 per cent of the total number of Australians in military service at home and abroad.[7] Despite the emphasis placed on the women's auxiliary services as having irreversibly broadened the horizons of thousands of women, many positions allocated to servicewomen remained within the realm of traditional and/or civilian female work. Very few servicewomen served near the frontline. The Australian War Cabinet ruled in 1943 that no servicewomen were to be sent outside Australia unless they were part of the nursing services. An individual study of civilian women thus helps to re-balance popular and academic studies that draw inordinately on the experiences and testimony of servicewomen to advance a "watershed" argument.[8] It especially allows me to illuminate gendered trends and circumstances regarding women's employment in civilian wartime industries that would otherwise remain obscured in a broader study.

There are also compelling reasons to study the South Australian experience, which at present is somewhat opaque. South Australia features very little in comparison to the eastern states and Western Australia in existing academic histories of the World War II home front. There is also minimal state-based research. The main study of South Australia's home front was a conference organised by the History Trust in the 1980s. This generated a series of articles for the *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, one of which was based on Margaret Allen's MA thesis on Salisbury—the town, as well as the munitions factory—during World War II.[9] Carol Fort uses some South Australian case studies in her

[6] For the total female population see *Demography Bulletin* (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1943), 6; Hancock, "They Also Served," 105–7.

[7] These figures increase to just over two percent and 6.6 percent respectively if calculated using Patsy Adam-Smith's figure of 66,718 and slightly lower if using the Department of Veterans' Affairs calculation of 66,160. See Hancock, "They Also Served," 105–7.

[8] The testimony of servicewomen also features heavily in popular anthologies of the home front; see, for example, Betty Goldsmith and Beryl Sandford, *The Girls They Left Behind* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1990); Daniel Connell, *The War at Home: Australia 1939-1949* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1988); Joanna Penglase and David Horner, *When the War Came to Australia: Memories of the Second World War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992); Margaret Geddes, *Blood, Sweat and Tears: Australia's WWII Remembered by the Men and Women Who Lived It* (Melbourne: Penguin, 2004).

[9] Margaret Allen, "Salisbury (S.A.) in Transition," (M.A. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1975); Margaret Allen, "Salisbury in the Second World War," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 4, (1978): 65-74; Brian Dickey, "The South Australian Economy in World War II," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 16, (1988): 22–9; Kay Rollinson, "Working Women in South Australia during World War II," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 16, (1988): 54–62; Susan Marsden, "Housing the War Workers," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 16 (1988): 60–9. Also see Robert Thornton,

PhD thesis on wartime employment policy and Susan Lemar has written on venereal disease control in Adelaide between 1942–45.[10] My thesis thus significantly adds to existing South Australian literature. Indeed, the majority of the more than 400 archival records I use do not appear in any other research. The personnel files I draw on from Islington Railway Workshop, now held by the National Archives of Australia in Adelaide, especially point to the fruitfulness of a South Australian case study, as the opening lines of this introduction suggest. Because it was common practice to destroy employment records of civilians in war-related industries, they are the only sources of their kind remaining in Australia. They significantly enhance our understanding of women's entry into and departure from wartime work. Until now, other research has concluded that employers did not mount an overt campaign to persuade women to leave their work, but that women left of their own accord.[11] In South Australia, women too left munition factories of their own volition, but, even as early as 1943, these files show women at Islington were also being "terminated as surplus to requirements" after reasonable requests for leave were denied.[12]

This example points to my next argument: South Australia also offers a distinctive social and economic context that allows me to do more than simply reiterate the arguments of other historians who have addressed this topic. Paul Sendziuk and I have already argued this premise in our article on women's employment in South Australia's wartime industries, of which the first two chapters of this thesis are an extension.[13] Despite its modest population, Adelaide became an important munitions centre during the war because of its distance from the eastern seaboard (which was at greater risk of enemy attack) and its central location on the country's rail network. More than 82 factories of all descriptions opened

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"Practical Patriots: The Work of the Cheer-Up Society in South Australia, 1914–1964," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 13, (1985): 45–56.

[10] Carol Fort, "Developing a National Employment Policy, Australia 1939-45," (PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 2000); Susan Lemar, "Sexually Cursed, Mentally Weak and Socially Untouchable: Women and Venereal Diseases in World War Two Adelaide," *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no. 79, (2003): 153-64.

[11] See, for example, Gail Reekie, "Shunted Back to the Kitchen? Responses to War Work and Demobilisation," in Jenny Gregory, ed., *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1996), 75-90. Also see Gail Reekie, "Women's Responses to War Work in Western Australia, 1942-1946," *Studies in Western Australian History* 7 (1983): 46-57, and Stuart Macintyre, "Women's Leadership in War and Reconstruction," *Labour History* 104 (2013): 71.

[12] "Resignations, A–Z", Islington Railway Workshops, NAA, D1743, 1942/3774 PARTS 1–8.

[13] Rachel Harris and Paul Sendziuk, "Cogs in the Machine: The Experiences of Female Munitions Workers and Members of the Australian Women's Land Army in South Australia, 1940–45," *War & Society* 37, no. 3 (2018): 187–205.

between 1939 and the height of production in 1943, when just over one in ten South Australians were employed in factory work.[14] These figures suggest that women in South Australia were provided with a watershed opportunity. But the number of women engaged in Adelaide's munitions factories remained relatively small: 5,239 women worked in munitions in June 1943, just shy of ten per cent of a "total" female workforce of 53,800 (a figure that excludes servicewomen, rural labourers and domestic workers in private homes).[15] Men still constituted 72 per cent of South Australian workers overall and 75 per cent of factory workers.[16] Why then, during a time of rapid industrialisation that should have been very conducive for women participating in the industrial workforce, did the gendered division of labour in South Australia remain so strong?

I contend that the answer lies within and outside the workplace. While women's workplace participation in South Australia experienced an overall increase during the war, it in no way correlates to the popular claim that World War II was a watershed for Australian women. As Melanie Oppenheimer reminds readers in her introduction to *Australian Women and War,* fewer than 32 per cent of Australia's available women (i.e. those above the minimum working age of 14) were in the workforce at the height of wartime employment in 1943; the majority were volunteering or caring for their children and families.[17] In South Australia, this figure was 26 per cent.[18] The reinstatement of the domestic ideal did not even wait until war's end. The state's marriage rate peaked in 1942 with a total of 8,129 weddings—a number not again equalled until 1965.[19] The state's average crude marriage

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[14] *Year Book Australia 1944–45* (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1945), 915.

[15] *Year Book Australia 1944–45* (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1945), 432; "South Australia," in *Supplementary Civilian Register* (Australian Government Printer, 1943), 16. There were still 4,400 women employed as domestic servants in mid 1943, see "Employment and Unemployment," in *Labour Report 1943* (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1943), 95.

[16] *Labour Report 1943* (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1943), 95; Calculated on average masculinity of factory workers between 1939–45 as outlined in Table 4.6 in Wray Vamplew, Eric Richards, Dean Jaensch and Joan Hancock, *South Australian Historical Statistics* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1987), 61.

[17] Melanie Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War* (Canberra: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2008), 1.

[18] Table 6 in "South Australia," *Supplementary Civilian Register* (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1943), 20. The *Register* included residents of Alice Springs and Broken Hill, thus I calculated this figure by removing the number of women that were residents of Alice Springs and Broken Hill, which are stipulated on page 15 of the *Register.*

[19] Vamplew, *et al. South Australian Historical Statistics,* 22.

rate between 1941 and 1945 was above the national average, as was the state's crude birth rate between 1941 and 1950.[20] Indeed, newspaper reports proclaiming South Australia's "record" number of marriages and births abounded during the war, seemingly bucking the national trend that resulted in an inquiry into Australia's declining birth-rate by the National Health and Medical Research Council in mid-1944. In a report on the state's birth-rate, Adelaide's daily paper the *News* proclaimed in December 1944 that "while Australian women are giving their reasons for limiting families, more babies are being born in South Australia than ever before".[21]

This thesis speculates about why these circumstances existed in South Australia by looking at the dynamics of gender relations and the gendered discourses that shaped women's public and private lives between 1939-45, and what they might add to our understanding of women's experiences of World War II overall. The topics I evaluate—women's employment in munitions factories and the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA), women's voluntary work, the regulation of female morality and sexuality, and the experiences and treatment of those women deemed enemy aliens—have largely gone unexamined in relation to each other. Moreover, existing studies of these topics, in Australia at least, have gender as a peripheral concern. By using gender as my main category of analysis, and in examining these topics together, commonalities across all aspects of women's lives come to light. I can show the overarching concerns regarding the war's effect on gender norms, and how similar constructions of femininity were emphasised to women across social classes, occupations, locations and ethnicities. I have chosen these topics because they allow me to illuminate the function of gender in World War II in ways that previous overviews of women on the home front have not.

## Literature Review

As my thesis broaches a series of different topics, I have decided it is more appropriate to provide a review at the start of each chapter that examines the scholarly literature specifically pertaining to the topic under consideration. Here, I will provide an overview of broader theories that have considered the effects of World War II on women's lives. Historians in Australia and overseas have long debated the question of whether World War II was a

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[20] *Demography Bulletin 1948* (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1948), 37, 47; *Demography Bulletin 1950* (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1950), 54. The state's crude marriage rate between 1941 and 1945 was 10.63 per 1000 people compared to the national average of 9.95, and its crude birth rate was 23.9 per 1000 people compared to the national average of 22.9.

[21] "Record Birth Year Likely," *News,* 6 December 1944, 3.

turning point for women. As far back as 1987, Joan W. Scott identified four clear "watershed" narratives that had emerged in historical research since 1945.[22] These included focus on the new opportunities that wartime industries provided women, an increase in women's political rights, women's involvement in peace movements and wartime reconstruction, and assessment of the war's short- and long-term effect on women's status.[23] She argued these interpretive frameworks were limiting, and proposed that research on women and war should ask questions about the "processes of politics, connections between economic policy and the meanings of social experience [and] cultural representations of gender and their presence in political discourse".[24] Margaret and Patrice Higonnet took up this challenge and evoked the "double helix" metaphor to explain why women's wartime work did not improve their status or alter traditional notions of femininity. Observing women as being like the perpetually "subordinate strand" of a helix, they contended that while women took on wartime roles traditionally reserved for men, they were ultimately of "no consequence [as] even when the material conditions for women differ[ed] after the war, the fundamental devaluation of the tasks assigned to them remain[ed] … the lines of gender [were redrawn] to conform to the pre-war map of relations between men's and women's roles".[25]

Since their chapter was published, many more historians have made gender a central category of their analysis on women and war, which has yielded important new findings. Penny Summerfield details British women's experiences in *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War*, which examines how cultural representations of the war shaped the gendered narratives that women drew upon when recounting experiences of wartime employment.[26] Philomena Goodman adds to this field in *Women, Sexuality and War*, positing that a new form of "patriotic femininity" emerged in Britain during the war, and examines how women

[22] Joan W. Scott, "Rewriting History," in Margaret Higonnet, Jane Jensen, Sonya Michel and Margaret Weitz, eds, *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 23–5.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] *Ibid.,* 25.

[25] Margaret and Patrice Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in Margaret Higonnet, Jane Jensen, Sonya Michel and Margaret Weitz, eds, *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 34–5.

[26] Penny Summerfield *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

appropriated this identity to negotiate both the "perils and opportunities" presented to them.[27] In New Zealand, Deborah Montgomerie has examined how individuals, institutions and policymakers aimed to preserve the "gender order" during World War II. She argues in *The Women's War: New Zealand Women 1939–45* that traditional femininity was more resilient during the war than public commentary of the time suggested; women made a vital contribution to the war effort but its influence on their social and economic status should not be exaggerated.[28] Montgomerie's work amply expanded upon existing knowledge of New Zealand women's experiences of World War II, proving how a similar study is necessary for South Australia. Most recently, Corinna Peniston-Bird and Emma Vickers, in their introduction to the edited collection *Gender and the Second World War: Lessons of War*, proclaim that World War II historiography is now at a crucial juncture, more likely than ever to acknowledge that its social and economic impact cannot be understood without reference to gender: "war is a 'clarifying moment' which throws gender into stark relief [revealing] what in constructions of gender is negotiable and flexible, and what is not".[29] It is important to note that in utilising theories of gender to discuss the experiences of women in particular, I do not intend to elide the importance or presence of men as gendered subjects. While my focus is primarily on women, men feature throughout this thesis and their presence reinforces the fact that gender is a relational concept.

In comparison to the ever-growing range of publications concerning the masculine domains of politics and the battlefield, a reappraisal of women's lives in World War II Australia is well overdue. Aside from the re-publication of Kate Darian-Smith's influential study of wartime Melbourne, there has been no substantial academic study of the Australian home front since Jenny Gregory's edited collection on Western Australia in 1996.[30] Patsy Adam-Smith's *Australian Women at War*, first published in 1984 and reprinted in 2014, alongside Melanie Oppenheimer's *Australian Women and War*, are currently the only full

[27] Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002). Also see Phil Goodman, "'Patriotic Femininity': Women's Morals and Men's Morale during the Second World War," *Gender & War* 10, no. 2 (1998): 278–93.

[28] Deborah Montgomerie, *The Women's War: New Zealand Women, 1939–45* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2001).

[29] Corinna Peniston-Bird and Emma Vickers, eds, *Gender and the Second World: Lessons of War* (London: Palgrave, 2017), 1–2.

[30] Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939-1945,* 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009); Jenny Gregory, ed., *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1996).

length overviews of Australian women's involvement in twentieth century warfare.[31] In terms of gender history, Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake's 1995 edited collection of essays *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* remains the only full length work that specifically examines the war's effect on gender relations and identities in Australia. Drawing on international trends in research on gender and war, this collection's aim was to investigate the connections between politics and gender in a way that made women (and men) visible as "historical actors [and] subjects of the narrative".[32] Its chapters on wartime femininity broadly argue that the world wars required women to navigate "new and old femininities" in order to overcome restrictive wartime narratives that cast them as "natural homemakers, [passive] victims and witnesses of war, marginal to the real arenas of action and decision-making".[33] This had a "contradictory" effect on gender roles and relations, as war conditions entrenched certain gender stereotypes, in both men and women, but also gave new opportunities to challenge and transgress them.

Although *Gender and War* did not advance an overarching theory through which to understand wartime gender identities in Australia, it was positioned by its editors as a ground-breaking text, poised on the cusp of an expanding historical field and which encouraged further research. Indeed, some of the topics it covers—particularly gender relations in World War I and the wartime experiences of LGBT people—have now developed into established areas of inquiry.[34] The academic study of Australian women and World War II, however, has arguably receded in the past decade, seemingly "done and dusted" by other Australian historians. Popular narratives now dominate book releases, which continue to advance "watershed" arguments. For example, publicity for Jacqueline Dinan's *Between the Dances,* published in 2015, declared boldly that the "start of World

[31] Patsy Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War,* 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Five Mile Press, 2014); Melanie Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War* (Canberra: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2008).

[32] Marilyn Lake and Joy Damousi, "Warfare, History and Gender," in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, eds, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1.

[33] *Ibid.,* 10.

[34] Some recent examples include Natasha Milosevic Meston, "'I simply can't go back to my old life': Female Gender Identity in Australian Contexts of War and Peacetime," *History Australia* 16, no. 1 (2019): 38–51; Elizabeth Nelson, *Homefront Hostilities: The First World War and Domestic Violence* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014); Yorick Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific, 1939–45: Queer Identities in Australia in the Second World War* (London: Palgrave, 2015); Noah Riseman, Shirleene Robinson and Graham Willett, *Serving in Silence?: Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2018).

War II changed women's lives and their place in Australian society forever".[35] *Girls' Own War Stories,* broadcast on ABC TV in mid-2011, similarly declared World War II a "remarkable social catalyst for Australian women".[36] As two of the most recent examinations, such endorsement of these misconceptions in the face of academic literature that suggests otherwise demonstrates there is still a need to address the extent to which the war influenced the social and economic prospects of Australian women.

**Thesis Overview**

Accordingly, the structure of my thesis transitions from an analysis of women's public and working experiences to the regulation of their private behaviour and domestic lives. The first two chapters focus on and compare women's employment in South Australia's munitions factories and the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA). Chapter One establishes the economic foundations of women's work in these occupations, arguing that women's employment in both industrial and agricultural labour was defined by relatively poor wages and substandard working conditions. It also examines how gender differences were formalised in the policies of trade unions, the Manpower Directorate and the Women's Employment Board (WEB). Chapter Two looks at gender relations in munitions factories and compares them to the dynamics of all-female service in the AWLA, considering how the workplace practices discussed in Chapter One shaped the everyday interactions between workers and employers, as well as the gendered discourses and expectations that were evident in staff publications and workplace social events. I argue that notions of sex appeal, glamour and docile domesticity were used to encourage women in both occupations to retain interest in marriage and motherhood and to decrease wartime anxieties that women's participation in male work would erode traditional femininity. I also consider the practical effects of these discourses, which in munitions factories were used by employers and the government to legitimise inaction over female absenteeism, long working hours, and war worker childcare. In contrast, the freedom offered by AWLA service gave some women liberty from restrictive gender roles, but this was only temporary as they were ultimately reinstated as a consequence of the limited opportunities made available to women on the land in the post-war period.

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[35] Jacqueline Dinan, *Between the Dances: World War 2 Women Tell Their Stories* (Sydney: Ventura Press, 2015); Also see Ann Howard, *You'll Be Sorry! How World War II Changed Women's Lives,* rev. ed. (Sydney: Big Sky Publishing, 2016).

[36] Antoinette Ford and Paul Roy, *Girls' Own War Stories,* directed by Jennifer Ainge, aired on ABC TV on 21 April 2011 (Sydney: Iguana Film Productions, 2010).

Munitions work and the AWLA were but two of many new avenues of work for Australian women during World War II. I focus on these two occupations in my thesis because few or no archival sources exist for other types of wartime work undertaken by women in South Australia. More broadly, the vast majority of working women both in South Australia and elsewhere were newly employed or remained in non-war or "peacetime" occupations. The Women's Employment Board (WEB) regulated wages and working conditions for a variety of roles customarily filled by men in "peacetime" occupations that women took up for the first time due to a wartime lack of male labour. This included the roles of tram conductors, postal clerks and postmen, bank tellers and clerks, railway porters and cleaners, motor and broadcast mechanics, meter readers, press and mechanical operators, and confectionary makers and butchers.[37] Across Australia, the railways and tramways attracted particularly high numbers of women. In Melbourne, 2,000 women trained as tram conductors during the war, while by 1942 more than 700 women had joined the New South Wales Railways in various positions usually filled by men, including in carriage cleaning and clerical work.[38] In most cases, the WEB prescribed 100 per cent of male rates of pay for these women, as well as for postwomen filling in for absent postmen.[39] In South Australia it was a different story. The South Australian Branch of the Railways Union strongly resisted an increase in the employment of women.[40] From 1942, approximately 200 women were employed on the railways in roles formerly undertaken by men but did not receive equal pay. Then in November 1943, the WEB barred women in South Australia from being employed as carriage cleaners and cloakroom and baggage porters. Approximately 60 women remained in various roles at railway stations, including as ticket collectors.[41] Adelaide's tram network did not employ any women as conductors, despite a critical shortage of male workers. The Tramways Trust cited women's absenteeism

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[37] See Edna Ryan and Anne Conlon, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work 1788-1974* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1975), 137.

[38] Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front,* 72; "Women on Railways: Numbers to be Increased," *Lithgow Mercury,* 26 July 1942, 1. Women were also employed as tram "conductresses" in Sydney, Perth and Brisbane.

[39] Ryan and Conlon, *Gentle Invaders,* 137.

[40] "Rail Union Objection to Woman Labor," *News,* 8 May 1942, 6; "Blank Cheque on Women Rail Guards Opposed," *News,* 17 September 1942, 5.

[41] The hearing deemed that women were entitled to 100 per cent wages for the time they had served in these roles. See "Women's Employment Board in Matter on an Application by the South Australian Railways Commissioner (Application No. 169 of 1943)," NAA, MP346/1, 159; "Women in Rail Work: Questions of Pay and Conditions, *Advertiser,* 8 July 1942, 7; "Women to Stay in Rail Jobs," *News,* 3 April 1947, 3.

in other industries and keenness to employ returning servicemen as the main reasons.[42] This demonstrates a point of exceptionalism, namely that conservative attitudes in regard to women's wartime employment arguably ran deeper and more broadly in South Australia than in other states. It also clearly establishes munitions work and the AWLA as the two main wartime occupations available to South Australian women.

When extending the definition of war work to include unpaid labour, voluntary work comprised women's greatest contribution to the war effort. Women's wartime voluntarism is routinely under-studied in social histories of women and World War II, as it is often overlooked in favour of women's paid employment. Chapter Three, therefore, aims to bridge current Australian historiography on women's paid and unpaid war work. It builds on Melanie Oppenheimer's pioneering research on voluntary work in Australia in both world wars, especially her recommendation for further research on the voluntary work undertaken in World War II in the public sector and wartime workplaces.[43] Between 1939–45, more than 500 voluntary organisations operated across South Australia, the largest with a membership of more than 30,000 women. Focusing on the voluntary activities of these South Australian women—which ranged from providing material comforts for servicemen to fundraising as participants in beauty and pin-up competitions—I reveal that female voluntarism was a highly visible and ubiquitous part of the home front experience. I use oral histories, press reports and archival sources to show that women's voluntary work was considered crucial to the upkeep of male morale, and thus functioned to ease concerns regarding the war's impact on traditional gender relations. But I argue that in practice, the close relationship between paid and unpaid work meant voluntarism did not necessarily limit the wartime gains of South Australian women, instead rhetoric used to describe women's voluntary work obscured the social and economic benefits it often provided. I conclude the chapter with an analysis of the wartime diary of Lucy Lockett Ayers, who volunteered as an air-raid warden in Adelaide between 1941–45.[44] I demonstrate that even within the realm of voluntary work, ideals of femininity were drawn upon to demarcate suitable and unsuitable roles for women workers.

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[42] "Problem of Women Tram Conductors," *Advertiser,* 4 August 1943, 7; "No Women Tram Conductors: Trust Seeks 100 More Men," *Advertiser,* 11 August 1943, 5.

[43] Melanie Oppenheimer, "'We All Did Voluntary Work of Some Kind': Voluntary Work and Labour History," *Labour History* 81 (2001): 1–11; Melanie Oppenheimer, "Voluntary Work and Labour History," *Labour History* 74 (1998): 1–9; Also see Joanne Scott, "Voluntary Work as Work? Some Implications for Labour History," *Labour History* 74 (1998): 10–20.

[44] Lucy Lockett Ayers, diary, December 1941– January 1945, SLSA, PRG, 67/45.

My final chapters turn to the discursive and practical wartime regulation of women's private behaviour. Chapter Four examines the public discourses and state controls implemented in South Australia in response to female sexuality, particularly as it related to women's contact with American servicemen, female alcohol consumption, and spread of venereal disease. I focus on the legislation that was introduced and the language that was invoked alongside these measures, and I argue that the pejorative labels applied to women––by police, politicians, press and the public—had a self-disciplinary effect, prompting some women who wished to pursue American servicemen romantically to adopt a discourse of feminine patriotism to describe their relationships. I conclude that while some women created an acceptable space in which to seek contact with servicemen, the widening institutional definition of inappropriate female conduct and sustained police emphasis on curtailing female behaviour had deleterious consequences for women, as they aimed to meet contradictory and impracticable expectations. Indeed, the heightened wartime regulation of female sexuality, while ostensibly claiming to protect women, ran parallel to an increase in gender violence and sexual victimisation. Prompted by an emerging Australian historiography of gender violence, I consider the effects of these wartime circumstances on familial relations, and especially whether the social and economic stresses of war increased the instance of domestic violence.

Chapter Five examines the intersection of gender and ethnicity by analysing the experiences and treatment of German and Italian women, who constituted South Australia's largest group of female enemy aliens. Much literature exists on the wartime internment of male enemy aliens in Australia, but there is little on the mothers, wives and daughters they left behind.[45] Using this group of women as a case study, I explore how women classed as enemy aliens during World War II—both those classified as such by birth or marriage, and those Australian-born or naturalised subjects who were suspected to hold non-British allegiances—negotiated everyday life on the home front. I use women's oral histories and archival material from the Commonwealth Investigation Branch to reveal that while the discrimination and isolation these women faced was mainly a result of their ethnicity, the inequalities they encountered were also shaped by gender. Keeping house and caring for children became increasingly strenuous for these women when faced with limited employment opportunities, internment of the family breadwinner, and widespread public suspicion. The restrictions on movement and communication enforced by the *National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations 1939* compounded these hardships. I argue that, in

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[45] For a full review of this literature, see pages 184–6.

addition to ethnic and political concerns, these regulations were shaped by gendered ideologies that encouraged traditional femininity based around domesticity and unpaid work, but which in practice often had the effect of placing women even further away from the ideals expected of them. I focus on German and Italian women as there is only a very small number of Commonwealth Investigation Branch files on South Australian women of other nationalities who came under the ambit of the *National Security Regulations.* At the start of the chapter I discuss how these files do not represent an adequate sample size to trace the ethnic and gendered attitudes that shaped the experiences of women enemy aliens who were not German or Italian.

**Aboriginal Women and War**

My omission of women from one of South Australia's most racially marginalised groups—Indigenous Australians—needs further explanation. The study of Aboriginal women's lives in World War II has emerged only recently, with focus prior to this mainly on the experiences of Aboriginal servicemen.[46] This new scholarship has established that Aboriginal women and children struggled with social isolation and increased economic distress in the absence of male family members on active service. Many Aboriginal women left their traditional lands to find work in domestic service or wartime industries in the cities, although many were denied access to wage regulations due to their "native mentality".[47] Some Aboriginal women, at least, found new forms of community; participation in wartime voluntary work had the capacity to break down racial divisions as Aboriginal and white women worked alongside each other in organisations such as the Australian Comforts Fund and Country

[46] There is a significant body of literature on Aboriginal servicemen. See Noah Riseman, *Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012); Noah Riseman, "The Stolen Veteran: Institutionalisation, Military Service and the Stolen Generations," *Aboriginal History* 35 (2011): 57–77; Noah Riseman, 'The Rise of Indigenous Military History', *History Compass* 12, no. 12 (2014): 901–11; R. Scott Sheffield, "Indigenous Exceptionalism Under Fire: Assessing Indigenous Soldiers in Combat with the Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and American Armies during the Second World War," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45, no. 3 (2017): 506–24. Also see Kay Saunders, "Inequalities of Sacrifice: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Labour in Northern Australia during the Second World War," *Labour History* 69 (1995): 131–48.

[47] R. Scott Sheffield and Noah Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War: The Politics, Experiences and Legacies in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 162–200; Sara Buttsworth, "Women Colouring the Wartime Landscape," in Jenny Gregory, ed., *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1996), 59. Also see Elizabeth Osborne, *Torres Strait Islander Women and the Pacific War* (Canberra: Australian Studies Press, 1997).

Women's Association.[48] Many Aboriginal women who joined the women's auxiliary forces were given opportunities to broaden their social and economic status and learn new skills not previously on offer to Indigenous people in the assimilation era of the 1930s–60s.[49]

However, discriminatory practices towards Aboriginal people remained. Karen Hughes has studied the treatment of Aboriginal women who formed relationships with American and other allied servicemen stationed in Australia and the government regulations that aimed to separate them. For example, the *War Brides Act 1945* required Aboriginal women be able to prove they were 50 per cent "white" if they wanted to marry and emigrate to America, or vice versa if their prospective husband wished to remain in Australia.[50] She concludes, however, that Aboriginal women, in pursuing these relationships and in some cases raising the children produced from them, "firmly challenged social attitudes to race, nation and settler colonial identity [and] staunchly defied interwar policies of biological absorption aimed at 'breeding out blackness'".[51] Hughes interviewed one Aboriginal woman from South Australia, Edith Lovegrove, who, alongside her sister, worked in munitions production at General Motors Holden, Woodville. Due to her exemption under amendments made to the *Aborigines Act SA 1911* in 1939, Edith was able to marry her white American boyfriend in 1945, and moved to the United States shortly thereafter.[52] In total, Hughes estimates around 20 Aboriginal women across Australia were able to circumvent government regulations and emigrate to the United States.[53]

The picture of Aboriginal women's experiences of World War II that emerges from the archival record I consulted for my research was not as optimistic, and indeed, the

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[48] Sheffield and Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War*, 175–80. Also see Kristyn Harman, "'The Families Were … Too Poor to Send Them Parcels': The Provision of Comforts to Aboriginal Soldiers in the AIF in the Second World War," *Aboriginal History* 39 (2015): 223–32.

[49] Noah Riseman, "Escaping Assimilation's Grasp: Aboriginal Women in the Australian Women's Military Services," *Women's History Review* 24, no. 5 (2015): 757–75.

[50] Karen Hughes, "Mobilising Across Colour Lines: Intimate Encounters between Aboriginal Women and African American and other Allied Servicemen on the World War II Australian Home Front," *Aboriginal History* 41, (2017): 47–70.

[51] *Ibid.,* 63–4.

[52] Karen Hughes, "Exemption, Mobility, Migration: Indigenous Australian Women's Marriages to American Servicemen in the Second World War." This chapter forms part of the Australian Research Council Discovery Indigenous Project IN140100036, "Children Born of War: Australia and the War in the Pacific 1941–1945" with Victoria Grieves and Catriona Elder, publication forthcoming.

[53] Hughes, "Mobilising Across Colour Lines," 61.

references I located often fulfilled negative historical stereotypes. Aboriginal women were most often mentioned in police reports and newspaper articles in relation to vagrancy, frequenting hotel lounges, and in spreading venereal disease.[54] The most substantial wartime file I found on an Aboriginal woman was that of Mary Matsumoto, originally from Broome, who lost her nationality upon marriage to a Japanese national in 1928, and who was interned at Tatura Internment Camp from 1941–43 alongside her husband and four children. She was released in September 1943 and relocated to a Roman Catholic Mission at Balaklava, in the state's mid-north, for the rest of the war, while her children were relocated to a mission in Carrieton, a town in the Flinders Ranges. She was eventually reunited with her husband and children in 1948.[55] References to Aboriginal women in other sources are scant. The Anglo-British names of many Aboriginal women means it is difficult to identify them in civilian wartime employment records, and thus makes it virtually impossible to ascertain the number of Aboriginal women who gained employment in munitions factories or the AWLA. Prior knowledge of ethnicity is required. For example, prominent Aboriginal community leader Gladys Elphick was employed as a shell maker at Islington Railway Workshops, and excelled in her position so much that she won an award for making a shell with one tool instead of the usual two.[56] This achievement, alongside those of other Aboriginal women in wartime industries hitherto unknown, are significantly obscured by the traditional archival record; Gladys's invention was not mentioned in her employment record or in the press at the time.

Of the more than 100 oral histories I accessed from South Australian institutions as part of my research, I found just one conducted with an Aboriginal woman,[57] and I was unable to recruit any Aboriginal women to be part of my oral history project. Life expectancy

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[54] See, for example, letter, Medical Officer, to Chief Secretary of Health, 9 June 1942, Adelaide City Council Archives [henceforth ACA], 194a; entries 13–14 October 1943 in Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, August 1943 – March 1944, State Records of South Australia [henceforth SRSA], GRG, 5/105/3; entry 25 April 1944 in Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, March 1944 – September 1944, SRSA, GRG 5/105/3; entries 4 February and 2-8 June 1943 in Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1942 – July 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3; entry 29 September 1944 in Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, August 1944 – May 1945, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3; entry 4 December 1943. Examples of newspaper reporting include: "Slept in Rail Carriages: Half-Castes Fined," *News,* 13 July 1942, 3; "28 Days' Gaol for Half-Caste Girl," *News,* 6 June 1942, 3.

[55] "Mary Matsumoto and Kakio Matsumoto," NAA, D1915, SA21158; "Last Jap Released," *Daily News,* 20 May 1948, 7.

[56] "Gladys Elphick, M.B.E" in John Healey, ed., *S.A.'s Greats: The Men and Women of the North Terrace Plaques* (Adelaide: Historical Society of South Australia, 2002), 35.

[57] Maude Tongerie interviewed by Sue Anderson, 14 February 2002, SLSA, OH 593/10.

for Aboriginal women is well below the average for women in general, which partly explains the difficulty I encountered.[58] The presence of Aboriginal women on farms and stations are mentioned briefly in some interviews with former AWLA members.[59] Therefore, as I do not have a corpus of sources that convey how Aboriginal women experienced or understood the war from their own perspective, I have thus decided it would be difficult and problematic to establish their perspective in my thesis.

### Theoretical Framework

Any historical study of "gender" and "discourse" requires a discussion of both terms. The fruitfulness of considering gender as a "useful category of historical analysis" was propounded most stridently by American historian Joan Wallach Scott in 1986. She defined gender as a "constitutive element" of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, used to designate dynamics of power and generally favour a male prerogative.[60] Scott argues that to successfully examine how women's identities are constructed, historians should not confine research on women's lives to areas typically associated with femininity (e.g. children, reproduction or the household), but should examine how femininity has been constructed across a range of activities and organisations; private, public and political.[61] In the Australian context, Marilyn Lake also argued in 1986 that gender should become a "central category of all historical analysis".[62] While her focus was on identifying the masculine context of Australian national identity in the late nineteenth century, Lake drew attention to how the sheer male-centredness of Australian historiography

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[58] For issues on recruiting Aboriginal participants for oral history projects, see Bronwyn Fredericks, "So, You Want to Do Oral History with Aboriginal Australians…" *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 30, (2008): 22–4; Christine Gordon, "The Collection of Oral History in Remote Communities in the Northern Territory: Some Problems," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 23, (2001): 80–4; Sue Anderson, Jaimee Hamilton and Lorina. L. Barker, "Yarning Up Oral History: An Indigenous Feminist Analysis," in Katrina Srigley, Stacey Zembrzycki and Franca Lacovetta, eds, *Beyond Women's Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2018), 170–83.

[59] Eileen Spencer interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 2 April 1985, Australian War Memorial [henceforth AWM], S02702; Mary White interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 1985, AWM, S02700.

[60] Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 153–75. Also see Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History,* rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[61] Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," 154–68.

[62] Marilyn Lake, "Historical Reconsiderations IV: The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context," *Historical Studies* 22, no. 86 (1986): 116–31.

provides a greater impetus for gender historians to move beyond a women's history that has mostly compensatory aims.

I take Marilyn Lake's conception of femininity as a starting point. As a historical construction, Lake argues that femininity is produced across a variety of sites, the definition of which can change and be in opposition or conflict with previous or current definitions.[63] The war's effect on understandings and experiences of femininity in Australia has been varied. Lake contends that definitions of the "feminine" underwent a fundamental shift during the 1930s and 1940s towards a womanhood connected to "sexuality, sexual attractiveness and youthfulness".[64] Lisa Featherstone presents an alternative view. She asserts that maternity remained a "powerful ideology" in the lives of Australian women in the 1940s and women's adherence to the ideals of marriage and domesticity were central to their wartime experiences.[65] My argument falls between these two conclusions. I espouse that traditional feminine discourses and expectations were present in South Australia during the war, but some women appropriated these gender expectations to suit their own social, economic or personal needs; feminine discourse could be used by women, as well as institutions, to carve out an acceptable space in which to engage in non-traditional female behaviour, pursuits or activities.

I note here that my thesis focuses on the experiences of *heterosexual* women. This is primarily because the experiences of LGBT women did not emerge from the corpus of archives and oral histories I consulted. As Lisa Featherstone states in her study of female pleasure in early 20th century Australia, it is far easier to find examples of heterosexual female desire than lesbian desire within the archival record.[66] Indeed, the authors of *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women* restrict their timeframe to post-World War II as they found that archival sources and memoirs relating to homosexual activity

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[63] Marilyn Lake, "Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II," *Australian Historical Studies* 24, no. 95 (1990): 268. Also see Antonia Lant, "Prologue: Mobile Femininity," in Christine Gledhill and Gillian Swanson eds, *Nationalising Femininity: Culture, Sexuality and British Cinema in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 13–34; Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1975), 238–43.

[64] Marilyn Lake, "Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II," in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, eds, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 61.

[65] Lisa Featherstone, "Sexy Mamas? Women, Sexuality and Reproduction in Australia in the 1940s," *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 126 (2005): 234–52.

[66] Lisa Featherstone, "Rethinking Female Pleasure: Purity and Desire in Early Twentieth-Century Australia," *Women's History Review* 21, no. 5 (2012): 730.

before then to be sparse.[67] Likewise, oral histories of lesbians who socialised with other lesbians prior to the 1960s are extremely scant, as the taboo attached to homosexuality means few interviews were conducted with lesbians prior to the 1990s.[68] References to lesbianism––or at least, the threat of it—appeared in women's oral histories of the AWLA conducted by Sue Hardisty for *Thanks Girls and Goodbye*. These women were not directly relating their lesbian experiences, but rather recalling observations of other women they saw together.[69] These mentions of lesbianism were not in the oral histories Hardisty conducted with South Australian AWLA members that I use in my thesis, but women do make extensive reference to the physical closeness they shared with other members, recalling—often fondly—how they had shared baths or beds together.[70] These anecdotes were not sexual. But as Ruth Ford explains in the context of the women's auxiliary services, such activities were viewed by officials as being conducive of same-sex desire, and thus were a source of anxiety (although no effort was made by AWLA officials to improve the standard of accommodation facilities).[71] In terms of my argument, the lack of archival and oral sources pertaining to lesbianism during World War II keenly reflects the discourses surrounding women, sexuality, and gender at the time: the ideal woman, as I explore in Chapter Four, did not express her sexuality outside of a monogamous heterosexual marriage, and thus she certainly would not have been a lesbian.

There are some Australian studies on women at war that implement gendered discourse analysis, and even less that specifically focus on civilian women during war. Annabel Cooper interrogates the "inter-textual relations between the discourse [of] war and the discourses of domesticity and maternity" that appeared in press and literature about the

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[67] Riseman, Robinson and Willett, *Serving in Silence,* 8.

[68] Rebecca Jennings, "A Room Full of Women: Lesbian Bars and Social Spaces in Postwar Sydney," *Women's History Review* 21, no. 5 (2012): 813–29.

[69] Sue Hardisty, *Thanks Girls and Goodbye: The Story of the Australian Women's Land Army 1942–45* (Melbourne: Viking O'Neil, 1990), 38.

[70] Kath Vivian interviewed by Rachel Harris, 21 November 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/23; Flora Kearvell interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 12 April 1985, AWM S02705; Win Dodsworth interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 13 April 1985, AWM, S02706; Spencer, interview; White, interview.

[71] Ruth Ford, "Lesbians and Loose Women: Female Sexuality and the Women's Services During World War II" in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, eds, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 97–8.

ANZACs published during World War I.[72] Analysis of feminine discourse and imagery has also been undertaken in regard to Australian servicewomen and nurses in World War II. Christina Twomey's study of AANS nurses captured by the Japanese examines representations of femininity in press reports of their release in 1945. Twomey argues that reports often emphasised the nurses' hair, make up and floral dresses to assure the public they would readapt to "real" womanliness now their ordeal in the prison camp—a disruptive gender environment—was over.[73] Erica Miller considers the discourses used by the nurses in their wartime diaries. She argues that while the nurses draw on romantic and domestic narratives to shape their sense of self, they also unsettle traditional femininity by focusing on the "dangerous" and masculine nature of their overseas service.[74] These studies present a compelling argument, and there is clearly scope for me to consider their assertions in relation to feminine identity in the wartime letters and diaries of civilian women. Joan Davis's analysis of SALT, a wartime publication of the Australian Army Education Service, also provides a useful model. Davis emphasises that institutional and workplace wartime publications shaped and reflected dominant gender expectations.[75] I draw extensively on two such civilian publications, *Hendon Howl,* the staff publication of Hendon Ammunition Factory, and the *AWLA Quarterly Journal,* the newsletter of the South Australian branch of the AWLA. I broaden Davis's analytical framework by considering these publications as sources for gender relations within workplaces, reflecting social interactions between male and female workers.

To analyse certain topics, I have decided to draw upon specific gender theories that are useful in illuminating certain aspects of wartime gender relations. I apply Raewyn Connell's theory of "emphasised femininity" in my discussion of voluntary work in Chapter Three and Jill Julius Matthews's concept of the "gender order" in examining the experiences of German and Italian women in Chapter Five. I detail the usefulness of these theories, and

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[72] Annabel Cooper, "Textual Territories: Gendered Cultural Politics and Australian Representations of the War 1914-1918," *Australian Historical Studies* 25, no. 100 (1993): 403–21. Susan Grayzel implements a similar approach in her study of women in Britain and France during World War I. See Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

[73] Christina Twomey, "Australian Nurse POWs: Gender, War and Captivity," *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 124 (2004): 255–74.

[74] Erica Miller, "Carving a Feminine Space in a Masculine Environment: The Diary of an Australian Military Nurse," *Lilith* 14 (2005): 41–51.

[75] Joan Davis, "'Women's Work' and the Women's Services in the Second World War as Presented in Salt," *Hecate* 18, no. 1 (1992): 64–87.

their analytical value, at the start of the relevant chapters. Broadly put, these theories provide logical avenues for enabling deeper investigation and interpretation of these topics. Matthews's theory is rooted in historical enterprise, while Connell's theory is influenced by social and historical considerations. Both were also formulated with Australia in mind.[76] Indeed, Matthews's *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia* is an extension of her PhD thesis that specifically examines the South Australian experience.[77] While 1939–45 falls squarely within her timeframe—that is, 1920 to 1970—it receives only the briefest attention in both works. In my chapters, I show that closer interrogation of this period through this theoretical approach is especially fruitful.

In *Good and Mad Women,* Matthews explores how Australian women have been defined by ideals of femininity, whether they are constrained by or resist them, as defined by the institutions, ideas and relationships that have formed our society. She argues this was an ideological process; women either fulfilled ideals of femininity or they failed.[78] Matthews does not explicitly mention discourse in her argument, but her theory of an ideological "gender order" shares many similarities with the theories of gendered discourse articulated by other feminist historians. For example, Greer Litton Fox's "nice girl" theory—which Matthews references—suggests that women's behaviour is conditioned by certain "value constructs", such as being a "good" or "nice girl" or a "lady".[79] Helen Pace applied this theory to her study of the Leonski murders in wartime Melbourne, arguing that the construction of "nice girls" in the press was effectively a form of social control, as the murders increased public attention on female sexuality and supposed moral decay.[80]

The notion that discourses have the ability to guide or "govern" people's behaviour is a key premise of my argument. Indeed, Chris Weedon states that discourses, in the Foucauldian tradition, seek to govern people's behaviour and emotions, and inherently

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[76] R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

[77] Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984); Jill Julius Matthews, "Good and Mad Women: A Study of the Gender-Order in South Australia, 1920-1970 (PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 1979).

[78] Matthews, *Good and Mad Women,* 5–8.

[79] Greer Litton Fox, "'Nice Girl': Social Control of Women Through a Value Construct," *Signs* 2, no. 4 (1977): 805–17.

[80] Edward Leonski, an American soldier, was responsible for the deaths of three women in Melbourne in 1942. Helen Pace, "'All the Nice Girls…' A Case Study in the Social Control of Women, Melbourne, 1942," *Hecate* 18, no. 1 (1992): 38–60.

contain some form of social control and power relations.[81] This notion is most clearly presented in Foucault's theory of governmentality, which postulates the ways in which social institutions, communities and governments aim to "shape, guide or affect" people's behaviour, including a person's own sense of self, i.e. their private thoughts and behaviour, as well as their relations with institutions and other people. It is, essentially, according to Colin Gordon, the "conduct of conduct". [82] Scholars in other fields have argued that governmentality is a "broad-ranging and incisive theoretical tool for the analysis of gender relations on a micro– and macro–level".[83] Feminist historians have debated the benefits and drawbacks of using Foucault in gender histories. Lisa Featherstone, who implemented a Foucauldian frame of reference in her study on the history of Australian sexuality, argues that Foucault offers a useful route to investigate social power, but that feminist historians should be careful not to let Foucault "override the agenda" of their work or allow "Foucault to speak for everyone".[84] Indeed, she states that Foucault's major drawback is that he does not identify gender as a site of power, although he focuses on sexuality and the body.

While not mentioning its application to women's or gender history in particular, Simon Gunn also expresses reservations about Foucault's theory of governmentality as an organising concept in historical writing. He notes its emphasis on "top-down power" and disregard of individual agency.[85] To overcome these inadequacies, he suggests that historians who use governmentality as an analytical frame should also consider the

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[81] Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 108. Also see Jane Sunderland, *Gendered Discourses* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Lia Litosseliti and Jane Sunderland, eds, *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002); Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987); Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

[82] Colin Gordon, "Governmental Rationality: An Introduction," in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, eds, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 2–3.

[83] Catriona MacLeod and Kevin Durrheim, "Foucauldian Feminism: The Implications of Governmentality," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 32, no. 1 (2002): 41–60.

[84] Lisa Featherstone, "Foucault, Feminism, and History," in Lynda Burns, ed., *Feminist Alliances* (New York: Rodopi, 2006), 79; Lisa Featherstone, *Let's Talk About Sex: Histories of Sexuality in Australia from Federation to the Pill* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 3.

[85] Simon Gunn, "From Hegemony to Governmentality: Changing Conceptions of Power in Social History," *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (2006): 705–20.

regulation and representations of "the body" as a means to understand power relations.[86] For this reason, the theory of governmentality is most prominent in my chapter on women's sexuality, which focuses closely on the government's (attempted) control of women's bodies and on the self-regulation of women's bodies through the discourse they adopted. Fundamentally, I believe governmentality is pertinent to a wartime study as the war effort necessitated, or at least legitimised, greater institutional regulation of people's behaviour, social interactions, and private lives.

**Methodology**

Unlike many other studies of women's lives in World War II, which rely largely on archival material *or* oral histories, my thesis draws equally on both. This allows me to explore in the detail the similarities and differences between public discourses used at the time and the personal discourses that women later draw on to make sense of their experiences. The quantitative basis of each chapter rests on statistical data, collected from government documents, census and demography bulletins, and the employment and registration records of various organisations. Clearly identifying the number of women employed or involved with each topic under discussion is crucial to my argument; the relatively low number of women employed in munitions factories and AWLA in comparison to the relatively high number of women involved in unpaid work with voluntary organisations, for example, is alone a key demonstrator that current popular and academic understandings about the effect of the war on women's social and economic status need to be reconceptualised and unsettled.

Details of women's wartime lives emerge upon examining the archival sources from the period, namely government documents and debates, police reports, employment records, magazine and newspaper articles, and records of private and public organisations, including voluntary groups and trade unions. Women's letters and diaries were found throughout these archives. These sources were accessed from the State Library of South Australia, State Records of South Australia, Adelaide City Council Archives, Noel Butlin Trade Union Archives, National Archives of Australia, and the Australian War Memorial. The National Archives of Australia hold the majority of files pertaining to the Women's Employment Board (WEB) and government munitions factories—covering topics such as wages and working conditions—as well as Commonwealth Investigation Branch files on the German and Italian women that I use in Chapter Five. The Noel Butlin Archives Centre provided sources relating to the role of trade unions in munitions factories, as well as transcripts of

[86] *Ibid.,* 715–20.

WEB hearings, including the hearings that were conducted in 1942–3 with women employed in Adelaide munitions factories. I have also accessed numerous reports, letters and surveys held by the National Archives of Australia relating to the key social issues I examine in Chapters Two and Four, including childcare provisions, rates of absenteeism in wartime industries, and housing conditions. The State Library of South Australia is a key institution for records on the voluntary organisations I discuss in Chapter Three, including the Cheer Up Society, Red Cross, Defence Society and Fighting Forces Comfort Fund. The police reports and public health documents I have accessed from the State Records of South Australia and Adelaide City Council Archives comprise the bulk of my archival research on the wartime regulation of women's sexuality in Chapter Four.

Given that each chapter largely relies on a separate corpus of archival materials, I have made the decision to explain the specific methodological issues that pertain to them at the start of each respective chapter. Fundamentally, I privilege archival materials that reveal the voice and experiences of women who are overlooked in existing gender and home front histories, in particular working-class women and others marginalised by ethnicity and social status, who area also overlooked by archival collection practices. As Carol Gerson explains, while the "task of researching women in archives seems obvious" there are "contingencies of value surrounding the institution of the archive": traditional voices and academic attitudes—usually male—have, and continue to be, favoured by collecting repositories.[87] It may be for this reason that I found comparatively few archival sources relating to my research in the collection of the Australian War Memorial, which is still developing its acquisition policies in relation to women.[88] More broadly, archives relating to civilian women's employment in both world wars are far scarcer than military records, which were compulsorily retained. In contrast, it was common practice for civilian records to be discarded; the personnel files of South Australian AWLA members, for example, no longer exist.

[87] Carol Gerson, "Locating Female Subjects in the Archives," in Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar, eds, *Researching Women's Private Literature and Archival Documents* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 7–22. Also see Katie Wood, "Disturbing the Silence of Women Metal Workers," *Archives and Manuscripts* 46, no. 1 (2018): 83–9; Maryanne Dever, "Archives and New Modes of Feminist Research," *Australian Feminist Studies* 32, no. 91–2 (2017): 1–4; Renée Römekns and Anita Wiersma, *Gender and Archiving: Past, Present, Future* (Torelaan: The Year Book of Women's History/Verloen, 2017).

[88] See Australian War Memorial, "Collection Development Plan," (accessed 27 August 2019), https://www.awm.gov.au/sites/default/files/collection_development_plan.pdf

*Newspapers*

The uneven archival record means I have drawn extensively on newspaper articles, especially Adelaide's daily papers at the time: *The Advertiser* and *The News*, and also *The Mail* (precursor to the *Sunday Mail,* published on Sundays). I also use regional newspapers, such as Mount Gambier's *Border Watch* and Renmark's *Murray Pioneer*, among others. I am aware of the methodological considerations of using press reports as primary evidence, including inaccurate or biased reporting, author agenda, and representativeness of public opinion.[89] Keeping these issues in mind, I use newspapers in two main ways. I use them to reconstruct the activities of South Australian women during the war that, prior to the introduction of the National Library of Australia's digital Trove database, remained largely inaccessible to historians, who had to trawl through microfilm reels in the hope of finding articles relevant to their research. As the majority of Australian studies of women on the home front were published before 2008, when Trove was launched, they do not feature newspaper articles as prominent sources. Trove, which has digitised South Australian newspapers of the 1930s–1950s, gave me the opportunity to uncover a vast amount of new material.[90] In some cases, the press reports I use are the only remaining sources that exist for certain topics. My use of newspaper articles in Chapter Three that discuss women's wartime voluntary work in paid workplaces is particularly consequential. Aside from these articles, such efforts went largely unrecorded. Melanie Oppenheimer, in her 2001 publication *All Work, No Pay*, recommended volunteering in wartime workplaces as an area of further research but noted information at the time was limited. Drawing on the press reports that were regularly published in *The Advertiser* about the voluntary work of "business girls" thus constitutes a new body of research.

Newspaper articles have also been invaluable sources for analysing gendered wartime discourse. Jane Chapman, in her study on newspapers and gender in Britain, India and France between 1860 and 1930, argues that newspapers "act as a reminder of the potency

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[89] See Stephen Vella, "Newspapers," in Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann, eds, *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century History* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), 197–208.

[90] I have kept in mind recent debates about the ways that digitised newspapers are changing the way historians access the past, particular the concern that keyword searches in databases increase the chance of producing a misleading view of press coverage. Thus, I made sure to scroll through as many full editions of newspapers as I possibly could to ascertain the wider context of the articles that I use. See Tim Sherratt, "Trove: Connecting Us To The Past," *Teaching History* 53, no. 2 (2019): 39–43; Roger Blackley, "Cruising the Colonial: Newspapers and Shop Windows," *Journal of New Zealand Studies* 12 (2011): 65–76.

of gender discourses".[91] Chapman identifies five historical connections between women and newspapers, namely, their representation within them, their role as sources of news, their influence on editorial matter, female readership and perceptions of women as consumers of the press, and how women received and sought press coverage through activities in the public sphere.[92] In Chapter One, I analyse the disjuncture between the overtly feminised coverage of munitions work by Adelaide's newspapers—which depicted factories as being akin to typically feminine spaces like kitchens or laundries—and the reality of strenuous labour and dangerous working conditions. Such press reports acted as gendered propaganda, actively concealing the facts about munitions work in order to entice more women to take up employment at a time of an acute labour shortage, while allaying public fears about its effect on their femininity. Conversely, I argue in Chapter Four that the unrelenting negative coverage of women's behaviour and sexuality, while taking the opposite approach, aimed to influence women's actions in the same way. In both instances, I use newspaper articles as both sources of evidence for women's lives and as "historical actors in and of themselves".[93]

*Letters and Diaries*

The final group of archived primary sources I draw on are women's wartime diaries and letters. Both sources give a rich and unparalleled insight into women's experiences that is hard to capture through other types of sources.[94] As Katie Holmes argues in her study of Australian women's diaries of the 1920s and 1930s, diaries reveal the language that was available to women at the time—usually arranged around relations of gender and power—and how it was used to construct a sense of self. Holmes argues that women did not simply record their everyday lives, but used diaries as a "place of resistance to dominant prescriptions of [their] lives, or, alternatively, as a place of rapprochement or accommodation, where the conflicting and contradictory demands on [them] could be

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[91] Jane L. Chapman, *Gender, Citizenship and Newspapers* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), xiii.

[92] *Ibid.,* 3.

[93] Julia Laite, "Justifiable Sensationalism: Newspapers, Public Opinion and Official Policy about Commercial Sex in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain," *Media History* 20, no. 2 (2014): 126–45.

[94] Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, "Issues in Studying Women's Diaries: A Theoretical and Critical Introduction," in Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia L. Huff, eds, *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 1.

integrated".[95] Locating women's diaries relevant to my research was a difficult task. The State Library of South Australia holds only two diaries by women from the period, and while some of the women I interviewed had kept diaries during the war, they were reluctant to share them. But the two diaries I do use provide compelling narratives of wartime mobilisation in city and country, one composed by Lucy Lockett Ayers, a voluntary air-raid warden in Adelaide, and the other by Frances Harvie, an AWLA worker. Lucy's diary forms the basis of my analysis of ARP work in Chapter Three, as it provides a detailed account of the difficulties she faced in volunteering in a role perceived as masculine. The fact Lucy was middle-aged at the time also makes her diary a valuable source for how this age group responded to the war, as the passage of time means I have been unable to interview older women for the oral history component of my project.

As with diaries, letters are valuable sources for understanding women's experiences and connections with gendered discourses. They also present similar methodological issues. Penny Summerfield notes that letters are "constructed narratives" in which the author shapes their identity both for themselves and the intended reader.[96] This point is especially important in regards to the letters I use, the vast majority of which are not personal correspondence, but were letters sent by women to employers, the press and government departments with a specific purpose. For example, the letters of women in the Islington Railway Workshop archives are primarily resignation letters, while the letters I use in Chapter Five are from German and Italian women requesting government support, which have a different purpose again to the body of letters I use in Chapter Four, which are from women writing to the National Health and Medical Research Council outlining why they had decided to limit their family size. This means women may have altered or obscured their true sentiments to a considerable extent in order to best serve the purpose of their letter. However, I see this as a positive, especially because this provides insight into how women negotiated difficult wartime circumstances. They are some of the only sources which give a contemporary insight into how women interacted with the government, employers and institutions that defined and enforced the gender norms that shaped their lives from 1939–45.

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[95] Katie Holmes, *Spaces in Her Day: Australian Women's Diaries 1920s–1930s* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995), x–xiii. Also see Erica Miller, "Negotiating Change: Australian Women's Wartime Diaries, 1939–45" (M.A. thesis, University of Melbourne, 2005).

[96] Penny Summerfield, "Concluding Thoughts: Performance, the Self and Women's History," *History Review* 22, no. 2 (2013): 350.

*Oral Histories*

In addition to archival sources, this study is informed by the oral testimony of 130 women who experienced life on the South Australian home front during World War II. This corpus includes approximately 100 oral history interviews held by the State Library of South Australia, Adelaide City Council Archives, and the Australian War Memorial, as well as 23 interviews I conducted myself in 2016-17, which are now in the collection of the State Library of South Australia. The majority of re-purposed interviews that feature in my thesis were undertaken in the 1980s and are not included in other studies. The women I interviewed ranged from 88 to 102 years of age with the average birth year being 1923. Collectively, both groups of interviews represent women from all social classes: housewives and mothers from city and country, munitions and AWLA workers, shop assistants, bank and office workers, as well as women who dedicated themselves to full-time voluntary work. Some had participated in other oral history projects. But the most compelling interviews were with women who had not previously had chance to share their stories and who relished the opportunity to recount their wartime experiences.[97]

Re-purposing and conducting interviews, especially with elderly participants, generates a number of methodological issues which I have had to consider when using them as historical evidence. Adequately addressing the social and historical context of these interviews not only has ethical ramifications, but also helps to reveal how women's narratives and memories of the war have shifted over time. Due to the advancing age of prospective participants, I set a realistic corpus size of 25 interviews, with my three basic criteria being that interviewees had to have experienced civilian life in South Australia for at least part of the period 1939–45 and been above working age (i.e. 14 years) for the majority of that time, and currently be of sound mind. In addition to conducting interviews across Adelaide, I also interviewed nine women in Victor Harbor and Mount Gambier; all apart from one were interviewed at their place of residence. During the war, most had resided in suburban Adelaide, however some were located in Victor Harbor and other small towns on the Fleurieu Peninsula, Mount Gambier, and Port Augusta. Despite my small target demographic, when coupled with the oral histories undertaken by other historians, many more of which were conducted with the rural context in mind, I have amassed a collection

[97] This accords with Alistair Thomson's observation that many older people enjoy oral history interviews and that they fulfil a "deep-felt need to make sense of [life] as it passes". See Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Stories: Using Personal Testimony in War History," *War & Society* 25, no. 2 (2006): 11-2.

of interviews that represent a relatively reflective cross-section of women who experienced life in South Australia during World War II (see Table 1.1).

| Factory Work | 8 |
|---|---|
| Munitions | 16 |
| Bank/Office Work | 19 |
| Farmhand | 5 |
| AWLA | 21 |
| Domestic Service* | 4 |
| Housewife/Mother | 16 |
| Voluntary Worker | 19 |
| Shop Assistant | 5 |
| Other | 17 |
| **TOTAL** | **130** |
| % Metropolitan | 45 |
| % Country | 55 |

Table 1.1: The different wartime occupations of women included in my oral history corpus and the percentage who lived in Adelaide and country South Australia during World War II.
*Includes one German and one Aboriginal woman

While listening to first-hand accounts of women's wartime lives was a profoundly rewarding experience, undertaking an oral history project with elderly participants was challenging. At the time, I felt like I rushed into conducting my project because of the age of the women I was searching for; I thought I might not find any at all. This was not the case, and, by and large, aside from the occasional faulty hearing aid and initial wariness of recording equipment, the women I met were mentally astute and were confident in relating their wartime memories. The greatest barrier to the recruitment process was instead practical. As many lived in age care facilities, it was often necessary to organise the interviews through a facility's lifestyle assistant. Most were helpful and had considerable experience in undertaking reminiscence activities. However, there were four cases in which the aims of my project were misunderstood, and I was recommended unsuitable candidates (that is, women affected with dementia). In these few instances, I made casual conversations but did not conduct a formal interview. While my experiences with these women might be an occupational hazard of involving myself in the aged care sector (and present a perfect case

for why some critics of oral history believe conducting interviews with elderly people to be a futile exercise) they reinforced my belief in the importance of my project. As much firsthand knowledge of the South Australian home front has already been lost, through memory loss, the reluctance of many women to record their stories, and simply through the passage of time, this makes the testimonies I have collected even more valuable.

The consistency of the testimonies I have collected suggests they capture the reality of women's wartime situations. However, I have kept in mind that the recollection of past events by any group of people inevitably involve a process of editing in which certain details are selected and others supressed, often according to one's class, gender or contemporary political outlook, or due to the influence of collective or popular memory.[98] Older interviewees are especially prone to view the past through a nostalgic lens and downplay the difficulties of their younger days.[99] Patrick O'Farrell summed up opposition to oral history on these grounds in 1979, when he argued that to "rest a book on oral foundations is hazardous" as it would be affected by "the world of image, selective memory, later overlays and utter subjectivity". This would "lead not into our history, but into myth".[100] While O'Farrell makes a valid point, the same might be said about other forms of subjective historical evidence, such as diaries, memoirs and letters.[101] His caution, I think, is largely out of proportion. Much of the factual information related by my interviewees (e.g. dates, locations and events) can be corroborated with information contained in archival sources, including newspaper articles and government documents, as well as that in secondary literature. This was especially true for women who drew upon personal documents in their

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[98] Alistair Thomson, "Making the Most of Memories: The Empirical and Subjective Value of Oral History," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999): 291; Anna Green, "Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates," *Oral History* 32, no. 2 (2004): 35–44; Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991).

[99] See, for example, Selma Leydesdorff, "The Screen of Nostalgia: Oral History and the Ordeal of Working-Class Jews in Amsterdam," *International Journal of Oral History* 7, no. 2 (1986): 109-15; Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, "The Dimensions of Nostalgia", in Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, eds, *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 1-17; David Lowenthal, "Nostalgia Tells It Like It Wasn't," in Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, eds, *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 18-32.

[100] Patrick O'Farrell, "Oral History: Facts and Fiction," *Quadrant* 5 (1979): 4, 8-9.

[101] For critical responses of Farrell's contention see Alan Roberts, "Paul Thompson, Wendy Lowenstein and One Source History: A Reply to Patrick O'Farrell," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 5 (1982–83): 25–34; Vicki Cowden, "Historiography and Oral History: A Plea for Reconciliation," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 5 (1982–83): 35–40; Paul Thompson, "Oral History and the Historian," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 5 (1982-83): 41–7.

interviews such as diaries, memoirs, employment papers and bank records; the fact they had kept these items for so many years demonstrated the importance they placed on recalling their wartime experiences accurately.

The fact that many women dwelled on the negative aspects of their wartime experiences also makes their testimony all the more pertinent. An element of nostalgia was prominent only in two interviews, which were with women who had recently lost their husbands whom they had dated and married during the war. As one of the requirements for the existence of nostalgia is the sense that the present is somehow deficient,[102] it seemed natural for the testimony of these women to reflect their current situation. But the vast majority of women did not shy away from describing the social and economic difficulties they had faced at home and work. This quote from Anna Morrison, who raised two children during the war, demonstrates the frankness of their accounts. When I asked whether her formative family years were still a happy time, she replied:

> Well in one way [they were], but [I] can remember, a beautiful day and the children playing on the back lawn and Japan was advancing rapidly towards us and somebody had told me how to kill ourselves painlessly, the children and me … and I remember standing at the lawn thinking 'this should be the happiest time of my life, and it isn't' … it wasn't at all obvious at that stage we would win [and] it was just horrific.[103]

While most women, including Anna, enjoyed sharing their wartime experiences, it was almost unanimous that their fondest memory of the war had been when peace was declared. I found this somewhat surprising. Kate Darian-Smith, who interviewed over 80 women in the 1980s for her project on the Melbourne home front, discovered that for women who were teenagers or young adults, the war had become a "metaphor" for youth, romance and excitement.[104] This stark difference in our findings may be due to the changing collective memory of World War II in Australia, which has been definitively re-fashioned in the past

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[102] See Chase and Shaw, "The Dimensions of Nostalgia," 3.

[103] Anna Morrison interviewed by Rachel Harris, 10 July 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/3.

[104] Kate Darian-Smith, "War Stories: Remembering the Australian Home Front During the Second World War," in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, eds, *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 143-4.

three decades. Popular narratives of the home front that may have once influenced women's wartime recollections—for example, the television dramas "The Sullivans" and "Come in Spinner" were often reference points with interviewees in Kate Darian-Smith's oral histories—are no longer prominent in public memory.

While popular media depictions of women at war might not be as prolific as they once were, Australia's current collective memory of war—focused overwhelmingly on the resurgence of military history and the ANZAC legend—did inevitably impinge upon women's narratives. Collective memory can be defined as being like a set of "cultural scripts" based on dominant representations of the past through which personal stories can be mediated, modified and interpreted.[105] While I believe these scripts supplement an individual's memories, some historians believe they are the only way through which individual identity and remembering can be framed, understood and made meaningful.[106] Australia's collective memory of war, now more than ever, is very selective in nature, substantially favouring male experiences and largely repressing women's wartime stories. The popularity of the ANZAC legend has marginalised women's war experiences in popular memory, which are viewed as an appendage to military history, rather than its equal.[107] This had been clearly internalised by some of my interviewees, who made sure to detail the wartime service of male family members as part of their testimony. Some apologised off the record for not doing their "homework" on their husband's military service record and were surprised when I told them it was not necessary. The notion that I was genuinely interested in *their* wartime experiences produced two main responses. Some women expressed doubts or dismissed that their contribution was adequate or useful. But others placed great

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[105] Green, "Individual Remembering and Collective Memory," 36.

[106] See Amos Funkenstein, "Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness," *History and Memory* 1, no. 1 (1989): 7.

[107] Briefly, the ANZAC Legend revolves around the commemoration of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corp (ANZAC) landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915, which has been elevated in the public consciousness in recent years through government education initiatives, increased funding for ANZAC Day services, and the expansion of the Australian War Memorial. Former Prime Minister John Howard was a strong proponent of ANZAC Day as the nation's most important occasion, and his support of it eventually saw the ANZAC Legend become akin to "White Australia's creation myth". It now eclipses other historical narratives in popular national histories of Australia, conflating the masculine qualities of mateship, courage and larrikinism with Australian national identity. For recent critiques of the ANZAC Legend see David Stephens and Alison Broinowski, eds, *The Honest History Book* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2017); Raelene Frances and Bruce Scates, eds, *Beyond Gallipoli: New Perspectives on Anzac* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2016); Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014); Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend,* 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2013); Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, eds, *What's Wrong with ANZAC? The Militarisation of Australian History* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2010).

significance on their participation in the project. In particular, one woman prepared in the months prior to her interview by writing a script and deciding at what points to discuss her wartime mementoes and photographs in the interview. On my arrival, she welcomed me by explaining I was to be served tea and scones on her "best fine china" that she saved for "very special occasions". Throughout the interview she kept largely to a memorised script. She later described the interview as one of the most "important things" she had done and was happy she had "finally been good for something" in her old age.

Not all the women I interviewed shared the same level of enthusiasm or preparation as the one in this example. But her response captures the spirit in which my interviews were conducted and shows the testimony of elderly participants will not necessarily be compromised by fading memory. It also demonstrates that Australia's collective—that is, masculine—memory of war enhanced this woman's perception that she had to try harder to legitimise the worth of her memories, even though she believed them to be of great personal importance. The rise of the ANZAC legend at the time of the decline of the World War II generation, and its effect on how women from this generation recall and relate their wartime experiences, is significant and widespread, and also understudied. Indeed, this has been observed by other oral historians. Mary Brooks, for example, interviewed ex-AWAS members about their memories of the bombing of Darwin. She found that when asked about the value of her wartime service, one of her interviewees digressed "to the male experience of the war as if by proxy".[108] With this in mind, women's commitment to prioritising their own wartime experiences can actually be read as a form of challenge towards Australia's collective memory of the war; this, if anything, throws their historical significance into sharper relief.

While the oral history component of my project has yielded important new findings, the majority of my oral history corpus is composed of re-purposed interviews, sourced from the State Library of South Australia and the Australian War Memorial. Most have not been included in any other books or articles. They shape my historical narrative and methodological approach, but I have had to grapple with the challenges associated with re-purposing interview data. Social scientists have identified problems that can arise with re-purposed interviews due to a possible lack of context about how they were collected, the absence of a unique relationship between interviewee and secondary researcher, reliability

[108] Mary Brooks, "'My Brain is Playing Up with Me': Reminiscing the Home Front: Memory, Story and Fading Scripts," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 35 (2013): 58-67. Also see Rodney Earl Walton, "Memories from the Edge of the Abyss: Evaluating the Oral Accounts of World War II Veterans," *The Oral History Review* 37, no. 1 (2010): 18-34.

of the interview data (e.g. interviews that may have been undertaken using an interview technique that is now considered outdated), and the ethical dilemma of being unable to obtain informed consent from the interviewee and original researcher for their reuse.[109] Such issues have customarily received little attention from oral historians, which may stem from the fact that re-using data is a relatively normal and uncontroversial practice for historians. (Indeed, all primary sources could come under the category of "re-used material".) [110]

Where available, I drew on original recordings rather than transcripts, as they provide more contextual information about the mood of the interview and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee.[111] I selected interviews undertaken with a similar intent to those I undertook myself. The majority come from collections that were commissioned with the specific aim of capturing women's wartime experiences, including Sue Hardisty's collection of AWLA interviews held by the Australian War Memorial—the South Australian interviews do not appear in her book *Thanks Girls and Goodbye*—and more general "life history" interviews in which World War II was discussed. This shaped my own oral history project as I made sure to cover topics that were not a focus of these existing interviews, such as wartime voluntary work and the arrival of American servicemen in Adelaide. Ethical issues of re-purposing interviews are harder to overcome, especially given that guidelines have changed significantly since the 1980s and 1990s, when the majority of interviews were conducted. This means it is unknown whether interviewees would have been made fully aware of how their testimony could be used by researchers. To mitigate this concern as much as possible, I have only included interviews that are made freely available for public research and study. This suggests interviewees would have at least been aware of the possibility that their interviews could be included in future research, even if they cannot give consent to how I have specifically interpreted them here.

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[109] Joanna Bornat, "A Second Take: Revisiting Interviews with a Different Purpose," *Oral History* 31, no. 1 (2003): 47–53; Irene Rogers and Margaret McAllister, "Ghosts in the Archives: Exploring the Challenge of Reusing Memories," paper presented at the National Oral History Association of New Zealand Conference, Wellington, 19–21 September 2004; Libby Bishop, "Ethical Sharing and Reuse of Qualitative Data," *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 44, no. 3 (2009): 255-72; Peter Jackson, Graham Smith and Sarah Olive, "Families Remembering Food: Reusing Secondary Data," (working paper, University of York, 2008); Rachel L. Einwohner, "Ethical Considerations on the Use of Archived Testimonies in Holocaust Research: Beyond the IRB Exemption," *Qualitative Sociology* 34 (2011): 415-30.

[110] See Joanna Bornat, "Crossing Boundaries with Secondary Analysis: Implications for Archived Oral History Data," paper presented at the ESRC National Council for Research Methods for Methodological Innovation, University of Essex, 19 September 2008. Also see Louise Corti, "Editorial," *Methodological Innovations* 1, no. 2 (2006): 1–9.

[111] For analysis of recordings and transcripts as sources see Ronald Grele, "On Using Oral History Collections: An Introduction," *Journal of American History* 74, no. 2 (1987): 577.

## Oral History, Discourse and Gender

As women's oral histories often reveal views at odds with those in official or popular accounts, they are frequently used by feminist and gender historians.[112] As Lynn Abrams asserts, oral histories are an important source for understanding how people relate to and mediate their sense of self through dominant social, cultural and gendered discourses which have been ascribed to them. (For example, women may convey themselves as maternal in oral histories because they have absorbed dominant discourses of women as mothers.)[113] In this regard, conducting my interviews at the start of my project proved the best approach, as they became crucial in helping me form my overall argument and theoretical approach. The overwhelming tendency for the women I interviewed to reconstruct their wartime memories through a domestic framework prompted me to explore other ways in which gendered discourses were used during the war to shape women's lives. As Summerfield notes, the discourses that women use to retrospectively position themselves as "wartime women" cannot be divorced from dominant constructions of femininity of the time.[114] In Australia, there has been limited study on what women's oral accounts of the war can reveal about gender relations on the home front; Kate Darian-Smith's research on romance narratives in women's oral histories of their relationships with allied servicemen in wartime Melbourne is the most notable exception.[115] Darian-Smith argues that women generally adhered to a "girl-meets-boy tale [that] constructs [war] experiences as being related to and emotionally dependent on men".[116] I too discovered when undertaking my oral history project that the

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[112] Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory,* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), 71–4; Penny Summerfield, "Doing Feminist Oral History Then and Now," in Katrina Srigley, Stacey Zembrzycki and Franca Lacovetta, eds, *Beyond Women's Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2018), 77–80; Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," in Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds, *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 11.

[113] Abrams, *Oral History Theory,* 36.

[114] Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives,* 15–6.

[115] Kate Darian-Smith, "Remembering Romance: Memory, Gender and World War II," in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, eds, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 117–32. Also see Rosemary Montgomery, "'We didn't know we were part of history': Adolescent Girls, Reading and the Second World War in Australia," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 22 (2000): 54-9; Catherine Ikin, Leanne Johns and Colleen Hayes, "Field, Capital and Habitus: An Oral History of Women in Accounting in Australia during World War II," *Accounting History* 17, no. 2 (2012): 175-92; Bronwyn Lowe, "Reflections on Gender and Memory: Personal Experiences of Women of the WAAAF during the Second World War," *Melbourne Historical Journal* 39, no. 1 (2011): 159-74.

[116] Darian-Smith, "Remembering Romance," 122.

popular notion of the war as a watershed for women can be rebalanced by paying attention to femininity in oral histories of their experiences, but I also found some women's narratives challenged existing understandings of gendered World War II memories.

Interpreting women's oral histories within a gendered framework can be fraught with difficulty because it is sometimes the case that interviewees—and especially those from older generations—can take exception to the idea of their stories being recast through a modern "feminist" lens.[117] This unease can be coupled with apprehension about the interview process itself, which tends to privilege masculine forms of story-telling. Kristina Minister argues that the traditional oral history frame often disadvantages women with its usual emphasis on acts and events, rather than feelings and personal relationships.[118] As the majority of women I interviewed had no previous experience with oral history or public speaking, I made sure to formulate my questions to give them opportunity to reflect on their feelings and to encourage spontaneous reflections.[119] To make this clear, at the beginning of each interview I informed the women that I did not expect them to relate a standard chronological narrative. Although factual questions were inevitably part of the interview process, I made sure to emphasise my interest in feelings and personal memories rather than specific dates or military or political events.

Women's emphasis on domestic concerns when relating their experiences is not confined to a wartime context; oral historians have generally observed that many women remember the past—or construct their memories of it—in a different way to men.[120] Older women especially tend to focus on the minutiae of domestic life, home interiors and family events. They more frequently avoid a first-person point of view, downplay personal accomplishments, and place undue emphasis on other people's activities. They also show preference for reported speech, that is, quoted conversations or dialogue, and more often use

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[117] Katherine Borland, "That's Not What I Said: A Reprise 25 Years On," in Katrina Srigley, Stacey Zembrzycki and Franca Lacovetta, eds, *Beyond Women's Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2018), 31–7. Also see Alistair Thomson, "Moving Stories, Women's Lives: Sharing Authority in Oral History," *Oral History* 39, no. 2 (2011): 73-82.

[118] Kristina Minister, "A Frame for Feminist Interviews," in Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds, *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 31.

[119] For more on encouraging the discussion/reflection of emotions in women's oral history interviews see Anderson and Jack, "Learning to Listen," 13–4.

[120] Joan Sangster, "Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History," *Women's History Review* 3, no. 1 (1994): 7; Abrams, *Oral History Theory,* 91–2.

the terms "we" or "us" rather than "I" or "me".[121] Whereas women distance themselves from public events, men invariably use first-person pronouns and place themselves at the centre of the action they describe. In fact, women's "embeddedness in familial life" can shape their "very consciousness of historical time".[122]

Many of the women who feature in my thesis reconstructed their timeframes of the war by using personal or family benchmarks—including the engagement and marriage of themselves and others, birth of children, enlistment or return of brothers and husbands on active service, or the death of a family member—rather than political, military or public events. Alessandro Portelli argues "war narratives" are clearly demarcated by gender; men talk about their military service while women construct "hospital tales". In some cases, this means women literally emphasise their wartime experiences of caring for wounded servicemen, for example, but more broadly they reconstruct their wartime experiences through discourses of caring and nurturing.[123] This narrative was evident in several interviews I conducted and repurposed. However, it was especially prominent in the one interview I conducted where the husband of my interviewee was present. While my interviewee could not recall if she had been concerned about the bombing of Darwin—she focused more on her father's death in a workplace accident that occurred around the same time—her husband interjected to give a summary of Japanese military activity and the tensions between Prime Minister Curtin and Winston Churchill.[124]

Although I asked women about their personal and family lives during the war, wartime work, both paid and unpaid, was a main focus. This was the area where women's recollections deviated most from previous studies that addressed these topics. Penny Summerfield concluded in the British context that the complexity of women's responses to wartime work means there is no clear answer regarding whether it constituted a social or economic watershed for women. She instead defines women as adhering to either "heroic" or "stoic" narratives. Heroic women relished the opportunity to take up paid jobs that transgressed conventional gender identities. Stoic women, however, were cautious to challenge feminine standards. They engaged unwillingly in male work or continued in

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[121] Minister, "A Frame for Feminist Interviews," 27–39; Abrams, *Oral History Theory,* 119.

[122] Sangster, "Telling Our Stories," 7.

[123] Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin University Press, 1997), 6–7.

[124] Betty Hayford interviewed by Rachel Harris, 11 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/8.

traditional female occupations and viewed the war as an obstacle to their personal goals.[125] These appear to be polarised narratives, but both, as Summerfield explains, are circumscribed by femininity; the (supposed) freedom of heroic women is contingent on the fact they had not yet become wives and mothers, while the restraint of stoic women emerged from their continued prescription to this ideal.[126] Applying Summerfield's framework to the Australian context is not straightforward given the fact that in Britain female workers were conscripted into war work by the government, which would have naturally impinged on how much individual autonomy women believed they possessed. Thus, neither categorisation holds clear in my testimonies of Australian women; they seem to draw on narratives that could be defined as stoic or heroic depending on what aspect of their wartime experiences they relate.

There was a broad tendency for women whose testimonies I used to downplay their wartime contributions. The only testimonies that could be loosely defined as heroic were from women who entered positions giving them a degree of power in the workplace. Lilian Johnston's oral history is a prime example. While she relished the chance to fill a male job as an inspector at Hendon Ammunition Factory, she also believed the war ended opportunities for better education or employment for many women, stating "[that these] were available for anyone who'd been in the services but not to anyone who'd 'slammed their guts out' in a munitions factory. They were just discarded, including me".[127] Lilian's comment raises an important distinction. Summerfield's heroic versus stoic theory is based on the recollections of women in civilian and non-civilian occupations. Indeed, she notes that heroic narratives were more frequent among women who had joined the services. This points to the fruitfulness, and also the need, of examining civilian women in isolation. Their oral histories suggest that civilian wartime employment did not always equate with freedom or success. In fact, women whose civilian wartime work digressed from accepted gender norms, such as trade union leader Mary Miller, more readily critiqued their male employers and discussed in detail their experiences of substandard working conditions and wage practices.[128] A few women expressed they had taken on their chosen wartime occupations in

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[125] Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives,* 82–99.

[126] *Ibid.,* 80.

[127] Lilian Johnston interviewed by Anne Geddes, July 1983, SLSA, PRG, 727/2/2.

[128] Mary Miller interviewed by Margaret Allen, 23 January 1984 and 5 and 18 June 1986, SLSA, OH 78/1; Mary Miller, Women and Labour in South Australia's History Seminar, 18 August 1991, SLSA, OH 148/3.

order to "do their bit" for the war effort. However, their reasons more frequently rested on traditional family constraints: they wanted to provide for their families, or because their parents or husbands suggested it, or because the workplace was close to home, or because shift work allowed them to care for their children.[129] My thesis does not refute that the war saw an increase in the number of jobs available to women, but highlights that access to these jobs remained contingent on gendered expectations and decisions.

This argument leads to the main question I posed to each woman I interviewed: do you think the war was a turning point in your life? This question was formulated in light of existing academic and popular arguments which pivot on the idea that the war altered women's social and economic status, and hence gender norms. Of my interviewees, 12 said the war had been a turning point in their lives, nine said it had not been a turning point or that another event had been more important, and two did not provide a definitive answer. The near-equal balance of responses alone challenges the watershed narrative, but the reasons women provided for their answers shows the importance of acknowledging female subjectivity when assessing the war's impact on women's lives. Of the nine women for whom the war was *not* a turning point, the most common reason was that it had "not affected them much". Some felt South Australia was not materially impacted, but most concluded that the war had occurred too early in their youth for it to have significantly affected the course of their lives. These women were not markedly younger than other interviewees, but most were married after 1945. This means the importance they placed on their marriage was not directly linked to their wartime experiences. For them, adult life had started when they became a wife; the war was secondary to the momentous change this had brought about in their lives. Only two of these women considered their wartime employment when formulating an answer.[130]

Indeed, the extent to which all my interviewees used marriage as a measurement of the war's lasting effect was striking. I refer now to the 12 women who believed the war *was* a turning point. Of these, six asserted it was because their wartime circumstances had led to them meeting their husbands. As one of my interviewees informed me, who was 16 when

[129] Key examples include Kath Vivian interviewed by Rachel Harris, 21 November 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/23; June Hanley interviewed by Rachel Harris, 16 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/11; Joy Noble interviewed by Rachel Harris, 15 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/10; Mrs Klingberg, Mrs Goodes, Mrs Manuel and Mrs Tozer interviewed by Margaret Allen, January 1984, SLSA, OH 78/5; Jean Schollar interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 11 April 1985, AWM, S02704; Margaret Lemmey interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 11 April 1985, AWM, S02703; Dodsworth, interview.

[130] Joy Noble interviewed by Rachel Harris, 15 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/10; June Gummow interviewed by Rachel Harris, 15 November 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/22.

war broke out in 1939 and was married in 1945: "was it a turning point? I think people my age got engaged, got married, started families, all that happened for some people. It was entirely different than to what everybody had been used to, we had never experienced a war like that".[131] The other six women from this group of 12 focused on wartime employment, much like popular narratives suggest. However, three were ex-servicewomen. While their interviews mainly focused on their civilian lives before they joined the services, when it came time to ask broader questions about the impact of the war, the fact they were given an opportunity to see "the much bigger world outside little Adelaide" became an overriding factor. Women in civilian occupations were much more matter of fact. Of the two single women I interviewed, one had found the war years restrictive rather than liberating, while another asserted it was not until some years after the war she realised that women could lead fulfilling lives outside of marriage.[132] Despite filling a male occupation, Jennifer McDonald, another of my interviewees, simply stated it was a turning point because "there was a job for me [which] would have not been available had there not been a war". Jennifer worked as a bank teller until she was married in 1950 and left the workforce never to return. Interestingly, when I asked Jennifer if she thought the war had changed women's lives collectively, she said it had "an absolutely huge [effect] because they came out and did things they were never able to do [and] it made a heck of a difference".[133] This response confirms the value of paying attention to the ways that popular narratives of the war interact with, and sometimes obscure, traditional notions of femininity expressed by women in accounts of their experiences. The oral histories I draw on in this thesis therefore demonstrate that a "watershed" argument conceals the war's multifaceted effect on women's identities, as well as their social and economic status. If the war was the turning point for women that popular narratives suggest, why would gendered difference in oral recollection be so pronounced? Would not its emancipatory effects be reflected by an absence of such characteristics? The following chapters, each delving deep into a different aspect of women's lives on the South Australian home front, aim to extend our current understanding about the relationship between discourse, gender and women's wartime experiences.

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[131] Hayford, interview.

[132] Joy Noble interviewed by Rachel Harris, 15 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/10; Helen Caterer interviewed by Rachel Harris, 7 November 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/20.

[133] Jennifer McDonald interviewed by Rachel Harris, 2 June 2017, SLSA, OH 1117/25.

# Chapter One

## "An Experiment in Overalls": Femininity and South Australia's Wartime Economy

Mobilisation of South Australia's home front marked the first large-scale opportunity for the state's women to enter employment traditionally reserved for men, and thus initiated public debate regarding the war's effect on femininity and women's place in society. In this chapter, I establish the economic foundations of women's work in the two main wartime industries available to them in South Australia: munitions production and employment in the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA). I provide an overview of women's involvement in industrial and agricultural work in South Australia in the years immediately prior to the war and discuss the issues and discourses that informed women's mobilisation for war work. I then examine the economic factors that shaped women's experiences once they had begun work, arguing that employment in both industries was defined by relatively poor wages and unattractive, and sometimes dangerous, working conditions. Finally, I consider how gender differences were formalised in the policies of the institutions responsible for implementing these conditions: trade unions, the Manpower Directorate and the Women's Employment Board (WEB). These institutions exacerbated workplace inequalities as they invariably preferenced the traditional division of labour over genuine improvement for women war workers. This chapter builds into the next, which together present a well-rounded gendered work history that considers the discursive construction of women's wartime employment in South Australia, as well as its practical outcomes.

In Australia, the experiences of female munition workers and AWLA members have received intermittent attention. National histories of the home front since the 1970s have examined both in varying levels of detail. Paul Hasluck's 750-page examination of the home front dedicates just three paragraphs to the AWLA, while S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin's study of Australia's wartime economy offers a perfunctory analysis of women's entry into wartime factories in its chapters on the expansion and retreat of Australian munitions production.[1] In *Australian Women at War*, first published in 1984, Patsy Adam-Smith details the dangerous conditions that women encountered in munitions factories but does not present

[1] Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942–45,* Series 4, vol. 2 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1970), 269–70 (Also see pages 221–2, 265–9, 285–9, 293); S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin, *War Economy, 1942–1945,* Series 4, vol. 4 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1977). In particular, see pages 29–33, 57, 86–7, 199–200, 377–8.

an overarching argument as to why they existed and makes no mention of women's wages.[2] Women's wartime work was a point of interest to feminist historians in the 1970s and 1980s, who, influenced by the feminist fervor of the times, were invariably critical of its lasting economic significance for women. Published in 1982, Lynn Beaton's chapter in *Worth Her Salt* argues that women's work in munitions factories was rendered "socially invisible" to ensure their status as a cheap source of labour.[3] Following in 1988, Richard White argued that the main change evinced by women's involvement in wartime industries was the type of women working rather than an increase in their overall number, observable in the employment of middle-class women, married and mothers, and a decline in the domestic service sector.[4] More recent studies examine female munitions work as part of a broader analysis of women's employment on the home front. These include Michael McKernan's *Australian's at Home: World War II* and Stuart Macintyre's *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s.*[5]

Women's employment in munitions factories is also covered in some interstate studies, most notably Kate Darian-Smith's *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime* and Jenny Gregory's edited collection *On the Home Front: Western Australia and World War II.*[6] Gail Reekie's contribution to Gregory's collection, and her study on the wartime industrial action taken by women employed in Western Australia's clothing and textile sectors, comprise the most detailed analyses of women's attitudes to wartime wages and working conditions. Reekie argues that women's oral histories are crucial to understanding the recruitment, wages, working conditions and demobilisation of women from munitions work. Both studies conclude that women's experiences of wartime manufacturing in

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[2] Patsy Adam Smith, *Australian Women at War*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Five Mile Press, 2014), 319–30.

[3] Lynn Beaton, "The Importance of Women's Labour: Women at Work in World War II," in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute, eds, *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), 98. Some early feminist analyses of women's munition work include Robin Kramar, "Female Employment during the Second World War," *Women and Labour Conference Papers* 2, no. 3 (1982): 448–60; Joan Curlewis, "Women Working in Heavy Industry in the Second World War," *Women and Labour Conference Papers* 2, no. 3 (1982): 461–70.

[4] Richard White, "War and Australian Society," in Michael McKernan and Margaret Browne, eds, *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1988), 409–13.

[5] Michael McKernan, *Australians at Home: World War II* 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Five Mile Press, 2014); Stuart Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2015).

[6] Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945,* 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009); Jenny Gregory, ed., *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1996).

Western Australia were shaped by dissatisfaction with working conditions and pay and dissension between female workers and male employers.[7] Janey Stone also describes munition factories as spaces of conflict. Focusing on the eastern states, Stone examines the wartime trade union involvement of female workers, contending that female unionists were often more militant in their approach than male members, with industrial action, short stoppages and strikes more frequently organised by women than by men.[8] My argument extends on and challenges these findings in two ways. First, given the extensive archival holdings that remain on munitions factories in Adelaide—especially Islington Railway Workshops—I am able to discern how women perceived their work at the time, through the letters and testimony they provided during their employment, and compare them to how they later recounted their working experiences. I also question Reekie's contention, which is echoed in Stone's summation, that women workers involved in strike action were inherently challenging "prevailing notions of femininity" in their actions. My research finds that trade unions often regulated gender relations within factories, and that women's industrial action was often attenuated by the salience of traditional gender stereotypes.

Labour historians have addressed the policies of the Women's Employment Board (WEB) and Manpower Directorate. Constance Larmour's and Penelope Johnson's studies of the WEB argue that its legacy is that of a missed opportunity; the Board had the potential to change attitudes regarding female wage fixation but the social climate of the 1940s negated its capacity to enact lasting progressive change, providing trade unions and the Commonwealth Government with a continued basis to resist wartime campaigns for equal pay.[9] Carol Fort provides the most comprehensive account of employment policy in Australia during World War II, focusing on how total war conditions affected the Australian

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[7] Gail Reekie, "Shunted Back to the Kitchen? Women's Responses to War Work and Demobilisation," in Jenny Gregory, ed., *On the Home Front: Western Australia and World War II* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1996); Gail Reekie, "Industrial Action by Women Workers in Western Australia during World War II," *Labour History* 49 (1985): 75–82. Reekie's research in Gregory's collection is also presented in Gail Reekie, "Women's Responses to War Work in Western Australia, 1942–1946," *Studies in Western Australian History* 7 (1983): 46–57.

[8] Janey Stone, "Class Struggle on the Home Front: Women, Unions and Militancy in the Second World War," in Sarah Bloodsworth and Tom O'Lincoln, eds, *Rebel Women in Australian Working-Class History* (Melbourne: Interventions, 1998), 39–60.

[9] Constance Larmour, "Women's Wages and the WEB," *Labour History* 29 (1975): 47–58; Penelope Johnson, "Gender, Class and Work: The Council of Action for Equal Pay and the Equal Pay Campaign in Australia during World War II," *Labour History* 50 (1986): 132–46. Also see Katherine Keirs, "Class, Gender and Cold War Politics: The Union of Australian Women and the Campaign for Equal Pay, 1950–66," *Labour History* 117 (2019): 159–80. Tom Sheridan and Pat Stretton, "Pragmatic Procrastination: Governments, Unions and Equal Pay, 1949–1968," *Labour History* 94 (2008): 133–56.

labour market, with particular emphasis on tensions between industrial employers and government institutions.[10] Fort's analysis includes some South Australian case studies, but her emphasis on the political and ministerial dimensions of the WEB and Manpower Directorate means that gender is a peripheral concern. She also does not draw on women's own views. My research takes this step, by using oral histories to examine women's responses to wages and working conditions, while my analysis of the South Australian women who testified before the WEB in mid-1942—which does not appear in any other research—reveals the extent to which the Board attempted to preserve the gendered division of labour despite the fact that the evidence presented to them clearly demonstrated women's aptitude for war work.

The experiences of women's war work in the country has customarily received less scholarly attention. Indeed, the lack of academic works on the AWLA is especially marked when compared with the volume of academic research on the equivalent women's land service organisations in Britain, America and New Zealand.[11] Kay Saunders's short overview of the AWLA's establishment, published in 1997, was the only academic study of the organisation prior to my article with Paul Sendziuk in 2018 and Heather Gartshore's recently published analysis of the post-war treatment of AWLA workers by the Labor Government.[12] My research compliments Gartshore's conclusion that wartime efforts of AWLA workers were dismissed by the Commonwealth Government, but my gendered analysis challenges her assertion that farmers "welcomed" the AWLA's establishment in

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[10] Carol Fort, "Developing a National Employment Policy, Australia 1939–45" (PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 2000); Carol Fort, "Regulating the Labour Market in Australia's Wartime Democracy," *Australian Historical Studies* 34, no. 122 (2003): 213–30; Carol Fort, "State vs. Federal Government in the 'Barmaids' Case: Regulating Australia's Second World War Home Front," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 62, no.1 (2016): 16–29.

[11] See Dianne Bardsley, *The Land Girls in a Man's World, 1939-1946* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2000); Deborah Montgomerie, "Men's Jobs and Women's Work: The New Zealand Women's Land Service in World War II," *Agricultural History* 63, no. 3 (1989): 1–13; Stephanie Carpenter, *On the Farm Front: The Women's Land Army in World War II* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); Ann Kramer, *Land Girls and Their Impact* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2008); Alison Woodeson, "'Going Back to the Land': Rhetoric and Reality in Women's Land Army Memories," *Oral History* 21, no. 2 (1993): 65–71. Also see Nicola Verdon, "Agricultural Labour and the Contested Nature of Women's Work in Interwar England and Wales," *The Historical Journal* 52 (2009): 109–30; Susan Grayzel, "Nostalgia, Gender and the Countryside: Placing the 'Land Girl' in First World War Britain," *Rural History* 10, no. 2 (1999): 155–70.

[12] Kay Saunders, "Not for them Battle Fatigues: The Australian Women's Land Army in the Second World War," *Journal of Australian Studies* 21, no. 52 (1997): 81-7; Rachel Harris and Paul Sendziuk, "Cogs in the Machine: The Experiences of Female Munitions Workers and Members of the Australian Women's Land Army in South Australia, 1940–45," *War & Society* 37, no. 3 (2018): 187–205; Heather Gartshore, "Called to Serve, Shunned as Citizens: How the Australian Women's Land Army Was Recruited and Abandoned by the Labor Government," *Labour History* 117 (2019): 135–58.

1942. The current full-length studies of the AWLA are Jean Scott's *Girls with Grit,* Sue Hardisty's *Thanks Girls and Goodbye,* and Juliet Ludbrook's *Until the Boys Return.*[13] These non-academic works were published with a general readership in mind. Accordingly, they frame AWLA service within a popular "watershed" narrative that emphasises women's nostalgic recollections and culminate with the inclusion of ex-AWLA members in ANZAC Day marches in the 1980s. However, Hardisty's introduction begins to analyse the disjuncture between women's fond memories of AWLA service and the reality of low wages, substandard working conditions and limited public recognition.[14] While she interviewed 15 South Australian women, only one is quoted in her work. This and the following chapter extend her findings by using these interviews, now held by the Australian War Memorial, to examine their views on AWLA wages, working conditions and social aspects of service in South Australia.

I also build on existing research by using munitions and the AWLA as comparative case studies, based on the rationale that integrating women's experiences of metropolitan and rural work gives me a better opportunity to analyse the social and economic conditions that shaped the working lives of civilian women than an examination of a particular occupation in isolation. In the Australian context, Beverley Symons, Roma Donnelly and Maria De Groot have written theses on the social, political and economic aspects of female munitions work, however they largely follow a similar structure and draw on equivalent case studies.[15] Paul Sendziuk and I have already advocated the benefits of a comparative approach, which we implemented in our research on the economic aspects of women's work in munitions and the AWLA in South Australia.[16] We argued that despite the state's thriving

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[13] Jean Scott, *Girls With Grit: Memories of the Australian Women's Land Army* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986); Sue Hardisty, *Thanks Girls and Goodbye: The Story of the Australian Women's Land Army 1942–45* (Melbourne: Viking, 1990); Juliet Ludbrook, *Until the Boys Return: A History of the Australian Women's Land Army (WA Division) 1942–1945* (Perth: The Ex-Australian Women's Land Army Association of Western Australia, 2010). Queensland and Victorian ex-AWLA associations have also published booklets. See Mary Macklin, *The Fourth Service: ex-Australian Women's Land Army, World War II* (Maryborough: Australian Women's Land Army, Queensland Division, 2001); Mary Lowe, *Down to Earth: The Story of the Australian Women's Land Army in Victoria* (Melbourne: Mary Lowe, 1991).

[14] Hardisty, *Thanks Girls and Goodbye,* 1–55.

[15] Beverley Symons, "Challenging and Maintaining the Traditional Gender Order: Labour Movement Responses to Women Workers in the Metal Industry, and to Equal Pay, during World War II" (PhD thesis, University of Wollongong, 1997); Roma Donnelly, "Women in the Australian Munitions Industry during the Second World War, 1939–1945 (M.A. thesis, Swinburne University, 2000); Maria de Groot, "Turning Full Circle: Women War Workers in Industry during the Second World War in Australia, 1939–1945" (M.A. thesis, University of New South Wales, 1986).

[16] Harris and Sendziuk, "Cogs in the Machine," 187–205.

economy, opportunities for women to remain in industrial and agricultural work decreased in the post-war period as their experiences of wartime employment deterred them from staying in the workforce. I develop the gendered aspects of this argument in this and the following chapter, which focus on how traditional notions of femininity affected women's wages and working conditions throughout 1940–45.

**Mobilising Women for Wartime Industries**

Women's entry into wartime munitions production accentuated concerns about their suitability for industrial employment. But women had been employed in factories in significant numbers long before World War II. The average number of female factory workers in South Australia during the interwar period (i.e. 1919–1939) was 5,800 per year.[17] This peaked at 7,060 female workers in 1926, fell during the Depression, and then rose again to 7,533 female workers in 1938–39.[18] The majority worked in clothing, textile and food production; areas that women had been traditionally employed since the nineteenth century.[19] However, the Depression deepened the gendered division of factory labour. Men's "possessiveness" of industry peaked in the 1930s, as mass unemployment provoked industrial tribunals and trade unions to reclassify the majority of factory positions as "male work".[20] Catriona Elder and Andree Wright have examined the discourses surrounding female workers during this period, noting that women were often dissuaded from seeking employment or asserting their rights in the workplace. Women factory workers were often represented as masculine figures who had sacrificed their feminine qualities for the sake of an income, or social deviants who had entered factory work to meet men and engage in sexual experimentation outside of marriage.[21] Such sentiments may have been exacerbated

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[17] *Annual Report on the Working of the Factories and Steam Boilers Department 1939* (Adelaide: South Australian Government Printer, 1940), 9.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] Wray Vamplew, Eric Richards, Dean Jaensch and Joan Hancock, eds, *South Australian Historical Statistics* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1987), 64–5.

[20] Marilyn Lake, "A War Over Women's Work," in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, eds, *A Most Valuable Acquisition: A People's History of Australia Since 1788* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1988), 205.

[21] Catriona Elder, "'The Question of the Unmarried': Some Meanings of Being Single in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s," *Australian Feminist Studies* 18 (1993): 154–63; Andree Wright, "The Australian Women's Weekly: Depression and the War Years, Romance and Reality," *Refractory Girl* 3 (1973): 9–13. Also see Katie Wood, "Pioneer Girls and Flappers: Australia's Early Female Ammunition Workers," *Labour History* 117 (2019): 23–46.

in South Australia, which had the nation's highest unemployment rate from late 1927 until early 1935. During this time Adelaide also experienced the highest level of unemployment of any capital city in Australia.[22] Robert Richards, short-term Premier of South Australia in 1933, seemingly captured the prevailing attitude in his comment to the *News* that women's continued employment in factories was leading to the evolution of a "system under which [our] social traditions are being reversed". He concluded that South Australian employers should "strive to gradually fill … factories and offices with male labour, and cease making beasts of burden of women".[23]

Women's work in country South Australia has a similar backstory. While recruitment of metropolitan women for rural labour was a unique wartime measure, women's employment on the land was not new. The number of South Australian women engaged in rural labour was steady during the inter-war period, averaging 2,700 female workers per year between 1928 and 1940.[24] This number dwarfs the membership rates of the AWLA in South Australia between 1942–45. Due to the state's relatively small population and the labour required to sustain large-scale munitions production, the state's full-time AWLA workforce peaked at just 320 full-time members.[25] Thus, in 1943, the AWLA represented a fraction of South Australia's 2,535 full-time rural female workers, 2,872 part-time rural female workers, and 2,596 female farmers (i.e. co-owners and lessors of rural properties).[26] These figures would seem to suggest that rural labour offered women reasonable economic prospects during the war. However, of the 2,535 women employed as full-time rural female workers, only 960 were remunerated; the remaining 1,575 were unwaged female relatives of farmers/farm owners. This situation demonstrates that the AWLA, despite the increased visibility it gave to women's rural labour, had little chance of altering the familial and gendered connections that underpinned this area of women's work.

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[22] Ray Broomhill, *Unemployed Workers: A Social History of the Great Depression in Adelaide* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1978), 12.

[23] "Boys Instead of Girls: Mr Richards on Work Problem," *News,* 13 January 1934, 1.

[24] "Production," in *South Australian Statistical Register 1944–45* (Adelaide: South Australian Government Printer, 1947), 4.

[25] "Land Army Winds Up," *Mail,* 1 December 1945, 7.

[26] "Production," in *South Australian Statistical Register 1950* (Adelaide: South Australian Government Printer, 1953), 4.

In Adelaide, the pace of wartime industrialisation was rapid, although Premier Thomas Playford had canvassed the establishment of large-scale munitions production in South Australia as early as 1937.[27] The state's munitions industry consisted of four main government-run factories, as well as 87 privately-operated factories that manufactured "high-priority goods" on contract with the Department of Munitions.[28] Hendon Small Arms Ammunition Factory began production in November 1940, with its workforce peaking in June 1942 with 1,920 women and 800 men.[29] Salisbury Explosives Factory was the state's largest munitions plant when it opened in July 1941. It had a peak female workforce of 2,717 in March 1943.[30] Finsbury Munitions Factory also opened in mid-1941 and by April 1942 was employing 1,500 women.[31] Islington Railway Workshops, operated by the State Government, employed approximately 550 women between May 1942 and September 1944.[32] Adelaide's largest privately-operated munitions factories were General Motors Holden, which employed 1,152 women in May 1942, and Richards Industries, which had an average female wartime workforce of 500.[33] The Commonwealth Government also operated "feeder factories" at Clare, Kapunda, Moonta, Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge and Port Pirie. The Mount Gambier and Port Pirie factories had workforces of over 100 women, while, on average, the others employed at least 50 women each between late 1943 and their closure in early 1945.[34] However, the establishment of South Australia's munitions industry did not significantly alter women's employment in traditional female areas of

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[27] Butlin and Schedvin, *War Economy,* 6.

[28] Fort, "Developing a National Employment Policy," 9.

[29] "Small Arms Ammunition Factory Hendon No. of Employees," National Archives of Australia [henceforth NAA], MP438/3, S/40 PART 1 [graph].

[30] "Explosives Factory Salisbury S.A," NAA, MP438/3, S/51 [graph].

[31] "Ammunition Factory Finsbury: Employment 1941–1945," NAA, MP438/3, S/38 [graph].

[32] "Aircraft: Engagement of Female Trainees", NAA, D1743, 1942/3675 PART 1

[33] General Motors Holden, *South Australian Factory at War 1939–1942*, State Library of South Australia [henceforth SLSA], BRG, 213/21/5; "Richards' Industries Absenteeism Enquiry," NAA, B3533, 1615/3/7.

[34] "Feeder Factories, South Australia," NAA, MP438/3, S/38; "Ammunition Factory Port Pirie Report," NAA, AP262/1, 3020/6/3.

manufacturing; the 7,780 women in clothing, textile and food production remained the largest group of female factory workers at the peak of wartime production in mid-1943.[35]

I note that the female employment figures for each munitions factory outlined in the paragraph above total more than the 5,239 female munition workers cited in the *Supplementary Civilian Register* in 1943. This is because some are aggregate wartime totals, while others reflect a certain point in time. They also reveal the temporary nature of munitions employment and betray the difficulties that the State Government faced in recruiting and retaining female workers. Islington Railway Workshop employment records show it was common for women to swap between factories. Indeed, one woman had worked at Finsbury, Salisbury and Hendon before her transfer to Islington in 1942.[36] In some cases, women requested a transfer to a different factory due to dissatisfaction with working conditions or the length of their commute. But in many instances, women were rotated from one factory to another in response to demands on production; the Manpower Directorate, despite its best efforts, did not attract enough workers for factories to operate at full capacity. Women's interest in munitions work piqued well before any factories had opened: 2,170 had registered their interest in munitions work by September 1940.[37] However, they did not come forward in the numbers that were expected once factories opened. J.W. Wainwright, South Australia's Deputy Director of War Industry, claimed in June 1942 that South Australia had no unemployed women; that is, none who were single and under the age of 30.[38] In response, the Manpower Directorate decided to "redirect" Adelaide's female shop assistants into munitions factories (or more specifically, those aged 19–26 who had never been married, or were divorced or widowed without children).[39] It was the only attempt at the compulsory wartime mobilisation of women in Australia. Carol Fort has examined the political success

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[35] Vamplew *et al., South Australian Historical Statistics,* 66.

[36] See Margaret Carr, "Aircraft: Engagement of Female Trainees," NAA, D1743, 1942/3675 PART 1.

[37] "Thousands of S.A. Women Will Soon Be Making Munitions for Victory," *Mail,* 21 September 1940, 12.

[38] J.W. Wainwright to Director, Department of War Organisation of Industry, 6 June 1942, NAA, MP39/1, 1942/69. Statistics regarding the employment status of South Australian women do not exist for 1942, however the Supplementary Civilian Register, taken in June 1943, shows approximately 37,825 of 75,714 women under 30 years of age were "not gainfully employed" or were "unemployed wage or salary earners". Exact numbers are not obtainable as this part of the Register incorporated the Northern Territory in its South Australian findings. See "South Australia," in *Supplementary Civilian Register* (Canberra: Australian Government Printer, 1943), 8.

[39] National Security (General) Regulations: Restriction in Retail Shops (Adelaide) Order 1942, NAA, MP1/1, 1/4/167.

of the redirection, arguing that from October 1942 until its revocation in April 1943, only 42 women were placed in munitions factories as a direct result of the measure.[40] However, the causational effect was relatively significant; public discussion of the imminent redirection saw the rate of women registering at the National Service Office rise between July and November 1942 from approximately 500 to 2,000 per month, but not all these women took up munitions work.[41]

The gendered aspects of this attempt to mobilise women for munitions work are so far unappreciated. The efforts of the South Australian Manpower Directorate to persuade women to enter munitions factories generated a wave of promotional material that encouraged the public and women themselves to view munitions work as an appropriate and glamorous expression of feminine patriotism. Leslie Hunkin, South Australia's Deputy-Director General of Manpower, claimed such measures were necessary because there was a "strong prejudice among women and their parents" towards women factory workers, who were supposedly viewed by many as being "largely of the coarser type".[42] He noted the success of advertising campaigns for the women's auxiliary services, which accentuated the "smart uniform, good pay and conditions [and] other benefits, together with glamour and social approval".[43] He believed the feminine appeal of the women's auxiliary services posed an issue for recruitment in civilian industries. Hunkin concluded that the "patriotic approbation" servicewomen received for supposedly "doing a man's job" meant that "factory work in the production of munitions or *really doing a man's job* on the land or in civil industry take a very minor place in the young woman's comparative valuation of jobs".[44]

Hunkin's comments are likely more indicative of the discourses surrounding women's entry into male occupations, rather than a true reflection of public opinion. Nevertheless, the Manpower Directorate resolved that its recruitment efforts had to be persuasive and appeal to women's patriotic sentiment. In November 1942, it contacted every

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[40] Fort, "Developing a National Employment Policy," 175.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] Deputy-Director General of Manpower, South Australia, to Director-General of Manpower, 8 September 1942, NAA, MP39/1, 1942/69.

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] *Ibid.*

South Australian woman aged 16–30 to inquire about their availability for munitions work. Hunkin wrote in the letter accompanying their survey that it represented a "personal appeal, of vital urgency, for you to help us achieve maximum production [and] to assist our fighting men".[45] This statement built on advice that was given in an internal directive issued by South Australia's National Service Office in July 1942, which claimed that women's "psychological response" to redirection "would be more favourable if they were [first] asked to volunteer for munitions work, before their disemployment order was issued".[46] Press reports claimed that redirected women were finding munitions work the perfect job as it enabled them to aid the war effort and retain their femininity. A *News* article from October 1942 reported that one female retail assistant was "cheerful" about the opportunity to help her brother on active service, while another was hopeful that working in munitions would "give her a chance to make a home of her own".[47]

Press coverage of women's work in munitions production most commonly presented it as akin to domestic chores. This served the dual purpose of addressing public concerns over women's departure from their traditional roles and soothed women's fears that they would be insufficiently skilled to do male work and that the factory would be too foreign an environment. Staged photographs taken by Adelaide photographer D. Darian-Smith for publications such as *South Australian Homes and Gardens* also appeared to prove the good health and happiness of female workers, who were depicted with make-up and perfectly set hair.[48] Industrial work was framed as being a "natural fit" for women's feminine strengths. An article on Hendon in July 1941, for example, stated that women excelled on the production line because of their "nimble fingers" and "real love" they had developed for their machines, which made them more intuitive at their work.[49] Other press reports fully obscured the reality of factory employment. A report on the Salisbury munitions plant in the *Australian Women's Weekly* in January 1943 described women's tasks as comparable to baking: "[they] sit and pat mixtures into little cakes, fill with powder small bags, like icing

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[45] Deputy Director General of Manpower, Annexure A, 31 October 1942, NAA, MP39/1, 1942/490.

[46] Withdrawal of Labour from Retail Shops in Adelaide, 16 July 1942, NAA, MP1/1, 1/4/167.

[47] "Shopgirls Cheerful Over Transfer to New Employment," *News*, 7 October 1942, 5.

[48] *South Australian Homes and Gardens,* 2 November 1942 and 1 September 1943.

[49] "Making Millions of Bullets a Week: Girls Busy at Hendon Factory," *News,* 16 July 1941, 3.

… and pour liquid like melted gelatine into bombs”.[50] Soon after Hendon opened in November 1940, the *News* described the inside of the factory as looking like washing day at home, with “shimmering white [masses] of lubricating suds that look like fairy floss at a carnival sweet stall, or the soapsuds of wash troughs that are a homelier and more familiar setting for femininity”.[51]

Despite these reassuring depictions, oral histories reveal some women still took up munitions work with significant apprehension. Beth Turner said that leaving her job at John Martin’s department store to work at Salisbury was “real upsetting” and that she cried when she was informed of the news.[52] Social prejudice towards munitions workers among Adelaide’s higher social classes was also present. Meg Humphris, upon graduating Wilderness School, applied for a lower paid position at a munitions supply laboratory because she thought it would be “frowned upon” for her to work at Salisbury as there were “very hard and fast rules as to what was approved [and] it took a lot of courage to deviate”.[53] Gwendoline Quick likewise chose lower paid hospital work over employment at Hendon because she had heard there was a “rough element” to workers in factories.[54] This is not to say that women did not willingly seek munitions work of their own accord. The number of married women in Adelaide’s munitions factories—the group of women that the Manpower Directorate did not target in their efforts—is testament to this. Married women at Finsbury constituted 60 per cent of female workers.[55] Even at Hendon, where most women were in their twenties, married women still accounted for 20 per cent of female workers.[56] Describing munitions production in feminine terms may have increased the confidence of these women to undertake industrial work. However, it provided the ideological justification

[50] “Vast Munition Works: Happy Community Grows Up as Volunteers Man Benches,” *Australian Women’s Weekly,* 9 January 1943, 9.

[51] “500 S.A. Girls Make Munitions,” *News,* 19 December 1940, 4.

[52] Beth Turner interviewed by Neil Baron, 14 July 1994, SLSA, OH 326/28.

[53] Wilderness is one of Adelaide’s most elite private schools. Meg Humphris interviewed by Neil Baron, 10 April 1994, SLSA, OH 326/1.

[54] Gwendoline Quick interviewed by Dawn Kanost, 26 January 1994, SLSA, OH 1055/8.

[55] Finsbury Ammunition Factory, Absenteeism Report 28/6/42–1/4/44, NAA, AP262/1, 3000/05/2.

[56] *Ibid.*

for employers to make little change in workplace conditions to properly accommodate the increase in female employees.

In contrast, the transient nature of AWLA service meant it attracted a larger proportion of single women. Modelled on the British Land Army, the AWLA was established by the Commonwealth Government in July 1942 to counteract the labour shortage generated by men who had left to join the armed forces or to work in expanding wartime industries in the cities. Premier Thomas Playford had flagged the difficulty of finding employees for primary industries at a Manpower Conference held in Adelaide in October 1941. However, emphasis on filling munitions factories in South Australia meant it was the last state to establish an "unofficial" Land Army in November 1941.[57] The resistance of farmers compounded this delay. At the 1941 South Australian Wheatgrowers Conference, one farmer from the state's mid-north claimed that asking women to undertake heavy rural labour would "lower the standard of [South Australia's] womanhood".[58] Another farmer from the Murray-Mallee claimed that "farm girls would be stopping work all the time to powder their noses" and he "would not trust a woman to treat [his] machinery carefully".[59] Despite these views, in the six months to July 1942, the Women's War Service Council (WWSC) oversaw 719 placements across the state in fruit picking and vegetable work.[60] The informal structure of the pre-1942 Land Army meant some local married women and young mothers, as well as older women, were given an opportunity to join during this time, but were ineligible for membership post-July 1942.

Once the Commonwealth Government assumed responsibility for the AWLA in July 1942, membership was restricted to women aged 16–50 not already participating in rural work (this included unpaid helpers on family properties).[61] This significantly limited the number of women eligible for membership. Coupled with the state's distinctive economic conditions, this meant few were employed long-term on farms and stations; only 57 AWLA

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[57] Manpower Conference Report of Proceedings, 23 October 1941, NAA, MP574/1, 26/4/3.

[58] "Woman's Place Not on The Land," *News,* 19 September 1941, 8; "Women's Land Army Unsuited to Australia," *News,* 19 May 1941, 3; "City Girls Little Use on Land," *News,* 30 May 1942, 4.

[59] "Woman's Place Not on The Land," *News,* 19 September 1941, 8.

[60] Re Reports on Women's Sections, 30 July 1942, NAA, MP39/1, 1942/69; "Women Carry Swags to Harvest Grapes," *Mail,* 21 February 1942, 5.

[61] Deputy Director-General of Manpower, *Australian Women's Land Army SA,* brochure, 1942, SLSA; "Membership," NAA, MP574/1, 50/38/7.

members in South Australia were employed as farmhands at the war's peak in 1943. In comparison, nearly half of Victoria's 400 AWLA members undertook this type of employment at the same time.[62] The few AWLA members who were stationed on farms in South Australia were engaged in "innumerable tasks" such as mustering, drafting, branding sheep and cattle, ploughing, carting hay stacks, and dairy management.[63] The vast majority of members, however, were employed as seasonal workers, sent to different districts as directed by AWLA officials. They undertook activities including picking and packaging fruit, spreading flax, and harvesting, dehydrating and canning vegetables. Principal locations included Berri, Hectorville, Laura, Loxton, Morphett Vale and Renmark, although members were located across the state in orchards, factories, vegetable gardens and vineyards.[64]

Compared with women in munitions—who often joined out of economic necessity or viewed factory work as a "second choice" of occupation after attempting to join a women's auxiliary service—AWLA members exercised a greater degree of personal autonomy in joining the organisation, which, unlike munitions and women's services, was not the subject of a prominent or glamorous advertising campaign.[65] The majority of women interviewed by Hardisty initially joined the "unofficial" AWLA in 1941/42 when they were in their late teens. Many had chosen the AWLA as they had a rural childhood or a long-held ambition to work on the land and equated outside work with freedom or enjoyment.[66] But for some it had been a direct reaction to their dislike of munitions work. Jean Bennier had joined the AWLA because she had "loathed" the "awful[ly] repetitive nature of munitions work".[67] Mary White took the drastic step of registering herself and her sister at 16 to avoid munitions when they came of age, stating they had been "just so down" at the prospect of

[62] "Australian Women's Land Army (South Australia) Report on Farm Training," 19 March 1943, NAA, B551, 1942/110/2476; "Land Army Conference Told of S.A. Girl's Jobs," *News,* 8 June 1943, 5; Eleanor Barbour, "Pages for Country Women," *Chronicle,* 23 November 1944, 30.

[63] "Australian Women's Land Army (South Australia) Report on Farm Training," 19 March 1943, NAA, B551, 1942/110/2476.

[64] "Membership," NAA, MP574/1, 50/38/7.

[65] A series of small AWLA advertisements were published in daily newspapers, which emphasised the smartness of the dress uniform and health benefits of a rural life. See examples in "Women for War Work Publicity Campaign," NAA, B551, 1942/19B/3386.

[66] Betty Freebairn interviewed by Sue Maslin, 27 March 1985, Australian War Memorial [henceforth AWM], S02698; Eileen Spencer interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 2 April 1985, AWM, S02702; Flora Kearvell interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 12 April 1985, AWM, S02705.

[67] Jean Bennier interviewed by Sue Maslin, 21 March 1985, AWM, S02695.

factory work, as they "just knew that you stood in one spot [and] worked away … that must have been a terrible time for the women to go in there [and] just do that terribly repetitive work".[68] These recollections are consistent with the Manpower Directorate's efforts to recruit country women to work at Hendon in September 1942. Officers interviewed 225 women from Port Pirie; the majority indicated their preference to be engaged in seasonal (non-AWLA) work as fruit and vegetables pickers, rather than take up the offer of full-time work in Adelaide.[69] The fact these women declined the chance to earn higher wages, which were double AWLA rates in some factories, speaks volumes on their opinion of the economic benefits, or lack thereof, that munitions work offered.

### Setting Women's Wages

From mid-1942, wages for both occupations were set by the Commonwealth Government. However, the state's pre-war wage rates had a considerable effect. Due to South Australia's relatively low cost of living, industrial workers were paid notably less than their interstate counterparts. In 1944, the average yearly income of a South Australian man employed in manufacturing equated to 92 per cent of the national average yearly income for a male manufacturing worker.[70] As female munition workers in South Australia received 54-65 per cent of this already reduced rate before the establishment of the WEB, their wages were thus even further below the national average.[71] In 1939, the standard female industrial wage for a 44-hour week in South Australia was £2/9/7 compared to a national average of £2/12/6, and in 1945 was £3/7/2 compared to £3/13/5.[72] This "gender pay gap" was reinforced in a series of Living Wage Inquiries held by the South Australian Board of Industry in 1935 and 1937, and in 1941/2. The 1941/2 inquiry, while it recognised the impact of household

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[68] Mary White interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 1985, AWM, S02700.

[69] Deputy Director-General of Manpower, South Australia to Director-General of Manpower, 17 September 1943, NAA, B551, 1942/110/2906.

[70] Figure calculated from Table 9, Brian Dickey, "The South Australian Economy in World War II," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 16 (1988): 28.

[71] The average female munitions wage before the WEB was set at 65 per cent, however rates differed across factories. Women earned £2/7/6 or 60 per cent of male rates at Salisbury and Hendon when they opened in 1940/41, while those at Islington earned just £2/5 or just 54 per cent of the factory's male rate until 1942. See "Thousands of S.A. Women Will Soon Be Making Munitions for Victory," *Mail,* 21 September 1940, 12; "Many Offer for Jobs on Bombers," *News,* 4 November 1941, 5; Beaton, "The Importance of Women's Paid Labour," 86.

[72] Vamplew *et al.*, *South Australian Historical Statistics,* 292.

rationing and other cost of living changes brought about by wartime conditions, adhered to the Board's pre-war agreement that a male living wage was "intended to be a family wage". Accordingly, it set the female living wage at 60 per cent of its revised male rate.[73] This decision likely reinforced the marked discrepancy of South Australian wage increases between 1939–45; while male wages increased at a rate of 2.5 per cent *above* the national average during this period, female wages increased at a rate of 3.9 per cent *below*.[74]

Late application of WEB policy and vigorous political opposition to equal pay further entrenched South Australia's gendered division of labour. Established through the *Women's Employment Act 1942,* the WEB had the power to set wages for women employed in industrial work usually performed by males, or in other occupations not existing prior to the war. It broadly stipulated that women's wages should fall between 60-100 per cent of male rates.[75] It operated through a series of hearings, during which employers and trade unions sought permission to employ women on "male" tasks and for a determination of what rate of pay should be applied to females doing these tasks, based on an estimation of their relative efficiency and productivity.[76] A determination in August 1942 granted women on male work in government munitions factories in Victoria and New South Wales 90 per cent of male wages, retrospective to March 1942. The equivalent South Australian determination was not passed until January 1943, retrospective to July 1942, and only applied to about 4,000 South Australian women.[77] The disallowance of WEB regulations by the Commonwealth Government Senate, which culminated in the Board being inoperative from March to October 1943, delayed WEB payments in the state's non-government factories. It had been determined in December 1942 that females on male work at Holden and Richards were entitled to 90 per cent rates. Both companies resisted payment until a second determination

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[73] "Board of Industry Living Wage Inquiry," 11 October 1940, SLSA, SRG, 1/18/11; "Report by the Board of Industry to Minister of Industry," 30 September 1942, SLSA, SRG, 1/18/15A.

[74] Calculated from Dickey, "South Australian Economy," 21.

[75] *Women's Employment Act 1942* (Cth), provision 5A.

[76] Alfred W. Foster, "The Experience of the Women's Employment Board in Australia," *International Labour Review* 52, no.6 (1945): 636–38.

[77] "Women's Employment Board Application (No.32 of 1942)," Noel Butlin Archives Centre [henceforth NBAC], N14/551; Symons, "Challenging and Maintaining the Traditional Gender Order," 192, 208–12; "New Laws Make Women's Board Decisions Valid," *News*, 25 March 1943, 5.

was eventually passed in November 1943.[78] The WEB's 90 per cent rates appeared to mark a watershed in female wage fixing. However, its introduction of probation pay—whereby women in male work were paid 66 per cent of male rates for the first month of their employment, while similarly inexperienced men received full rates from the beginning—was a strong reminder of the gendered conditions that guided their entry into munitions factories.[79]

South Australia was also home to the most organised and virulent criticism of WEB policy. Leslie Hunkin strongly opposed equal pay, arguing the WEB was "seriously affecting" the Directorate's ability to staff essential industries, such as food manufacturing and hospitals, which were becoming unattractive because they did not pay wages more equivalent to male rates.[80] But the payment of 90 per cent rates for women in munitions after January 1943 was far from guaranteed. The *Mail* reported in December 1942 that women's wages under the WEB would rise from £2/7/6 to £4/5/4 for a 51-hour week and from £3/5/6 to £4/8/5 for shift work. The average wage in non-government factories would be £3/5 per week.[81] In practice, there were still four categories of pay rates: women on male work in government factories receiving 90 per cent of male rates, women not on male work in government factories receiving 60–75 per cent of male rates, women in small arms factories on a "piece-work" system, and women in private factories who received a wide variety of rates.

The WEB also restricted women's wages by prohibiting their employment in "semi-skilled" or tradesmen-level positions which attracted higher pay.[82] Employers resisted the WEB's ruling by manipulating its loose definition of "work usually performed by males".

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[78] "Women's Employment Board Application by General Motors-Holden and Richards Industries Ltd (No. 259 of 1943)," 8 November 1943, NBAC, N14/551. The WEB decision in December 1942 affected women employed in metal trades, aircraft and vehicle building.

[79] The WEB's system of probationary pay was unique to wage fixing in Australia, having never been applied in any area of work before. See Foster, "Australian Women's Employment Board," 639.

[80] "Higher Pay for Women: Effect on War Effort," *Advertiser,* 11 December 1942, 5. As Gail Reekie has noted, working conditions in these occupations, bad before the war, were worsened by the shortage of labour and the pressure to complete government contracts for uniforms, tents and kitbags for the defence forces. The Manpower Directorate exacerbated the circumstances of these women because it sometimes prevented them from leaving for better paid work elsewhere. See Reekie, "Women's Reponses to War Work," 52.

[81] "Pay Rates for Munitions Girls," *Mail,* 19 December 1942, 2. Also see "Many Jobs for Married Women Here," *News,* 9 June 1943, 3; Helen Crisp, "Women in Munitions," *Australian Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1941): 72.

[82] Memorandum, Ministry of Munitions, 27 January 1943, NAA, D2077, EX162.

This meant reclassifying, renaming or fragmenting male work to justify lower female wages. A particularly illustrative example of this is demonstrated by the response of Islington employers to a complaint they received in mid-1943 from the Vehicle Builders Union of South Australia. The factory's female welders had stopped using jigs, which raised the craftsmanship of their work and entitled them to WEB rates. Rather than paying them WEB rates, the women were ordered to commence work with the jigs again. The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration eventually ruled they were to be retrospectively paid 90 per cent of male rates for the two months they had worked without them.[83]

There was no opportunity for AWLA workers to earn comparable male rates. When the "unofficial" Land Army was formed in November 1941, the WWSC set wages at £2/10 per week, with an extra £1 for billeting if necessary.[84] After July 1942, the AWLA was controlled by the Manpower Directorate, making it exempt from WEB policy. AWLA workers in South Australia received the same wages as those interstate, but it also meant there was no wage increases between 1942 and 1945. The standard rate for seasonal work was £3 for a 48-hour week, less £1 for accommodation. The few women employed on farms and stations received a flat rate of £2 for a 48-hour week.[85] These rates were comparable to some on offer in private munitions factories but were significantly below the average rate of other wartime jobs. This contributed to the disappointing uptake of rural labour by metropolitan women. Indeed, a report by the national office of the Manpower Directorate in January 1943 stated the AWLA's function was limited "owing to the nature of the work and [the fact] wages rates are less attractive than those in factory employment" and thus resolved that "making maximum use of the limited manpower available [would be] a more satisfactory solution to the urgent rural labour problem".[86]

The resistance of the Manpower Directorate to offer higher wages to AWLA workers, when at the same time it vigorously lobbied for fair wages for male labourers engaged in seasonal work, exemplifies the gendered affront that the remuneration of women's manual labour allegedly posed. Soldiers participating in seasonal harvests received

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[83] See memorandum in "Aircraft – Dispute Regarding Rates of Pay of Female Welders from Vehicle Builders Union," NAA, D1743, 1942/3966.

[84] "Growers Suggest Jobs for S.A. Women Workers," *News,* 7 November 1941, 4.

[85] Deputy Director-General of Manpower, *Australian Women's Land Army SA,* brochure, 1942, SLSA.

[86] Manpower Directorate, Women Engaged in Australian Industry, report, circa January 1943, NAA, B551, 1943/110/5245.

their regular service wage, which in 1942 averaged £5/12 per week. In 1944, the Manpower Directorate agreed to cover the costs of releasing male "aliens" from internment if growers agreed to pay them £5/5/6 per week.[87] Leslie Hunkin, during a rural labour conference held in February 1944, argued that the employment of soldiers, aliens and casual itinerant workers was the most practical solution to the rural labour shortage. In discussing the wages to be paid to these workers, this exchange between Hunkin and a Murraylands farmer was recorded by the *Murray Pioneer*:

> Mr Hunkin added that all soldiers must be paid award rates for adult males, otherwise they would be seriously out of pocket. When the matter of some being underage was raised Mr A.A.J. Tonkin said, 'They've enlisted to do a man's job; it's better to rely on them than others looking for work'.[88]

The Manpower Directorate did not show the same concern for the financial welfare of younger AWLA workers. The service of at least one member employed as a farmhand was terminated early upon the arrival of male alien labour.[89] AWLA members who were 16 and 17 years of age also received a reduced rate: £1/10 compared to the standard £2.[90] This was a relatively meagre wage, despite the fact that AWLA officials claimed rural employers should "under no circumstances [be given] the opportunity to use female labour as cheap labour".[91] In reality, AWLA workers were earning less than 54 per cent of a male labourers' wage that was already substantially below the male rates on offer in metropolitan factory employment.

The extent of the gendered division of wage rates in munitions factories can be further observed in transcripts of WEB hearings relating to female employment at Islington, Holden, Richards, Perry Engineering and Die Casters Ltd. that took place between July and

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[87] "Reassuring Report on Harvest," *Murray Pioneer*, 3 February 1944, 1.

[88] *Ibid.*

[89] Frances Harvie, "Land Army Days," SLSA, PRG, 596/1

[90] *Land Army SA,* brochure, SLSA.

[91] Manpower Directorate, Wages – Circular, circa July 1942, NAA, MP574/1, 50/38/53.

November 1942.[92] During these hearings, 30 women were questioned before the Board about their skills and productivity. As employers kept scant records on the output of their female employees, this oral evidence was crucial to the WEB's determination. The majority of women claimed to be equal or more productive than male workers. Four women, from Holden and Richards, said they had received comments from male inspectors that their output and quality of work was better than that of male workers in their factories. Alice Conroy, an assembler at Richards, provided an illustrative answer: "the day we started, our leading hand came to us and said that the men's output was 250 per day. The women that day did 400".[93] Irene Quigley, also employed at Richards, elaborated on how her drilling work was regarded at the factory, stating that "the leading hand and the foreman and the men working [at Richards] tell me that I am doing a 100 per cent job, and when work has come from other parts of the factory they have called on me to do it … they have called me Phar Lap because I get through it so quickly".[94]

These answers indicate women that were given more responsibility in munitions factories than was popularly assumed. In some instances, the women openly challenged the notion that they were less skilled than male workers. Alice Conroy recalled on numerous occasions she had "been given work to do in preference to a man because the man's work has been brought back and given to me to re-do".[95] Holden riveter Florence Johns likewise asserted that "according to the tally board we do as much work [as] men and usually more … I think we get less complaints [by management] than the men [receive]".[96] Irene Quigley's remark that foremen at Richards were required to "set up" the machines of both female *and* male workers before they could begin work disputed the premise of previous WEB determinations that stated women's reliance on men to finish their work necessitated a lower pay rate.[97] While members of the WEB suggested to the women that their efficiency

[92] These transcripts are found in "1942: Women's Employment Board Transcripts," NBAC, N14/445.

[93] Alice Conroy, testimony before the Women's Employment Board, 16 September 1942, NBAC, N14/445.

[94] Phar Lap was a famed Australian-New Zealand race-horse who dominated the sport during the Great Depression. See Irene Quigley, testimony before the Women's Employment Board, 16 September 1942, NBAC, N14/445.

[95] Alice Conroy testimony, NBAC, N14/445.

[96] Florence Johns, testimony before the Women's Employment Board, 16 September 1942, NBAC, N14/445.

[97] Irene Quigley, testimony, NBAC, N14/445.

rested on the fact they were given smaller tasks than men, the hearing concluded that solely based on the evidence presented by the women "so far as productivity and efficiency are concerned, there is no doubt that [they] are entitled to equal pay".[98]

The hearings gave women the opportunity to give voice to their work. However, they also gave men of the Board, as well as male representatives of the factories, equal opportunity to display their gendered biases. Duncan McLachlan, Industrial Officer at Perry Engineering, claimed that women in his factory were not entitled to higher wages because "females are not amenable to discipline [being] individualistic and not so much inclined to be regimented as the male employee".[99] Mr Mann, a representative of the WEB, commented in his summary of the women's oral evidence that it was largely futile to compare the quantity and quality of male and female work because male employees at Holden and Richards were an inferior class of male worker compared to those who had successfully enrolled in the armed forces.[100] Some comments were even more overtly shaped by gender prejudice. Mr J. Hunter, representing the South Australian Railways Commissioner, reported that foremen at Islington believed that female absenteeism at the factory, especially on the weekends, stemmed from the fact that "ladies like to stop home to cook the dinners, and of course the men like them to do that".[101] Mr Sheehan of the Vehicle Builders Employee's Federation blatantly disregarded the women from Holden and Richards who testified that they rarely missed work for reasons other than illness or injury, arguing that a pay gap should remain because women must do a "certain amount of shopping" based on his evaluation that "the things [men] have to buy [can] be brought by persons other than himself, whereas with females we know that it is necessary for them to try several hats on before they decide on their final selection, [and they] just cannot send somebody else in to do their shopping".[102]

The WEB persisted with a line of questioning that was clearly influenced by pre-conceived attitudes towards female workers. Nearly all the women were first asked about

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[98] Women's Employment Board, hearing transcript, pages 454–466, 20 November 1942, NBAC, N14/445.

[99] Duncan McLachlan, testimony before the Women's Employment Board, 28 July 1942, NBAC, N14/445.

[100] Mr Mann, testimony before the Women's Employment Board, 25 November 1942, NBAC, N14/445.

[101] James Hunter, testimony before the Women's Employment Board, 15 September 1942, NBAC, N14/445.

[102] Mr Sheehan, on behalf of the Women's Employment Board, 26 November 1942, NBAC, N14/445. In her analysis of the WEB hearings, Penelope Johnson concludes that absenteeism was the largest factor affecting the rates set by the WEB. More information on causes of absenteeism is discussed in Chapter 2. See Johnson, "Gender, Class and Work," 142.

their personal circumstances rather than their experiences at work. Married women were continually questioned about their domestic arrangements even after they had stated it did not affect their attendance.[103] The questions posed by the WEB were also loaded with gendered assumptions. When Holden employee Florence Johns argued that she should receive equal pay, Judge Foster asked her to reflect on whether she had the same "responsibility" as the factory's male workers: "is it not the general idea that a man has to prepare for his marriage and to maintain a wife … does not that [justify] a differential wage?"[104] Foster's question seemed to influence the response of the following woman, Holden employee Sally Sterzl, who made the near-identical claim that a married man is entitled to higher pay because he has "more responsibility … even though we do the same work".[105] The WEB's continual use of leading or loaded questions—which suggest a particular answer or contain information that an examiner is seeking to confirm—may have been a reaction to the suspicion that women would feel inclined to exaggerate their abilities in an attempt to induce the Board to grant equal pay. In this sense, the ruling of 90 per cent rates was a moderate success for women, albeit heavily tempered by the resistance of employers to actually pay women the revised rates.

Indeed, lengthy debate among employers meant many women in government munitions factories waited months to receive their appropriate wages. At Finsbury it took employers four months to deliberate whether to reclassify one woman's position as eligible for 90 per cent rates despite the consensus that she was performing male work.[106] Employers also took a similar approach to retrospective wages. The stipulation that women's eligibility for back-payment rested on lodging an application within one month of the corresponding WEB decision was exploited by some employers, with women claiming that they had not been informed of this provision or that their payments had been withheld on minor technicalities. Salisbury's manager Mr J. Cochrane had attempted to deny one female worker retrospective pay because her claim letter, dated within the one-month period, had not arrived at the factory until after the cut-off date.[107]

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[103] See, for example, Gertrude May Whiteman, testimony before the Women's Employment Board, 16 September 1942, NBAC, N14/445.

[104] Florence Johns, testimony, NBAC, N14/445.

[105] Sally Sterzl, testimony before the Women's Employment Board, 16 September 1942, NBAC, N14/445.

[106] "Miss R Weiss, Reclassification of, Ammunition Factory Finsbury," NAA, MP1007/7, 249/1200/36.

[107] "Retrospective Pay, Women's Employment Board, Females (Miss L M Hill) Explosives Factory Salisbury," NAA, MP1007/7, 249/1201/43; "Mrs Kitty Cotton, Claim for Retrospective Pay, Explosives Factory

The frequent changeover of positions within and between factories also meant women were easily shifted out of work that attracted WEB rates. In January 1945, Salisbury transferred 51 women from 90 per cent to 60 per cent jobs. The transfers were eventually reversed by the Ministry of Munitions. However Salisbury's Industrial Officer claimed, stretching credibility, that less than half of the women had desired to transfer back to the 90 per cent job if they became available.[108] Indeed, when the Ministry of Munitions ordered a second transfer of 228 women from Hendon to Salisbury a month later, the Manpower Directorate and Salisbury employers decided to conceal the fact that 90 per cent wages were on offer to see how many women could be enticed to accept the transfer at 60 per cent wages; just 12 women accepted and the decision was rescinded in order to secure enough workers.[109]

Women in non-WEB-controlled factories also struggled to receive wages in accordance with their output. The "piecework" system operating at Hendon—that is, work paid according to the amount produced—claimed to offer higher pay. A report on Hendon claimed that its piecework system led to "freedom from labour troubles" because "women and girls [realised] its advantages where they were concerned".[110] In reality, their wages did not differ greatly from those in other factories. The average female worker at Hendon earned £4 per week; those on 60 per cent at Salisbury earned £3/8/6 and an additional £1/1/0 extra if they worked Saturday overtime.[111] Piecework thus only held tangible economic benefits if women worked in excess of a standard 51-hour week. In fact, a 1943 Commonwealth Government report on women's wages at Hendon recommended the introduction of WEB rates as piecework was making it "absolutely impossible for operators of equal ability, but on different processes requiring approximately the same skill, to earn on average the same wages".[112] Given Hendon was South Australia's second largest employer of female munition

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Salisbury," NAA, MP1007/7, 249/154/6; "Re Tinga v. Pope Products Ltd," 4 January 1945, NBAC, E170/48/20.

[108] "Females at SAA Hendon, Preference to those who have transferred from 90% to 60% sections when females again required in 90% sections instead of engaging new labour," NAA, MP1007, 249/305/8.

[109] "Retrenchment at S.A.A Hendon," NAA, MP1007/7, 249/952/5.

[110] A similar "payment by result" scheme was requested by unions for female workers at Salisbury in October 1944 but was denied by the factory's management. "Section V: Notes on Labour," NAA, MP438/3, S/40 PART 1; Donnelly, "Women in the Australian Munitions Industry," 92.

[111] "Inter-Factory Staff Transfers, Minutes of Conference," 30 January 1945, NAA, MP1007/7, 249/952/5.

[112] Jack Jones, "Interim Report on SAA Piecework," 11 January 1943, NBAC, E170/42.

workers, the deficiencies of its piecework system should not be overlooked when making an assessment of women's wartime wages.

Some AWLA employers also disregarded the wage conditions set by the Manpower Directorate in favour of piecework. AWLA workers stationed at Mr Lemon's Pea Pickers Inn at Reynella, for example, recalled they were paid according to the quantity of the produce they picked, rather than hours worked.[113] However, there was scope for AWLA workers to earn higher wages on piecework than was the case for women in munitions because they did not have to rely on other workers to reach their desired quota. The *News* reported that one particularly efficient AWLA worker was able to pick 198 lbs (approximately 90 kilograms) of peas per day. Based on the worth of peas at 4/ a bushel (about 25 lbs), this equated to an average daily wage of £1/12.[114] However, the unpredictable nature of outdoor work and climate-related illnesses meant that such opportunities were far from consistent and women could lose wages if they were unable to fulfil the 48-hours required of them per week. Despite the "wish" of the Manpower Directorate that women receive their standard AWLA wage regardless of weather conditions, women's oral histories reveal that wages were docked if tasks were not completed due to excessive rainfall, extreme heat and/or frost.[115] Many seasonal AWLA members attempted to work regardless of the weather as they wanted their full wage to buffer against the time in between postings when they were not paid. Inability to obtain full wages often proved financially "disastrous" for members if they were still required to pay £1 per week for board.[116]

How did female workers view these wage conditions? Helen Crisp, welfare officer at Hendon, found the majority of female employees admitted that higher wages had influenced their decision to enter munitions work, being considerably better than the average £1/7/6½ they had received as domestic servants, shop assistants, waitresses and dressmakers.[117] Kay Gates thought she was "wealthy beyond her wildest dreams" when she

[113] White, interview; Enid Theel interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 17 April 1985, AWM, S02709.

[114] "In Camp with Land Army Girls," *News,* 1 November 1943, 5.

[115] Daisy Evans interviewed by Sue Maslin, 20 March 1985, AWM, S02694; White, interview.

[116] Hardisty, *Thanks Girls,* 22–3.

[117] Indeed, the overall growth of female wages is most clearly apparent at an individual level; the employment record of one Hendon employee, for example, shows a 41 per cent increase in pay between May 1941 and January 1944 from £1/17/3 to £4/10 per week. See Thora Bartram employee register card, NAA, MT2439/S40 B; Crisp, "Women in Munitions," 73.

started work at Hendon on £2/10/1 per week.[118] However, a survey undertaken with 95 female workers at Hendon as part of a 1943 Commonwealth Government report on piecework offered a strikingly different view. It found 60 per cent of female employees would have preferred 90 per cent wages, that 48.4 per cent viewed piecework as "undesirable", and that 77 per cent considered Hendon's system of wage rates caused "bad feelings" within the factory.[119] This discrepancy between women's views can be inferred by examining how gender norms shape their oral histories, in which single women, who needed to support themselves, more frequently expressed dissatisfaction with wages. In contrast, wages were viewed more generously among women who had used their pay as a supplementary source of income. Gwen Prosser, for example, stated that her £5 wage at Islington gave her and her husband "chance to have a nest egg" because it was significantly more than the 10s she had previously received from her parents.[120] Even women who occupied a prominent role in the factory hierarchy, such as Barbara Pitt, an engineering supervisor at Richards, did not think to question the pay inequality. As she noted: "that was the structure at the time, and I was quite satisfied with mine".[121] So, while munitions wages provided some women with a sense of financial autonomy, they did not alter the view of many that paid work was an opportunity to save for married life; a necessary precursor to when a woman would find herself unemployed, rather than a means of furthering economic independence.

AWLA workers had no choice but to accept the pay rates stipulated by the Manpower Directorate. While the economic background of each worker influenced how they could budget their earnings, the consensus emerged that wages were inadequate. Dorothy Dans, who left her job as a clerk at Holden to join the AWLA as a farmhand in 1942, noted that the reduction in wages had been "quite a sacrifice".[122] Clarice Thomson, who also worked as a farmhand, believed the flat rate of £2 for full-time postings was disproportionate to the

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[118] Quoted in Donnelly, "Women in Munitions," 229.

[119] Jack Jones, "Interim Report on SAA Piecework," NBAC, E170/42.

[120] Quoted in Patricia Walker, *When the Boys Went Away: Mount Barker Women Remember the Second World War* (Mount Barker: Mount Barker Community Library 1995), 51.

[121] Barbara Jean Pitt interviewed by Mary Hutchinson, 15 October 1982, SLSA, OH 891/37.

[122] Dorothy Dans, "Women's Land Army WWII," memoir, History Trust of South Australia.

amount of work AWLA members were expected to undertake.[123] Some who were previously employed in traditional female occupations believed that £2 was an "enormous amount" despite living "from pay day to pay day" and ending the war with limited savings.[124] Betty Humble thought that women had been "used" by their employers, stating that "the pay was very poor [so] you'd either have to love it or leave … it didn't really worry me particularly, but if you wanted to make money out of it, it would have been hopeless".[125] Unlike women in munitions, AWLA workers were free from the weekly expenses of buying food and paying bills, which may have equated to more than £1.[126] On the other hand, AWLA work generated substantial transport and postage costs for which they received no concessions, unlike servicewomen. The need to rely on family members for extra money was mentioned by several AWLA workers. Eileen Spencer, for example, stated that borrowing money from her parents was the main reason that she was able to stay in the "unofficial" Land Army until transferring to the AWLA in July 1942.[127] The only AWLA worker who did not consider the low wages a concern was Win Dodsworth, who also happened to be the only worker interviewed by Hardisty who married during her AWLA service. She noted that her happy recollection of AWLA work stemmed from her "privileged position", noting that "it wasn't my life's work … I wasn't earning [like] my livelihood depended on it or anything. It was really just another period in my life".[128]

**Wartime Working Conditions**

The assumed separation between masculinity and femininity not only determined the monetary value of women's contribution to the war effort, but also affected the working conditions that they encountered. The WEB, in addition to its jurisdiction over wages,

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[123] Clarice Thomson, address, "Home Front" Display, 16 October 1987, SLSA, OH 144.

[124] Bennier, interview; Theel, interview; Madge Hastings interviewed by Sue Maslin, 22 March 1985, AWM, S02696; Margaret Lemmey interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 11 April 1985, AWM, S02703; Betty Humble interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 15 April 1985, AWM, S02707.

[125] Humble, interview.

[126] The record of wages kept by Kitty Ryan may be indicative of the expenses that munition workers faced. Of the £123/16/1 she earned as a Hendon employee between 1943–45, she spent £76/7/3 on tax and board. See Clarrie Bell, *Women in Munitions: A History of Munition Workers at Hendon Munition Factory 1940–1945* (Woodville: Historical Society of Woodville, 1989), 13.

[127] Spencer, interview.

[128] Win Dodsworth interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 13 April 1985, AWM, S02706.

determined the number of hours that women in industry could work and conditions regarding their health and welfare. Prior to October 1942, working conditions in government munition factories were regulated by state legislation; those in private factories were covered by individual awards and provisions negotiated by trade unions.[129] As the AWLA was exempt from WEB policy, and was never formalised under the National Security Regulations as an auxiliary service, its members had minimal protection from substandard employment practices throughout the war. Until June 1943, when Leslie Hunkin approved an official welfare scheme, the only immediate protection women had against exploitation was through the informal support of local groups such as the Country Women's Association who were entreated by the Manpower Directorate to check up on workers.[130]

Limited effort was made by employers to orientate female munition workers with their new employment. A "Code for Women War Workers" was circulated to government factories in March 1943, which set out the conditions recommended by the Welfare Directorate to be observed in industrial workplaces with large female workforces. Its recommendations largely accorded with existing industrial codes but were not formally implemented.[131] At a minimum, factories under the WEB had to ensure that women did not lift weights exceeding 35 lbs (16 kilograms).[132] The Manpower Directorate established similar restrictions on AWLA workers. The WWSC had set very few regulations for rural women workers. The Manpower Directorate, however, requested that employers should not ask AWLA workers to lift heavy items such as bags of fertiliser, undertake leverage work such as chopping wood, erecting fences, clearing land, digging irrigation channels, or operating heavy machinery and farming equipment.[133] As the Manpower Directorate rarely assessed working conditions before women were relocated, it was still relatively easy for employers to violate these policies. (It was also common for employers to loan AWLA workers to neighbouring properties not cleared with the Directorate.) Oral histories indeed reveal that AWLA workers were engaged in heavy manual labour. Clarice Thomson,

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[129] Employment of Females Under War Conditions, report, circa June 1941, NAA, A9816, 1943/393.

[130] "Watch on Welfare of Girls," *News,* 25 September 1942, 3; Marian March, "Welfare Facilities Extended to Land Army Girls," *Advertiser,* 9 June 1943, 3.

[131] "Code of Working Conditions for Women War Workers in Industry," NAA, MP392/36, 283/10/657.

[132] See judgements relating to munitions work in "Women's Employment Board Decisions," NBAC, N14/551.

[133] *Land Army SA,* brochure, SLSA.

commenting on the regulations, stated that "had we [AWLA workers] read them when we joined we may as well have given up, gone home and done our knitting … seeing the majority of us did these things and more".[134] Dorothy Dans, a AWLA hostel matron, recalled that women who had been on individual postings had "many stories to tell [of] some pretty harsh conditions … toiling in unglamourous [sic] and at times unpleasant surroundings [where they had] almost always performed heavy, physical work".[135]

Women in both occupations were not trained before commencing their employment. An AWLA training scheme was organised in other states, however the small size of the South Australian branch meant this provision was not introduced here. Women who had been part of the unofficial Land Army prior to July 1942 would have had prior experience in a wide variety of tasks. A small number of women at Islington also went through the College of Civil Aviation prior to commencing work. As Philomena Goodman notes in the British context, industrial employers were more likely to place women in repetitive work that required "dexterity rather than skill" as it was similar to the "lighter, cleaner and safer" realm of household chores.[136] Fragmenting tasks, in addition to justifying lower pay rates, was thus based on the notion that women's natural proclivity for tedious work meant that little training was required for their "new" employment. Accordingly, women in munitions undertook a variety of tasks, but all were part of a production line that demanded repetitive motions and intricate assembly. At Salisbury, women worked with higher explosives, filling large shells and detonators, mortar bombs and fuses.[137] At Holden, Richards and Islington, women manufactured and assembled aircraft parts and fabricated military haversacks, tents and marquees.[138] In smaller private factories, women were employed in the production of military uniforms, bomb assembly, and in polishing and painting finished components.

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[134] Thomson, address.

[135] Dans, "Women's Land Army WWII."

[136] Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002). Also see Penny Summerfield, "What Women Learned from the Second World War," *History of Education* 18, no. 2 (1989): 216–7.

[137] Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War,* 321.

[138] Amalgamated Wireless (A'Asia) Ltd. and Richards Industries (Adelaide) Absenteeism Enquiry, report, circa May 1942, NAA, B3533, 1615/3/7; General Motors Holden Ltd., *South Australian Factory at War 1939–1942*, SLSA, BRG, 213/21/5; "Aircraft: Report on Work Performed by Females in Area," NAA, D1743, 1942/3897.

According to Helen Crisp, such work was "exceedingly monotonous and [was] found irksome, particularly by [more] intelligent girls".[139]

Many women found it difficult to adapt to the industrial nature of their new workplaces, unprepared for the conditions they encountered which were a far cry from the feminine scenes painted by the press. Lilian Johnston, who worked as a forewoman at Hendon, recalled her first impression was of its "deafening noise", noting that while Hendon was a "nice clean factory … the whole effect of the place, the noise, the appearance and everything about it, no I couldn't bear".[140] Indeed, the vast, impersonal and masculine landscape of munitions factories differed entirely from the small workplaces and personal contact with employers that was familiar to most women. Even after the establishment of the WEB, working conditions exacerbated the difficulties that many women already faced in keeping industrial employment. Despite State Government policy barring the employment of female workers after 9.00pm, 95 per cent of munitions factories in Adelaide operated on shift work.[141] A standard week at Hendon consisted of a day shift from 7.30am–5.00pm and shifts from 6.12am–2.00pm and 3.00pm–11.25pm.[142] Salisbury and Finsbury had the longest working weeks, with women averaging 52 hours compared to 48 hours at other government factories.[143] Shift work at Salisbury consisted of a eight-hour day shift and two night shifts from 4.15pm–1.10am and 12.40am–9.35am.[144] Night shifts in private factories were only marginally shorter; seven hours at Holden and eight hours at Islington.[145] Despite these long hours, it was common for women to work overtime. As Crisp argues, some believed they had little choice, agreeing to take extra shifts to ensure they received reasonable wages.[146]

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[139] Crisp, "Women in Munitions," 73.

[140] Lilian Johnston interviewed by Anne Geddes, July 1983, SLSA, PRG, 727/2/2.

[141] See Employment of Women in Industry, report, circa 1941–42, NAA, MP1/1, 1/1/10.

[142] "500 SA. Girls Make Munitions in Colourful Surroundings," *News,* 19 December 1940, 4.

[143] Finsbury Ammunition Factory, Absenteeism Report 28/6/42–1/4/44, NAA, AP262/1, 3000/05/2.

[144] J.R. Cochrane, Salisbury Manager, to J.J. O'Grady, Secretary, Arms, Explosives & Munition Workers Federation, 15 June 1942, and, Finsbury Manager, to J.J. O'Grady, Secretary, Arms, Explosives & Munitions Workers Federation, 16 June 1942, both in NBAC, E170/47/3.

[145] "Hours of Aircraft Employees at Islington," NAA, D1743, 1939/58.

[146] Crisp, "Women in Munitions," 72.

AWLA workers were also employed for longer than their stipulated 44-hour week, which consisted of a 9.00am –5.00pm shift on weekdays and four hours on Saturday mornings.[147] Women vindicated this situation by noting it was customary for activities such as milking cows, herding sheep and feeding chickens to take place at daybreak or late in the evening; likewise for any strenuous manual work too difficult to undertake in the heat of summer.[148] As Betty Humble noted: "you just worked from early in the morning until late at night until [it] was done, you couldn't just stop because it was 5 o'clock".[149] Working overtime on seasonal fruit picking was harder to justify. Daisy Evans and Margaret Lemmey recalled they were rostered at their employer's demand to pick grapes between 9.00pm–2.00am during their posting at Hectorville.[150] Night shifts for AWLA workers at Hectorville were approved by the Manpower Directorate in September 1944; women were to work from 5.00pm–2.00am with ten minute breaks at 7.00pm and midnight, and a longer break from 9.00–9.45pm.[151] This was at least more generous than mid-shift breaks in munitions factories. At Finsbury and Richards, a morning tea break longer than three minutes was outright refused by management.[152] Finsbury's manager Mr W.A Copsey, ignoring the fatigue associated with long hours, argued that women would take advantage: "management is prepared to shut an eye to something reasonable, but I do think it is most unreasonable to sit around in groups talking and drinking your tea".[153] Many women found it difficult to eat regularly; those at Salisbury often fainted as a result of skipping meals.[154]

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[147] *Land Army SA,* brochure, SLSA.

[148] Kath Vivian interviewed by Rachel Harris, 21 November 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/23; Margarette Powell interviewed by Rachel Harris, 15 July 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/1; Betty Freebairn, "Australian Land Army at Work," AWM, PR85/362; Humble interview; Evans, interview.

[149] Humble, interview.

[150] Lemmey, interview; Evans, interview.

[151] "New Food Front for Land Girls," *News,* 19 September 1944, 5.

[152] Factory Welfare Branch Report, Area No. 3, circa May 1944, NAA, AP262/1, 3120/2/1; W. Fowler, Finsbury Manager, to J.J. O'Grady, Secretary, Arms, Explosives & Munition Workers Federation S.A. Branch, 6 January 1942, NBAC, E170/47/3; J.J. O'Grady to Mr. J. McPhillips, 16 December 1942, NBAC, E270/48/8.

[153] Minutes of Shop Delegation with Management, 11 June 1942, NBAC, E170/47/3.

[154] Mr R.J. Tilby interviewed by Margaret Allen, 1977, SLSA, OH 50/18.

The tasks women completed in the AWLA were generally not as hazardous as those in munitions factories. Women do not recall that they sustained any serious injuries, although they focused on the strain of working in harsh weather conditions, such as in the heat, heavy rain and cold, which in some cases led to health complaints including menstrual issues, heat exhaustion, colds and other viral infections. Some seasonal workers suffered from frequent muscle strain as fruit picking required them to bend down or stretch for hours on end.[155] Spreading and harvesting flax was considered the most strenuous and uncomfortable work. As Australian flax was used to create parachutes and harnesses for the British Army, it was important that supply would not be disrupted by enemy invasion, which made South Australia an ideal location for many of the Commonwealth Government's flax fields. Flora Kearvell described it as the "worst" job she had in the AWLA because of the bending it required and the heavy dust that blanketed workers in flax mills, which she recalled "just about choked you".[156]

According to the Manpower Directorate, the most serious health risk posed by AWLA work was diseases contractable from sprays, pesticides and animal products.[157] Dorothy Dans recalls that chemical sprays and other caustic liquids caused frequent cases of dermatitis, which generated some "distress" among women until cured.[158] However, many women believed they had coped satisfactorily with the conditions they encountered, expressing they enjoyed AWLA service precisely because they were viewed as doing "male work" and relished the opportunity to show they were capable of completing it. The emphasis that rural AWLA workers place in oral histories on detailing the husbandry methods they had learned during the war particularly demonstrates the sense of achievement they gained, even when their service became difficult and tiresome. Margarette Powell, who worked as a farmhand for the duration of the war, made a point that she had done work "over and above" her servicewomen friends, commenting that "I know what I did … although what they did was useful [it was] not such difficult or hard work".[159] Mary White also captured

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[155] Spencer, interview; Clarice Thomson, "Australian Women's Land Army Experiences, 1943–1945," SLSA, SRG, 266.

[156] Kearvell, interview.

[157] Manpower Directorate, Industrial Diseases – Circular, circa July 1942, NAA, MP574/1, 50/38/53.

[158] Dans, "Women's Land Army WWII."

[159] Powell, interview. Also see Humble, interview.

the prevailing sentiment in a comment she made when recounting the time that fellow worker Eileen Spencer stepped on a nest of venomous ants while fruit picking: "even after incidents like that [we] just went back to our work … I would have never considered it at all dangerous. It was very, very uncomfortable, mind you".[160] As the next chapter discusses, these shared experiences had the added effect of bonding members closer together, increasing a sense of camaraderie and sorority.

While press reports claimed that female munition workers were provided with the latest amenities, women had serious misgivings about industrial work. A survey undertaken by the Adelaide Branch of the National Service Office in September 1942 found women were reluctant to enter munitions due to fear of physical danger, worry that chemicals would affect nails and complexion, and the hazards associated with travelling home in the dark after shift work (this latter issue was somewhat addressed by the provision of police escorts for women who lived close to inner-metropolitan factories).[161] Data collected by the Department of Health's Munitions Medical Services reveal these concerns were entirely justified. Between June 1942 and September 1944, there were almost 500 accidents involving women at Hendon and Salisbury.[162] Salisbury was the most dangerous, with women involved in 30 accidents per month compared to an average of ten at Hendon. But there was a marked rise in the number of accidents in all factories in 1943, which the Factories and Steam Boilers Department deemed inevitable given the wartime surge in the number of inexperienced and untrained workers entering factories.[163]

Women in nearly all of Adelaide's factories sustained serious injuries, and in one case, death. Edna May Purling, a 39 year-old process worker, was killed in an explosion at Salisbury in October 1942.[164] In December 1940, a woman's arm was severed at the shoulder

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[160] White, interview.

[161] "Shopgirls Cheerful Over Transfer to New Employment," *News,* 7 October 1942, 5.

[162] Compiled from "Munitions Medical Services, Monthly Returns of Duties Performed," NAA, A1928, 682/17/3 SECTION 1.

[163] "More Factory Accidents," *News,* 23 February 1943, 4.

[164] Medical Report on Miss E.M. Purling (deceased) by J.J. Carter, Salisbury Medical Officer, 26 October 1942, NAA, A1928, 682/17/3, SECTION 1.

at Hendon when it became caught in overhead machinery.[165] Women at Islington, Richards and Pope Products sustained lacerated wrists, crushed hands and severed fingers.[166] Burns were suffered by women on lathe machines at Finsbury and Holden.[167] Of the close to 300 accidents involving women at Islington from 1943–45, there were 45 eye injuries that ranged from irritation due to dust particles to laceration of the eyeball.[168] Women at Islington also sustained a variety of other injuries, including fractures, bruising, muscle strains, deep cuts to arms and legs, and skin infections. Chronic illness was acute in smaller firms. Trade union leader Mary Miller recalled women in many private factories worked in "horrifying conditions".[169] Richards was described in one government report as being "old … dingy [and] extremely draughty and cold".[170] Melva Waterman similarly recalled the dankness of Pope Products, which was made worse by her obstinate manager who refused to schedule adequate breaks.[171] At Fireproof Tanks, a small Adelaide firm on contract with the Ministry of Munitions, nearly all of its 105 female employees complained of drowsiness, sore throats and eyes, stomach troubles and rashes, which, according to the WEB, were caused by lack of adequate ventilation and concentrated exposure to manufacturing fumes.[172]

Exposure to toxic chemicals was unavoidable at Salisbury. Attempts were made to mitigate the risks associated with chemical exposure as well as that of spark by prohibiting

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[165] South Australian Branch Secretary, Arms, Explosives & Munition Workers' Federation to General Secretary, Arms, Explosives & Munitions Workers' Federation of Australia, 8 January 1941, NBAC, E170/47/1.

[166] Mrs Klingberg, Mrs Goodes, Mrs Manuel and Mrs Tozer interviewed by Margaret Allen, January 1984, SLSA, OH 78/5; Melva Waterman interviewed by Neil Baron, 8 July 1994, SLSA, OH 326/27; Lorraine James, testimony before the Women's Employment Board, 16 September 1942, NBAC, N14/445; female injury cards in series NAA, D1743/18 and D1743/22, 1942-1944.

[167] Florence Hannan, testimony before the Women's Employment Board, 16 September 1942, NBAC, N14/445; "Provision for Protection to Forearms of Female Employees Operating Whitman Automatic Chucking Machine, AF Finsbury," NAA, MP1007/7, 249/850/46.

[168] See female injury cards in NAA, D1743/18 and D1743/22, 1942-1944.

[169] Mary Miller interviewed by Margaret Allen, 23 January 1984, SLSA, OH 78/1.

[170] Amalgamated Wireless (A'Asia) Ltd. and Richards Industries (Adelaide) Absenteeism Enquiry, report, circa May 1942, NAA, B3533, 1615/3/7.

[171] Waterman, interview.

[172] Report on Visit to Fireproof Tanks, S.A. Light Square, Adelaide, January 1944, NAA, B3533, 1270/4/11.

jewellery and ensuring that workers showered immediately after shifts.[173] However, it proved almost impossible to limit contact as the production process meant a large amount of dust settled on workers throughout the day. Numerous women suffered from respiratory problems, dermatitis, skin yellowing, and even toxaemia, as a result of TNT exposure.[174] During summer, turnover of employees reached ten per cent as excessive sweating increased absorption rates, leading to depressed blood pressure and severe headaches.[175] Female absenteeism in Salisbury's fuse section was highest at 16.2 per cent, followed by cartridge assembly at 15.4 per cent, and shell filling at 14.1 per cent.[176] Mary Miller, who worked at Salisbury, asserted that the stressful nature of this work, worsened by substandard amenities and the noise of industrial machinery, meant that many women suffered from low morale, recalling that "no one was ever satisfied where they were or what they were doing. It was all the time thinking and planning and hoping—trying to change your job or get out of your job".[177]

Low morale caused by working conditions was often compounded by the inflexible and seemingly unfeeling attitude of male employers. This was particularly the case at Islington. In December 1942, a Department of Aircraft Production report found that female absenteeism at Beaufort plants would reduce if working conditions were improved. No action was taken.[178] Focus instead turned to supposed weaknesses of the female temperament. A report on "accident proneness" in the factory concluded that 75 per cent of accidents were caused by "personal and psychological factors" including lack of experience, poor attitude towards the job, and emotional instability; problems that were perceived to

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[173] Ministry of Munitions, "Special Rules No. 1109, No. 2 Explosives and Filling Factory," SLSA.

[174] Department of Munitions, "Explosives Factory Salisbury: History," NAA, MP438/3, S/51; Chief Quarantine Officer South Australia to Secretary, Munition Workers' Union, 26 August 1943, NBAC, E170/48/13.

[175] Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War,* 322-24.

[176] Absenteeism by Department: Explosives Factories, NAA, AP262/1, 3000/05/2 [table]; Records of Lost Time due to Illness and Accident: Commonwealth Munitions Establishments, report, circa October 1942, NAA, A1928, 682/15 PART 1;

[177] Miller, interview.

[178] See reports entitled Measures to Combat Absenteeism in Beaufort Plants, circa October 1943, and Survey of Causes of Absenteeism, August–December 1942, in NAA, D1743, 1943/3808.

more likely affect women.[179] The comments of foremen in women's accident reports supports this view, in which they cite "carelessness" as the most common cause of accidents. Lack of adequate protection was an equally likely cause, especially as many foremen admitted that goggles and gloves were not always provided or replaced when lost or worn out.[180]

Lack of safety equipment and inadequate facilities was endemic to all factories. It was not until mid-1943 that female workers in factories without risk of spark were issued with steel-capped boots after a National Safety Council Report revealed a high level of accidents involving women with crushed toes.[181] In some cases, delay in supply of suitable workwear appeared to be based on a hesitancy to allow women to wear male clothing. Hendon was open for six months before female workers received trouser overalls, described by the *News* as an "experiment" to stop women from getting their "stockings splashed with oil when wearing the frock type of overall".[182] The reluctance of women to wear "unglamorous" safety gear was also an issue. At Islington, three women were scalped on drills after failing to wear the hairnets provided for them.[183] Doris Crowley, welfare officer at Holden, recalled the same problem, noting she had to "walk around and see that those girls had caps on their heads [otherwise] they got caught in the drills [and] got their hair ripped off".[184] Delays in the construction of women's washing facilities may have also contributed to the incidence of skin conditions. Until mid-1942, women at Finsbury and Hendon were allegedly required to change in full view of male workers.[185] A government report on industrial dermatitis suggested that regardless of facilities, women were naturally

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[179] "Aircraft – Report on Accident Proneness," NAA, D1743, 1942/3893.

[180] Kathleen Fox, NAA, D1743/22, 1944/3775; Dorothy Anderson, NAA, D1743/18, 1943/3666; Peggie Earle NAA, D1743/18, 1943/3640; Kathleen Nelson, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3944; Betty Nicholson, NAA, D1743/18, 1943/3764; Hope Byrne, NAA, D1743/18, 1943/3676.

[181] Deputy-Director of Rationing to Secretary, Federated Ironworkers Association, South Australian Branch, 14 July 1943, NBAC, E170/48/13.

[182] "Making Millions of Bullets a Week: Girls Busy at Hendon Factory," *News,* 16 July 1941, 3.

[183] Nancy Slaughter, injury record Islington, NAA, D1743/18, 1943/3697; Dawn Wait, injury record Islington, NAA, D1743/18, 1945/3746; Joyce Wilkins, injury record Islington, NAA, D1743/18, 1944/3691.

[184] Doris Crowley interviewed by Elizabeth Harris, 9 February 1988, Adelaide City Council Archives [henceforth ACA], OH 50.

[185] "Arms, Explosives & Munition Workers Federation, South Australia, Complaining of Facilities for Employees at Finsbury and Hendon," NAA, MP1007/1, 249/11/645.

disinclined to "expose themselves in change-rooms" because they were "much more modest than men".[186] This comment arguably reflects the attitude of employers more broadly that an overhaul of existing workplace facilities for women's benefit was largely unnecessary due to their supposedly temporary presence.

For women, health problems and poor working conditions also had a psychological effect. First, they had to manage the public judgement that often accompanied their injured and sickly appearance, which predictably, did little to counteract their reputation as "coarse" women. This was the case for Marj Osbourne, who suffered from orange hair and skin as a result of working 16-hour shifts in the filling section at Salisbury. She recalled the derision she had faced outside the factory: "you'd go shopping into Adelaide and the people would look at you … it was a real no-no if you touched any clothes or anything because people didn't understand about the colour of your skin". [187]

Press reports sometimes attempted to play down the seriousness or frequency of women's injuries and their obvious disfigurement through a discourse of feminine patriotism or romance. A *Mail* feature on Hendon emphasised the efforts being made to keep women workers "well and happy" so that their feminine appearances were not risked by undue dangers. It claimed there were "very, very few serious casualties" involving female munitions workers, and that women only had to worry about scratched fingers, which were dressed immediately.[188] Thus, when serious injuries did occur, their significant effect on women's femininity—and indeed, their physical health and mental well-being—needed to be downplayed. When 22 year-old Marjorie Nelson lost some of her fingers in an explosion at Salisbury, for example, a *News* report on the incident focused on a letter she had received from a local airman, in which he expressed admiration for "her sacrifice in the Empire's fight".[189] A similar stance was taken in an article about Jean McPharlin, who was temporarily blinded in an explosion at Salisbury in October 1942. It noted that the return of her eyesight meant she could see the photograph of her husband that she kept at her bedside.[190]

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[186] H.M.L. Murray, R.W. Prunster and R.D. Anderson, *Tetryl Dermatitis: An Investigation into its Wartime Incidence and Control in Australian Fuze-Filling Factories* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1944), 9.

[187] Marj Osbourne interviewed for "Women and War: Zonta Club of the Riverland's Australia Remembers, 1945–1995 Project," SLSA, OH 371.

[188] "Keeping Munitions Girls Well and Happy," *Mail,* 17 January 1942, 12.

[189] "Airman Writes to Injured Girl," *News,* 26 May 1943, 6.

[190] "£35 Gift for Injured Girl Arms Worker," *News,* 26 October 1942, 3.

Women knew that serious injuries could affect their ability to undertake domestic duties. The risk of serious injury or illness was a key consideration in the decision of married women to leave work at Islington. Mrs Baker, who had been on sick leave for a number of weeks, eventually applied for release as she found that her work, housekeeping, and caring for her husband was "really too much".[191] Several others intimated that Islington had "left their nerves in a bad state" and were advised by doctors to resume full-time domestic duties or take up work in the "open air".[192] Single women were also afflicted with mental and physical exhaustion. In some cases, doctors claimed if a woman did not immediately cease work, she would suffer a mental breakdown.[193] Many were advised to return to their previous occupations or give up employment altogether. This strongly accords with my previous argument that the comparative lack of interest South Australian women showed towards factory employment in the post-war period can be traced back to the dangerous working conditions they experienced during the war.[194] For these women, the decision to leave industrial work benefited not only their immediate well-being, but preserved their future roles as healthy wives and mothers.

**Trade Unions, Strike Action and Workplace Relations**

While many women resigned from munitions factories disheartened with the conditions they had experienced, more continued on for the war's duration, and some even became involved in trade union activity. This section departs somewhat from the overall focus of this chapter; however, trade unions were ubiquitous to the function of munitions factories and had the ability to influence how women viewed and responded to workplace policies and conditions, and thus need to be considered in some detail. The main role of trade unions was to represent workers and ameliorate substandard wage and working conditions, but, as I will

[191] Mrs M.J. Baker, letter, 19 December 1944, NAA, D1743, 1942/3774 PART 2.

[192] Mrs V.D. Bates, letter, 13 August 1945, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774 PART 2; Mrs I.F. Jackson, letter, 22 July 1943, NAA, D1743/3774 PART 4; Mrs M. Homer, letter, circa September 1942, NAA, D1743/3774 PART 4; Mrs E. Wilby, letter, circa January 1944, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774 PART 8; Mrs F.M. Williams, letter, 13 December 1943, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774; Mrs I.D. Richards, letter, circa 1943, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774 PART 6.

[193] See complete files of Miss P. Chapple, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774 PART 2; Miss A. Drummond, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774 PART 3; Miss D.A. Rathbone, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774 PART 6; Miss P. Smart and Miss Edna Sherwood, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3374 PART 7; Miss T. Tamlin, Miss A.J. Templer and Miss Merna Wishart, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774 PART 8.

[194] See Harris and Sendziuk, "Cogs in the Machine," 3.

demonstrate, they also functioned to regulate gender relations in factories, at times both inadvertently and deliberately. In 1943, there were 21,700 female trade union members in South Australia.[195] How many were employed in munitions factories is uncertain. In January 1945, membership statistics of the Federated Ironworkers Association (FIA, also known as the Arms, Explosives and Munitions Workers Union) indicate there were 380 female members at Finsbury (112 who were financial members), 860 at Hendon (of whom 82 were financial members), and 921 at Salisbury (of whom 198 were financial members).[196] These statistics suggest that trade unions had success in getting women to join their ranks—indeed, there were more female members than male at Hendon and Salisbury in 1945—however, oral histories and archival sources reveal that the process was often strained and protracted, and sometimes even accentuated existing divisions between and among male and female workers.

Mary Miller became a full-time FIA official while working at Salisbury. Her role included advocating for better working conditions and addressing meetings of women workers and persuading them to become financial union members. She recalls that when she first began this role, she encountered a strong "anti-trade union attitude". Women, even if they did join a union, did not bother to apply for better working conditions as they believed union leaders would never take a proper interest in their concerns; they were "there to collect money and do nothing".[197] This seeming disinterest or compliance within wages and conditions was noticed by male members of the FIA, who, in a meeting regarding the non-payment of 90 per cent rates by the WEB in October 1943, commented on the "patience [of] women in waiting for the terms concerned".[198] Mary Miller eventually launched a successful campaign for 90 per cent wages at Salisbury, but recalled that many women at the factory "took quite a while to convince that they ever would be able to get a wage like that—whether they were worth a wage like that".[199] While she remembers some women did become "politically conscious" through their union involvement, this was undermined by the

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[195] Vamplew *et al., South Australian Historical Statistics,* 298.

[196] Federated Ironworkers Association [henceforth FIA], "Membership Statement," 31 January 1945, NBAC, E170/48/18.

[197] Miller, interview.

[198] Ironworkers Union Adelaide Branch, "Minutes of Meeting," 24 October 1943, NBAC, N370/8.

[199] Miller, interview.

enduring suspicion of male workers that women trade unionists were going to "mess up" their working conditions.[200]

This was also the case at Hendon. While its government-authored history suggests that its limited incidence of labour struggles arose from the "loyal attitude" of female workers, who were all required to join a union, a history of Hendon composed by women who worked there indicates a different situation. Kitty Ryan, Hendon's female FIA representative from 1943–45, asserted that the union meetings attended by female workers had frequently turned into "free for all's" because of the antagonistic attitude of some male workers, which were intensified by what they perceived to be women's disinterest in union activities and over-compliance with current work practices.[201] To some extent, this was true. Kitty Ryan described the view of the women she represented: "they [the male workers] seemed to want certain things but we were quite happy … we knew the factory was winding down at the end of the war … we thought it was a waste of time that we [female union leaders] were paid to just sit around and dither".[202] This sentiment was also reflected in a letter to FIA representatives from one female worker in 1941, who rescinded her position as a union leader because it was "too much responsibility" and found that other women in the factory (which she does not name) were "not too anxious to join".[203]

Apart from a few notable exceptions, trade unions generally placed more emphasis on protecting the rights of male employees than improving working conditions for women, whom they believed were only in the workforce for the war's duration.[204] Indeed, Penelope Johnson argues that male-dominated trade unions, such as the FIA, were much more interested in preserving the sexual division of labour than improving women's working conditions, and were only temporarily active in fighting for gendered wage parity.[205] But even then, the social and economic welfare of female workers was not always the main concern of the male trade unionists who supported higher wages for women. Many

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[200] *Ibid.*

[201] Kitty Ryan in Bell, *Women in Munitions,* 24.

[202] *Ibid.*

[203] Miss D.J. Colwill to Mr McClean, FIA, NBAC, E170/48/5.

[204] Sean Scalmer, *The Little History of Australian Unionism* (Melbourne: Vulgar Press, 2006).

[205] Penelope Johnson, "Gender, Class and Work," 139.

supposedly believed it would make women too expensive to employ, and thus it would ensure that preference for male workers would continue.[206] Women's testimony indeed reveals that unions showed little interest in improving women's working conditions. Doris Crowley states this was the case at Holden, where male union officials were especially unhelpful towards female employees. She recalled that "the union was more on the boss's side than the worker's side because we [the women] complained about some of the work we had to do … the men [were] complaining because they were getting put off and the girls were given their work". When female workers at Holden approached the union with concerns about their conditions, Doris claimed that "[they said if] it hurts ya, then don't work. Well, if we didn't work what would happen to us? We'd get the sack".[207]

In the country, the majority of AWLA workers were opposed to union involvement. The Manpower Directorate encouraged this stance, arguing that large-scale union membership would have a "harmful effect on the strength of the Land Army, especially at a time when food production is so vital".[208] Several women recall they only joined a union because of antagonism from male labourers who would not work with them unless they had membership.[209] Betty Freebairn joined a union because male shearers on the property where she was stationed refused to shear the sheep that she had mustered as a non-union worker. Her boss did not want her to contact the shearers after she had joined, as he purportedly feared their union activities would have a "rough" influence on her.[210] Several members joined the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) as union officials had demanded membership before allowing them to work on the flax fields. But Eileen Spencer recalls they did not consider approaching them about their working conditions, nor did they think to discuss conditions with each other.[211] It had not occurred to Enid Theel to decline work, especially not on the grounds of unionism, while Jean Price explained that she rescinded her union

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[206] John Dedman, Rates of Pay for Women, report, circa 1941–42, NAA, MP1/1, 1/1/10.

[207] Crowley, interview.

[208] Director-General of Manpower to General Secretary, Australian Workers' Union, 24 January 1944, NAA, B551, 1943/110/5009.

[209] See, for example, Jean Schollar interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 11 April 1985, AWM, S02704; Jean Price interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 16 April 1985, AWM, S02708.

[210] Freebairn, interview.

[211] Spencer, interview.

membership after three months as "none of us applied for anything because we found our conditions were all right".[212] Such compliance with working conditions and disinterest in the ability of unions to amend conditions would have only provided further incentive for employers and union officials to exploit women as a source of cheap rural labour.

While trade unions were seemingly uninterested in protecting women in munitions production, women's refusal to join a union nevertheless had the potential to escalate tensions within factories. Bullying of female workers by threatening to withhold certain workplace rights or privileges if they did not take out union membership seems to have been a common tactic of male unionists in private factories. Pope Products employee Bobbie Levett recalls that the factory's union representative withheld new uniforms for female workers until they agreed to join the FIA.[213] Tensions could also emerge among female employees themselves about the benefits of trade union membership. A particularly emblematic example is that of the strike action undertaken by women at British Tube Mills, although it should be noted that women's militant support of unionism in this case was unusual. On 14 October 1942, 300 women held a stop-work meeting because five female workers, who were the wives of servicemen on active service, had refused to join the FIA. The previous day, 44 female workers had also gone on strike for the same reason.[214] The women were eventually ordered back to work and the issue of their trade union membership did not cause further disturbances. However, this is not to say that the women stopped caring about improvement to their working conditions; it was more common for women in all factories to start independent workplace action by forming internal and informal committees.[215]

Women's involvement in union business was often viewed as being a threat to women's femininity. A feature in the *News* on Gladys Williams, who in December 1941 was elected South Australia's first female delegate to the FIA, focused on how she was able to balance the role with her domestic chores, including doing the family ironing and cooking, and how she coped with being unable to wear jewellery and other clothing accessories to

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[212] Theel, interview; Price interview.

[213] Bobbie Levett interviewed by Beth Fullgrabe and Catherine Kelly, 1994, SLSA, OH 268/4.

[214] List of Strikes in South Australia for Month of October 1942, NAA, MP574/1, 420/1/5; "Arms Girls Strike; Union Issue," *News,* 14 October 1942, 3; "Stop-work Threat Over Girls," *News,* 15 October 1942, 3; "Non-Unionists Cause Trouble: Girls Reaffirm No Work Decision," *Advertiser,* 15 October 1942, 3.

[215] See Miller, address.

work.[216] The FIA established a South Australian women's auxiliary in early 1945, however its members, who were mostly the wives and family members of male union officials, did not actively advocate for higher wages or better working conditions for female workers. Indeed, its official objectives were not instituted until October of that year. Aside from some occasional visits to factories across Adelaide, which were largely observational, the auxiliary focused efforts on organising social events for factory workers, such as dances and concerts, as well as talent quests for their children, and on outside initiatives such as undertaking charitable visits, packing clothing for patriotic organisations, and organising sporting events to raise money for various wartime causes.[217]

Some female workers, seemingly incensed enough about their conditions, did go on strike. Strike action that involved women occurred both within and independent from union activity. There were 62 strikes in Adelaide munitions factories between July 1942 and December 1944. Of these, 23 were male-only strikes, 12 were female-only strikes, and in 27 cases men and women went on strike together.[218] The male-only strikes were invariably caused by dissatisfaction with wages and working conditions. Only ten of the 27 male-female strikes arose from opposition to workplace conditions or policies. The most common causes were opposition to an extended working week, introduction of time study methods, and inadequate factory heating during winter.[219] Of the 12 all-female strikes, five related to non-payment of WEB rates. Four of these strikes occurred at Pope Products and three at other small private establishments in September 1943.[220] The largest strike involved 1,150 men and 1,600 women on 9-10 June 1943. The strike originated at Richards in response to the non-payment of retrospective WEB wages and spread to several other private factories across Adelaide.[221] However, the scale of this strike and militancy of the women involved

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[216] "Voice of 2,000 Girl Munition Workers," *News,* 10 December 1941, 4. For more on women's leadership in trade unions see Raelene Frances, "Authentic Leaders: Women and Leadership in Australian Unions Before World War II," *Labour History* 104 (2013): 9–30.

[217] Minutes of the Women's FIA Auxiliary, NBAC, E170/45.

[218] "Summary of Strikes in Wartime Part 1," NAA, MP574/1, 420/1/5; "Summary of Strikes in Wartime Part 2," NAA, MP574/1, 420/1/18.

[219] *Ibid.* Time-study is the practice of observing staff in order to determine their productivity (i.e. the average length of time it takes them to perform a certain task).

[220] "Summary of Strikes Part 2," NAA, MP574/1, 420/1/5.

[221] "Summary of Strikes Part 1," NAA, MP574/1, 420/1/5.

was anomalous; other strikes over the non-payment of WEB rates did not involve more than 100 women at a time.[222]

Reekie and Stone suggest women's strike action was mutually exclusive of femininity; challenging gender norms was an inherent part of challenging the workplace status quo.[223] Women strikers were certainly described as having some unfeminine characteristics. In a Commonwealth Investigation Branch (CIB) report on an August 1943 strike involving 75 women and 60 men at Holden in regards to the non-payment of WEB rates, one woman was singled out as the factory "mischief maker"; a loud-spoken "militant-type" who had "openly incited the girls to strike".[224] A strike at Rossiter's Boot Factory between October 1942 and January 1943 further demonstrated how gendered prejudices shaped responses to female strike action. On 28 October, a female worker was suspended by a male supervisor for absenteeism. She had taken unscheduled time off to plan her upcoming wedding. This prompted 119 women, who were members of the Federated Boots Trades' Union, to go on strike. They were also suspended, and eight women and 169 men ceased work in protest. The matter was temporarily resolved until 29 December, when tensions again escalated and 120 women went on strike over another disagreement with a male supervisor, which was subsequently deemed "frivolous" by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.[225] Relations with male workers quickly deteriorated. Without enough female workers the factory risked closure; 76 male workers were temporarily stood down due to lack of working materials.[226] This case, in addition to underscoring women's struggle to balance domestic commitments with full-time manufacturing work, illustrates the tension between the legitimacy of women's claims to unfair workplace treatment, which was made so only if their claims did not threaten production or men's place in industry, and the scepticism of

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[222] The most consistent strike action occurred at Pope Products, where women were still attempting to obtain 90 per cent rates in November 1944. See Transcript of Commonwealth Court of Conciliation re Pope Products Limited of Adelaide, S.A., 11 November 1943, NBAC, N14/448.

[223] Stone, "Class Struggle on the Home Front," 39–60; Reekie, "Industrial Action by Women Workers," 75–82.

[224] Inquiry Officer, Commonwealth Investigation Branch, Re: General Motors Holden Stoppage in Trim Fabric Section, and Arbitration Inspector, Regulation 103, National Security (Supplementary) Regulations, General Motors-Holden, in NAA, A472, W19512.

[225] "List of strikes in South Australia for month of December 1942," NAA, MP574/1, 420/1/5. Also see "Strike Over Dismissal of Woman," *News,* 29 October 1942, 3; "Move to End Boot Strike," *News,* 11 January 1943, 2.

[226] "Move to End Boot Strike," *News,* 11 January 1943, 2.

male employers, workers and unionists, who seemed to believe that women's feminine temperament prevented their ability to undertake serious industrial action.

Male strike action against female workers did not attract the same condemnation, and nor was it dismissed by authorities as unimportant. For example, 55 men at Perry Engineering Company, who were members of the Moulders' Union, went on strike for 42 days starting in December 1944 over the employment of women on core-making work (however, such was their militancy, they were eventually directed by the Commonwealth Court of Arbitration to resume work and were issued fines totalling £320 by the Adelaide Police Court).[227] In 1943, a similar issue occurred at Metters Ltd., a small firm in Thebarton, when male workers threatened to cease work if women were placed on core-making.[228] The supposed "superiority" of male labour was also central to a dispute at the Mount Gambier flax mill. A group of 70 local women had volunteered to work at the mill in April 1943 due to a shortage of male labour. They had not initially received or expected wages, but the Flax Production Committee (part of the Manpower Directorate) deemed it was legally required to provide them with remuneration. As paid workers, they were approached by their male employers to join the AWU but refused and left their positions. This led to significant discontent among the mill's male workers, who threatened strike action. The union organiser argued if the women, as they claimed, were "actuated by patriotic motives [and] noble ideals" then they should donate their earnings to the Red Cross.[229]

In the country, anti-trade union attitude was exacerbated by the highly mobile nature of AWLA service, which worked against organisational strength. The short duration of most AWLA postings meant strike action was nearly impossible to coordinate and many women did not believe that lodging a formal complaint was worth the effort if they were going to leave the post regardless.[230] Mary White recalled they had not thought it an option at all: "you just started and you kept going. It never occurred to you that you could [stop]".[231] If

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[227] "Summary of Strikes Part 2," NAA, MP574/1, 420/1/5; Secretary, Metal Industries Association of South Australia, to John Curtin, 9 March 1945, NAA, A461, AK351/1/7; Fort, "Developing a National Employment Policy," 316-33.

[228] "Men Threaten to Strike if Women Employed," *News,* 17 December 1943, 3.

[229] "Flax Workers and the AWU," *Border Watch,* 17 April 1943, 1; "Left Job to Avert Strike," *Mail,* 1 May 1943, 2; "Interviews with Ex-Flax Workers," *Border Watch,* 1 May 1943, 1; "Action Deferred in S.E. Flax Dispute," *Mail,* 17 April 1943, 6.

[230] Hardisty, *Thanks Girls and Goodbye,* 32.

[231] White, interview.

action *was* taken, it was usually impulsive and on an individual scale. Jean Price, for example, who was posted to a Norwood cannery with three other AWLA workers, walked out after realising they had not been provided gloves when working with caustic acid. Such was her view of the poor treatment they had received, she claimed if she had been sent back by AWLA officials she would have asked for release from service, although she did not consider that being in a union would have improved the situation.[232] Win Dodsworth "drew the line" when asked to clean toilets at a Hectorville canning factory, even though she risked dismissal. She recalled that other women at the factory were "terrified" and did not speak up about conditions lest risk losing their jobs. But she also stated it was one of her most memorable postings, despite the foreman having "made it as unpleasant as he possibly could", because she had enjoyed standing up to him and, in the process, making other female workers at the factory happier.[233]

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explored the economic dimensions of women's employment in South Australia's munitions factories and the Australian Women's Land Army. I have established how gender difference was integrated into women's mobilisation for civilian war industries, the wages and working conditions they encountered once they entered their new mode of work, and their relationship with trade unions and involvement in workplace strike action. The domestic inflection of press coverage on women's munitions work concealed its dangers to the public and prospective female employees. In reality, women were frequently overworked to the point of exhaustion. Long hours of shift work, combined with the tediousness of the tasks that women were prescribed—and, at Salisbury, the health risks associated with handling toxic chemicals—significantly counteracted any benefits from a temporary increase in wages, which were lower and paid later than in other states. The pay rates enshrined by the rulings of the Women's Employment Board, which, contrary to popular interpretations that suggest 90 per cent wages were a watershed in female wage fixing, did not apply to women in all munitions factories. The increase in women's wages was also hampered by the inflexibility and resistance of employers who fragmented tasks and impeded the Board's provision of retrospective pay. The piecework system that operated at Hendon—the state's second largest employer of female munition workers—also

[232] Price, interview.

[233] Dodsworth, interview.

contributed to the relatively modest increase in women's wages, which grew at a rate far below that of male munition workers.

In the country, the gendered division of wartime labour was even further entrenched. The small size of the AWLA meant it did little to change public attitudes towards women's work on the land. The actions of the Manpower Directorate, both at a state and national level, obstructed the AWLA's function by effectively dismissing it as a legitimate source of rural labour. The formation of a land army service in South Australia prior to July 1942 was strongly resisted by the Directorate, which endorsed the scepticism of farmers that women possessed neither the strength or intellectual capacity to perform farm work effectively. This was reflected in the meagre wage that was prescribed by the Directorate from July 1942, which was well below existing male award rates and set despite the fact that the unpredictability of seasonal outdoor work made it difficult to consistently receive full pay. The isolated location of postings, coupled with minimal effort by the Directorate to monitor working conditions, made AWLA workers especially vulnerable to employer exploitation. However, despite these drawbacks, many women believed they had coped satisfactorily with the conditions they encountered. Their compliance with substandard workplace practices could be interpreted as tantamount to them accepting themselves as a cheap source of rural labour. But many women were grateful for the opportunity to undertake such a wide variety of tasks. For many, the chance to learn practical life skills—as opposed to munition workers, who staffed impersonal factories, and, to borrow Helen Crisp's term, "felt no compunction in becoming cogs in Australia's war machine"—is a defining factor in assessing how their employment tested the constraints of wartime femininity.

In contrast, many women struggled enormously with the masculine conditions that prevailed in most munitions factories, where little effort was made to accommodate their needs which might have encouraged them to stay. While many women resigned for the sake of their health, others campaigned for an improvement in working conditions through trade union membership or participating in workplace strikes. But women's interactions with unions was often conflicted, and the actions of those who did participate in workplace activism was heavily circumscribed by the traditional gender hierarchy of factories and the unsympathetic response of male union members and officials. The reluctance of AWLA workers to consider union membership as a recourse for substandard working conditions speaks volumes of the minimal support that rural unions provided female workers. Ultimately, in both occupations, provision for women's welfare came second to ensuring the mobilisation of South Australia's economy did not alter gender difference. As the next

chapter reveals, this objective inevitably shaped the relations that took place at a personal level between women, their employers, and fellow workers of both genders.

## Chapter Two

## "Working for Husbands, for Sweethearts, for Brothers": Gender Relations in South Australia's Wartime Industries

Having explored the economic conditions of women's employment in South Australia's wartime industries, I now shift to its social dimensions. This chapter examines gender relations within munition factories and the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA) and the ways that femininity was manifested in the gendered discourses, workplace practices and social interactions that shaped women's everyday lives in these occupations. I argue that female munition workers were encouraged to view their employment as a patriotic extension of their domestic duties, instead of an opportunity to form a new and lasting sense of identity. At the same time, the glamour and sex appeal of younger female workers was promoted at workplace events and in staff publications to remedy the concern that industrial work was eroding feminine desirability. This chapter builds on my discussion of gender relations and trade unionism in Chapter One, as it considers how gendered expectations may have shaped employer responses to issues affecting female workers, especially absenteeism and childcare provisions. The sexual division of labour engendered by the Women's Employment Board seemingly justified the differential treatment of women workers, which inevitably developed into a source of conflict among some employees. From the point of view of employers, the best way to diffuse dissension within the factory was to reinstate a traditional patriarchal structure, which contributed to the construction of gender norms at all levels of the factory hierarchy. In contrast, the temporary freedom from domesticity offered by AWLA service, the camaraderie that developed between workers, and exposure to a wider variety of social experiences, meant that women in the AWLA were less inhibited by gendered expectations. Nevertheless, male employers and AWLA officials aimed to temper the uniqueness of this wartime situation by emphasising traditional feminine behaviour and appearance.

Social aspects of women's employment in wartime industries have been examined by a number of Australian scholars. The difficulties experienced by married mothers in full-time industrial work, for example, frequently appear in general studies of the home front.[1] There are also some dedicated studies. Lynne Davis examines the childcare funding scheme launched by the Commonwealth Government in 1943, arguing that it was a "half-hearted"

[1] For example, Michael McKernan, *Australians at Home: World War II,* 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Five Mile Press, 2014); Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Homefront: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939-1945,* 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009); Jenny Gregory, ed., *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II* (Perth: University of Western Australia, 1996).

solution which reinforced the sexual division of labour at the expense of providing an acutely needed service.[2] Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton contend that wartime childcare initiatives, rather than signalling a departure from traditional attitudes, were actually used to further regulate women's attendance at work.[3] Ellen Warne has also traced the debates that took place among community groups in regard to childcare during World War II, noting their anxiety about the possible effect that schemes would have on the upbringing of children.[4] I build on this research by bringing together wartime discourses on motherhood and childcare provisions and examining how each reflected the other. Similar approaches have been taken in international studies of wartime childcare. In the United States, Sonya Mitchell argues that the government's resistance to the establishment of childcare centres "over-feminise[d]" women as it reinforced their employment as secondary to motherhood, which was presented as the "essential patriotic service".[5] Penny Summerfield argues that wartime childcare policy in Britain walked a fine line between maintaining conventional pre-war ideas about childminding (that it was a solution for "waifs and strays" and not for children who had mothers) and resolving the pressure of finding enough women to staff wartime industries.[6] The gendered analysis of these international studies make them useful references. However, the fundamental variation in circumstances between each country in regard to childcare policy—the widespread evacuation of children in Britain, for example, was central to the establishment of day nurseries throughout the war—makes it hard to draw parallels with the Australian experience.

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[2] Lynne Davis, "Minding Children or Minding Machines: Women's Labour and Child Care during World War II," *Labour History* 53 (1987): 86–98.

[3] Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton, "Girdled for War: Women's Mobilisations in World War Two," in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans, eds, *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* (Sydney: Harcourt, 1992), 376–97; Helen Taylor, "'Total War is a Woman's War … All Can Serve': War Mobilisation: A Matter of Geography," *Queensland Geography Journal* 3 (1988): 71–88. Also see Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front,* 123–30, 136–7.

[4] Ellen Warne, "A Daily Scramble: Working Mothers' Access to Childcare in World War II," in Patricia Grimshaw, John Murphy and Belinda Probert, eds, *Double Shift: Working Mothers and Social Change in Australia* (Melbourne: Circa, 2005), 118–32.

[5] Sonya Mitchell, "American Women and the Discourse of the Democratic Family in World War II," in Margaret and Patrice Higonnet, eds, *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 154–67.

[6] Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1989), 67–98.

The majority of Australian studies on gender relations in wartime workplaces focus on the women's auxiliary services. Key examples include Ruth Ford's chapter on the regulation of sexuality and servicewomen in *Gender and War*, Ann Howard's popularly-orientated *You'll Be Sorry!*, and Joan Davis's analysis of servicewomen in a wartime journal titled *Salt,* published by the Australian Army.[7] In terms of women's civilian work, Carol Fort's early research on Salisbury Explosives Factory briefly analyses women's absenteeism with a focus on revealing the disjuncture between "wartime rhetoric and factory-floor reality".[8] Margaret Allen has also published on the domestic difficulties faced by women who lived in the Salisbury Cabin Homes built adjacent to the factory, who were either employed at Salisbury or were the wives of the factory's male workers.[9] I expand on this research by situating employer policies, especially those regarding childcare and female absenteeism, as consequences of how traditional gendered attitudes were produced and entrenched by the factory environment. This aligns my research with international studies that examine how gender stereotypes shaped interactions between female workers and employers in wartime industries. Penny Summerfield describes British wartime industrial workplaces as being sexualised spaces; the perceived threat represented in women's adoption of masculine work, according to the author, prompted some men to assert their masculine and sexual superiority. Women navigated this in a variety of ways. Many accepted the social dynamics of factory life in the hope of mitigating the harassment or suspicion that could arise if they deviated from traditional feminine mores, some embraced the opportunity for new sexual experiences, while others challenged the situation by refusing unwanted male advances and developing personal strategies to cope with the various expressions of male superiority and sexual power they encountered.[10]

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[7] Ruth Ford, "Lesbians and Loose Women: Female Sexuality and the Women's Services during World War II," in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, eds, *Gender and War: Australia at War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 81–104; Ann Howard, *You'll Be Sorry! How World War II Changed Women's Lives* (Sydney: Big Sky, 1990); Joan Davis, "'Women's Work' and the Women's Services in the Second World War as Presented in Salt," *Hecate* 18, no. 1 (1992): 64–88.

[8] Carol Fort, "'Equality of Sacrifice'? War Work in Salisbury, South Australia," in Bernard O'Neil, Judith Raftery and Kerrie Round, eds, *Playford's South Australia: Essays on the History of South Australia 1933-1968* (Adelaide: Association of Professional Historians, 1996), 215-32.

[9] Margaret Allen, "Salisbury in the Second World War," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 4, (1978): 65-74.

[10] Penny Summerfield, "What Women Learned from the Second World War," *History of Education* 18, no. 3 (1989): 213–29; Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 115–60. Also see Penny Summerfield and Nicole Crockett, "'You Weren't Taught that with the Welding': Lessons in Sexuality

The all-female workforce of the AWLA offers an interesting counterpoint to the social experiences of women in munitions factories. Existing literature on the AWLA focuses on its economic aspects far more than social experiences, although it has firmly established that the camaraderie fostered by AWLA work made the war years a memorable time for its workers, despite a lack of official recognition in the post-war period. Some studies offer a precursory analysis of gender relations. In *Thanks Girls and Goodbye,* Sue Hardisty mentions the sexual advances of male employers and the intimacy of AWLA living conditions which made possible the lesbian relationships that occasionally arose between workers.[11] Juliet Ludbrook examines the relationships between AWLA workers and farming families in Western Australia.[12] These connections are also discussed at length in popularly-orientated works published by ex-AWLA members and associations, such as Jean Scott's *Girls With Grit* and Mary Macklin's *The Fourth Service.*[13] The significance of the lasting friendships between AWLA members has not yet been the subject of academic studies in any meaningful way. Indeed, the camaraderie generated by AWLA service was by no means inevitable. For example, Dianne Bardsley argues in her study of the New Zealand Women's Land Service that the individual service most women undertook meant that loneliness—and even unhappiness—with the social side of Land Service was a key experience.[14] In this chapter, I approach AWLA camaraderie as a topic worthy of serious scholarly attention, arguing that the social dynamics of AWLA service, particularly when examined in relation to the male-dominated environment of munition factories, is a legitimate means through which to highlight and critique the inherently gendered nature of civilian wartime employment.

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in the Second World War," *Women's History Review* 1, no. 3 (1992): 435–54; Penny Summerfield, "Gender and War in the Twentieth Century," *International History Review* 19, no. 1 (1997): 2–15.

[11] Sue Hardisty, *Thanks Girls and Goodbye: The Story of the Australian Women's Land Army, 1942–45* (Melbourne: Viking O'Neil, 1990), 38–45.

[12] Ludbrook, *Until the Boys Return,* 174–84.

[13] Jean Scott, *Girls with Grit: Memories of the Australian Women's Land Army* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986); Mary Macklin, *The Fourth Service: Australian Women's Land Army World War II* (Maryborough: ex-Australian Women's Land Army Queensland Division, 2001). Also see Mary Lowe, *Down to Earth: The Story of the Australian Women's Land Army in Victoria* (Melbourne: ex-Australian Women's Land Army Association Victoria, 1991).

[14] Dianne Bardsley, *The Land Girls in a Man's World, 1939–45* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2000), 107–16.

### Gender Relations at Work

The voluntary impetus behind women's involvement in wartime industries—which Philomena Goodman terms in the British context as an expression of "patriotic femininity"[15]—meant the government and employers expected women, especially wives and mothers, to make their own arrangements for domestic duties. According to this gendered interpretation, as these women had chosen to enter paid war work, they should be willing to make personal sacrifices without complaint. This exacerbated the struggle that many women faced in balancing factory work with unpaid housekeeping. It also directly connected munitions work with a patriotic mode of femininity that cast self-sacrifice and indefatigable devotion to family life as central traits of a "respectable" female munitions worker. This construction of womanhood, which was represented as an implicit part of women's motivation to seek employment in munition factories, influenced their relationship with, and experiences of, war work at every level.

Women's experiences of munitions work naturally depended on the working and social environment of individual factories. However, for the purpose of establishing the gendered rhetoric associated with women in munitions, I will be focusing on Hendon Small Arms Ammunition Factory. As the only remaining source of its kind, *The Hendon Howl,* produced monthly by the factory's social club in aid of the Adelaide's Children's Hospital from November 1942 until December 1944, provides a distinctive insight into the gender dynamics of the factory and the modes of femininity its female workers were encouraged to adopt.[16] Under the editorship of male employee Vic Brauer, both male and female workers contributed to each issue, which were comprised of a summary of current events in the factory, including voluntary efforts and social activities, cartoons, short stories and poems, advice on coping with wartime shortages, and commentary on the war's progress nationally and overseas.

The notion of female workers as factory sex symbols is pronounced throughout *The Hendon Howl,* with their physical attractiveness represented as a source of entertainment and amusement for male workers, which counteracted their presence in the factory as serious and adept workers. "Monthly mottos" in each issue—such as, "girls, keep your figure in good shape, because no man wants to follow the straight and narrow", "the wildest girls make the best 'pets'" and "it's only when a munitions girl begins to lose her reputation that

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[15] Goodman refers to the period in the U.K. before female conscription was introduced in December 1941. See Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 39.

[16] Hendon Social Club, *Hendon Howl*, vols. 1–17, May 1942–December 1944, Australian War Memorial [henceforth AWM].

she really begins to acquire one!"—emphasise the desirability of female workers and the supposed eagerness with which they sought this sexual attention.[17] Jokes about clothes rationing and the notion it would lead to women wearing scanty attire or appearing in the nude were common. Illustrations of buxom female munition workers wearing tight-fitting dresses and showing their legs or underwear, similar in style to pin-up posters, also suggest they were subjected to the male gaze in the factory. A cartoon in the December 1944 issue depicts a female worker wearing her security pass as a garter as she pulls up her dress to the male guard on her way into the factory.[18] In another issue, an illustration of a female worker bent over a workbench in heels, bare legs, and underwear showing is accompanied by a short verse:

> A girl, a box, a traying bin
> A show of leg that's fat or thin,
> And all the Hendon wives and aunts
> Can certify to wearing paunts [sic]![19]

The continued focus in the *Hendon Howl* on accentuating women's bodies underneath their workwear was also a response to the belief that adoption of masculine dress would diminish sexual difference. Ruth Ford, in relation to servicewomen, has argued that so great was the anxiety that a military uniform would lead to women's appropriation of masculine attitudes, specific policies were enacted to encourage "normal feminine interests in home and family matters".[20] Such measures were not implemented in regards to women in civilian industries. However, a concerted effort was made in press coverage to encourage female munitions workers to maintain a feminine appearance. A *News* article in June 1942 introduced readers to fictional Hendon worker Minnie Brown, and her co-workers Sandra and Mrs Smith. Their experience of munitions work emphasised to women they need not be anxious it would erode

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[17] *Hendon Howl,* vol. 3, November 1942, 7; *Hendon Howl,* vol. 6, March 1943, 3; *Hendon Howl,* vol. 10, August 1943, 6.

[18] *Hendon Howl,* vol. 16, April 1944, 4.

[19] *Hendon Howl,* vol. 4, December 1942, 6.

[20] Ford, "Lesbians and Loose Women," 82–8. Also see Pat Kirkham, "Fashioning the Feminine: Dress, Appearance and Femininity in Wartime Britain," in Christine Gledhill and Gillian Swanson, eds, *Nationalising Femininity: Culture, Sexuality and British Cinema in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 152-76.

their femininity; between 50 hours of shift work, they would still have time to do household chores, find romance with fellow workers, and get "dressed up".[21] It should be noted that women themselves expressed distaste about the shapeless overalls they were required to wear. Eunice Brown, when she worked at Hendon, asked to be transferred from the casings area to the cordite section as she preferred the "snazzy" blue pantsuit worn by the cordite women.[22] Some in non-manual roles at Islington were given permission to dye their uniforms bright colours and make new figure-hugging items using floral curtain material.[23]

In the AWLA, uniforms and appearance were a key preoccupation. The AWLA's standard issue gumboots and overalls, according to Kay Saunders, were symbolic of the challenge the service allegedly posed to the gender system, as they increased the perception that workers were unable to retain a suitable level of feminine behaviour.[24] Indeed, the public visibility and presentation of members was of great concern to South Australian AWLA officials, who, when a dress uniform became available in 1944, instructed members to wear it off-duty to keep a "smart and immaculate" appearance.[25] On the "rare" occasions that members found it unavoidable to be in working uniform, they were to "attract as little attention as possible by choosing by-ways rather than main streets".[26] The *AWLA Quarterly Journal*, published by South Australian AWLA officials from October 1943 to December 1945, impressed upon members to emphasise their femininity. An article entitled "Why was I sent to the Flax Industry?", for example, focused on quashing discontent with the "back-breaking and hand-searing" task, by telling members they worked in pursuit of glamour and beauty: "when the mirror discloses the improved figure, the clear eye, the glamourous

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[21] Valda Marshall, "Minnie Brown Works in Munitions," *News,* 20 June 1942, 2.

[22] Quoted in Julie Tolley, "But Who'll Get Ted's Lunch?" (B.A Hons. thesis, University of South Australia, 2001), 44.

[23] Mary Foubister in *What did you do in the war Enfield? Over Here, Over There 1945-1995: The People of Enfield Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Ending of World War II* (Adelaide: City of Enfield, 1995), 14; Joan Hasse in Macpherson Kent, Judy Sutcliffe, Andrew Collett and Bryan Charlton, eds, *Our Mothers as we Remember Them* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2015), 84.

[24] Kay Saunders, "Not for them Battle Fatigues: The Australian Women's Land Army in the Second World War," *Journal of Australian Studies* 21, no. 52 (1997): 81–7.

[25] Australian Women's Land Army South Australian Division, *AWLA Quarterly Journal,* vol. 2, April 1944, 3, State Library of South Australia.

[26] "AWLA Clothing and Equipment," circular, 27 April 1945, SLSA, SRG, 266.

appearance which comes from healthy exercise in the open air, the question is altered to, 'why was I *not* sent to the Flax Industry *before*?'"[27]

Many AWLA members believed they had challenged ideas about femininity. Lois Makins, in reference to the sceptical comments made by farmers in the South Australian press, noted her view of the AWLA as a "serious body of hard-working girls; [if] only [those farmers] had seen [the] colour of our overalls when [they] were sticky with grapes … that's different to sitting there powdering your nose every five minutes and putting lipstick on".[28] Frances Harvie, who was stationed on a farm in Lucindale, wrote at length in her diary about the "sex unrecognition" that came with having her hair cut short, noting that she enjoyed the "stares [and] varied opinions" of people in the town.[29] Other members aimed to retain their feminine appearance when possible. Enid Theel recalled the "glamourous" appeal of the AWLA dress uniform, especially because it attracted local men to dance with them.[30] At the Berri Hostel, some members organised their own pin-up competition, each having their photograph taken by the hostel manager to send to his son on overseas service, who was to pick a winner.[31] But women's focus on beauty and glamour was not always an act of docility. Some women used their feminine appearance as a form of protest. AWLA members employed at Hectorville Cannery took workplace action in the form of wearing their best clothes into work to protest against their foreman, who had told another female worker (with whom he was supposedly having an affair) that she did not have to do "dirty" work if she came to the cannery wearing a dress.[32]

In addition to emphasising the sexuality of female workers, evidently as a male morale booster, the *Hendon Howl* also drew on other common (pre-war) female stereotypes, particularly those which characterised women as lacking intellect, having a tendency to be shallow, obsessed with beauty and romance, and easily distracted by workplace gossip.[33]

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[27] "Why Was I Sent to the Flax Industry?" *AWLA Quarterly Journal,* vol. 3, July 1944, 1, SLSA.

[28] Lois Makins interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 1 April 1985, AWM, S02701.

[29] Frances Harvie, "Land Army Days," SLSA, PRG, 596/1.

[30] Enid Theel interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 17 April 1985, AWM, S02709.

[31] Jean Schollar interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 11 April 1985, AWM, S02704. For more on wartime pin-up competitions, see Chapter Three.

[32] Win Dodsworth interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 13 April 1985, AWM, S02706.

[33] For more on the use of wartime female stereotypes in the American and Canadian contexts, see Maureen Honey, "Maternal Welders: Women's Sexuality and Propaganda on the Home Front during World War II,"

The column "A Week in the Life of WAD-Press Winnie"—a fictional Hendon worker whose experiences were based on real-life happenings in the factory—parodied the feminine traits of women workers, who supposedly spent a lot of time powdering their noses, finding themselves confused in social situations, daydreaming about finding romance, flirting, teasing and showing "plenty of leg" to male workers, and gossiping about their dates with American servicemen, or, in the case of married women, complaining about their inattentive husbands.[34] A typical entry in Winnie's diary is as follows:

> Tuesday*:* Went to the Canteen's Cheery-Grin Dance and saw one of the girls looking very despondent. 'What's up with you, sour-puss?' I asked. 'Men make me sick,' growled the girl. 'What's happened?' I asked with a grin. She pointed to an Air Force Boy. 'Men are so unreliable! Why, every time I go to a dance with another boy, I find my own boyfriend there with another girl!'[35]

It is important to note the satirical subtext of this content. The fact it draws on common public wartime misconceptions of working-class women—particularly those that revolved around them frequently consuming alcohol, romancing American servicemen, and potentially engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage—and uses them as a source of humour (and fundraising) arguably indicates that the *Hendon Howl* also served as a form of protest and camaraderie against the negative discourses of femininity that circulated in press coverage and political debate. Indeed, female Hendon workers were large contributors to the *Hendon Howl* and enjoyed reading it each month.[36] Penny Summerfield has examined the effect of sexual and romantic discourse on women's attitude towards their war work in her oral history study of gender relations in British wartime workplaces. While she found some women had been offended by the sexualised treatment they had received from male co-

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*Prospects* 22, no. 1 (1997): 478-519; Helen Smith and Pamela Wakewich, "'Beauty and the Helldivers': Representing Women's Work and Identities in a Warplant Newspaper," *Labour/Le Travail* 44 (1999): 71-107.

[34] See the column "WAD Press Winnie" in *Hendon Howl,* vol. 3, November 1942 to vol. 14, January 1944, AWM.

[35] *Hendon Howl,* vol. 9, July 1943, 6, AWM.

[36] See Clarrie Bell, *Women in Munitions: A History of Munition Workers at Hendon Munition Factory 1940-1945* (Adelaide: Historical Society of Woodville, 1989).

workers, much of which would be viewed today as harassment, others had enjoyed the special attention and had welcomed the emphasis on their femininity.[37]

Nevertheless, the depiction of women in the *Hendon Howl* as typically feminine—a result likely in part due to the fact its main editor was male—ultimately undermined the value of women's paid work in the factory, which was seldom mentioned in the publication. Rather than counteracting the threat of women's sexuality through a portrayal of them as proficient and dedicated workers, emphasis was instead placed on how their work was an expression of patriotic femininity and reflected their devotion to marriage. For example, a poem in the May 1944 issue entitled "Hendon Factory Girls" stated that the women "stick to the job they're doing" so "when the war is over/with thankfulness and joy/ munition girls will meet again/their homing soldier boys".[38] Marriages of female workers to men both within and outside the factory were detailed in the social pages of each issue, while the column "Laments of the Lovelorn" detailed the matchmaking attempts made by workers in the factory, which supposedly led to a "matrimonial epidemic sweeping the place" by January 1944.[39] While not to diminish the sincerity of the affection that likely formed between individuals, these efforts, alongside the sexual characterisation of women, arguably reinforced the novelty of women's place in industry; they were there for some temporary frivolity, and to possibly to find a husband, but not for long-term economic gain. Indeed, male workers being "shocked" or "surprised" that women could be proficient at industrial work is widespread within women's testimonies.[40] Similar sentiments were also expressed by AWLA employers, who women recall were also often "surprised" that female workers could be successfully taught to undertake manual labour.[41] However, even moderate praise

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[37] See Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives,* 143-9.

[38] Jay-Eff, "Hendon Factory Girls," in *Hendon Howl,* vol. 17, May 1944, 4.

[39] See "Laments of the Lovelorn," in *Hendon Howl,* vol. 13, December 1943, 3; *Hendon Howl,* vol. 14, January 1944, 5.

[40] See, for example, Kay Gates in Roma Donnelly, "Women in the Australian Munitions Industry during the Second World War, 1939-1945," (PhD thesis, Swinburne University of Technology, 2000), 232. This view was also expressed at the time by the Women's Employment Board in its judgement handed down after a series of hearings with South Australia munitions workers in mid-1942, which stated it was an "amazing revelation" that women who were "yesterday working in beauty salons or who had not previously worked outside their own homes or who had come [from] retail stores or a dozen other industries" were now operating "mighty machines [with] a skill and mastery that was little short of marvellous". See Women's Employment Board Judgement (No. 9 of 1942), Noel Butlin Archives Centre [henceforth NBAC], N14/446.

[41] See, for example, Betty Humble interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 15 April 1985, AWM, S02707.

such as this was tempered by ensuring women were still situated well within a feminised discourse; AWLA workers, according to farmers, were "tireless", "diligent", "capable", "intelligent," "efficient" and had "extraordinary stamina" but were also "cheerful", "pleasant", "splendid", "eupeptic" and "steadying influences".[42] Paying attention to gendered language such as this is important because it highlights the ubiquity of traditional femininity and the potential for it to negate women's economic and personal gains; it shows that women, even if they were physically removed from a typical feminine environment, were never fully cut free from pre-war ideals of womanhood.

While the camaraderie between fellow AWLA workers was of greatest significance to AWLA members, relations with their male employers and employer's families were also an important part of their experiences. For women posted on farms, it was often the case that they lodged in the homestead, and therefore lived, slept and ate with the farmer and his family.[43] Women's oral histories indicate a mixed response to the AWLA presence in rural homes. Some recall they were "accepted" or felt like "part of the family" because they were included in family activities such as church outings, Sunday dinners, birthdays and special family occasions. Others encountered some antagonism from the wives of younger farmers, who were sceptical that AWLA workers could be trusted alone with their husbands.[44] Eileen Spencer recalled one "snobby" wife who allowed non-AWLA workers and male labourers to eat at the family dinner table, but not AWLA workers.[45] At Renmark, the wife of one farmer worked alongside AWLA workers as she did not want her husband to be alone with them.[46] While, as I discuss later, romances did occur between some AWLA workers and their employers, for most women the sense of feminine patriotism they derived from AWLA work overrode other considerations. This sentiment is strikingly embodied in a song that they composed while out at work:

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[42] See farmer comments in "Australian Women's Land Army (South Australia): Report on Farm Training," NAA, B551, 1942/110/2476; *AWLA Quarterly Journal,* vol. 1, January 1944, SLSA.

[43] Margarette Powell interviewed by Rachel Harris, 15 July 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/1; Mary White interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 1985, AWM, S02700; Win Dodsworth interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 13 April 1985, AWM, S02706; Daisy Evans interviewed by Sue Maslin, 20 March 1985, AWM, S02694.

[44] Betty Humble interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 15 April 1985, AWM, S02707; Eileen Spencer interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 2 April 1985, AWM, S02702; Flora Kearvell interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 12 April 1985, AWM, S02705; Lois Makins interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 1 April 1985, AWM, S02701; Daisy Evans interviewed by Sue Maslin, 20 March 1985, AWM, S02694; Jean Schollar interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 11 April 1985, AWM, S02704; Mary White interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 1985, AWM, S02700.

[45] Spencer, interview

[46] Dodsworth, interview.

There's many a service that we could have joined,
but this one is classed as A-one.
We know we're expected to go where directed,
and say that our job is well done.
We're working for husbands, for sweethearts, for brothers,
who answered to their country's call.
We get no promotions, so don't cause commotions,
just cheer up my girls, bless them all.[47]

Many women had a positive relationship with both the farmer and his wife if they were an older couple, viewing them as substitute parents.[48] Indeed, the *AWLA Quarterly Journal* encouraged AWLA workers to view themselves as "daughters" of their bosses, presumably to mitigate any inappropriate romantic attachments and to help foster an appropriate sense of patriotic service. In "South Australia's Land Song", which appeared in the April 1944 issue, AWLA workers described themselves as "daughters of the soil" who had "come to help [Mister Farmer] carry on your work/ We'll do our chores, and help you too, because/ It isn't right to shirk".[49] These familial dynamics did little to counteract the fact that AWLA workers were not supposed to undertake domestic chores.[50] According to Mollie Bayne, who published a summary of women's war work in 1943, the informal and unregulated structure of rural AWLA service practically invited gendered double-standards. She noted that living within a family obviously made it "difficult … to avoid doing part of the housework, which would not be expected of a man and which makes too great a burden".[51] Among AWLA workers, there was the view that household chores undermined the significance of the "male"

[47] Kearvell, interview.

[48] See Enid Theel interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 17 April 1985, AWM, S02709; Dodsworth, interview; Powell, interview.

[49] 'South Australia's Land Song," in *AWLA Quarterly Journal,* vol. 2, April 1944, 4, SLSA.

[50] Deputy Director-General of Manpower, *Australian Women's Land Army SA,* brochure, 1942, SLSA.

[51] Mollie Bayne, *Australian Women at War* (Melbourne: Research Group of the Left Book Club of Victoria, 1943), 25.

tasks they undertook. Enid Bennett, who was "looking forward to becoming a real land girl", stated it was a "shock" to find some employers regarded them as domestic workers.[52]

Some women directly appealed to the Dorothy Marshall, the state superintendent, if they were dissatisfied with their employers and often received a sympathetic response, although she only removed AWLA members from their postings if workplace conditions were clearly substandard.[53] Dorothy Marshall frequently appears in the oral histories and testimonies of AWLA workers as she often had personal contact with them and toured key AWLA locations across the state. Marshall, a schoolteacher and public servant, was in her early forties when the war began and became involved with the AWLA through her appointment as foundation secretary of the Women's War Service Council, in which she allocated seasonal work prior to the establishment of the Commonwealth AWLA in July 1942. Thereafter, Marshall's role consisted of implementing AWLA policies in South Australia and appointing and managing staff at the AWLA headquarters and hostels.[54] In British historiography, one of the main keys to understanding the function of the Women's Land Army (WLA) has been to appreciate the powerful role played by Lady Gertrude Denman as its director.[55] In the Australian context, state superintendents held less sway in regards to devising or changing AWLA policy, however Marshall held an influential position in the minds of members and reinforced the matriarchal nature of the organisation. The portrait that emerges from women's recollections of "Miss Marshall" is that of a formidable but benevolent matronly figure who expressed genuine concern for the welfare of members, even if she could not enact lasting improvements.[56] The mutual affection between Marshall and AWLA workers is evident in the letter she published in the *AWLA*

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[52] Enid Bennett quoted in Jean Scott, *Girls with Grit,* 121.

[53] See, for example, Mrs Kloss, Australian Women's Land Army memoir, SLSA, SRG, 266 TSF P398; Dodsworth, interview.

[54] Helen Jones, "Marshall, Dorothy May," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography,* vol. 15 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000).

[55] For a summary of Denman's contribution to the WLA, see Cecilia Gowdy-Wygant, *Cultivating Victory: The Women's Land Army and the Victory Garden Movement* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 108–9.

[56] See, for example, Lal Proudfoot interviewed by Sue Maslin, 28 March 1985, AWM, S02699. Lal Proudfoot took over as AWLA state superintendent in South Australia upon Marshall's resignation, until the organisation was disbanded in December 1945. Also see Jean Price interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 16 April 1985, AWM, S02708; Jean Bennier interviewed by Sue Maslin, 21 March 1985, AWM, S02695; Makins interview.

*Quarterly Journal* upon her resignation in July 1945, in which she thanked members for their many letters, telegrams and messages.[57]

Mutual fondness between female workers and female supervisors or employers was rare in munitions factories, and this was true for male supervisors as well. Contact between employers and female workers in munitions factories was commonly strained, and sometimes even paternalistic. The actions of employers and other members of supervisory staff, who were relatively unaccustomed to catering for a large female workforce, often tended to reinforce gender stereotypes of women as emotionally and naturally unsuited to work outside the domestic sphere (and especially that which consisted of noise and large groups of people). In an address at the University of Adelaide in January 1945, welfare officer Miss B.M. Bentley asserted that many foremen were supposedly finding it difficult to "get used to the temperamental difficulties [and] personal attitude women tend to adopt".[58] Mr R.J. Tilby, welfare officer at Salisbury, recalled that male managerial staff felt inadequate in dealing with women and relied heavily on female welfare officers to mediate with female workers and make employment selections.[59] Outsourcing the issues surrounding women's employment to female supervisory staff is another example of how patriarchal structure was reinforced in munitions factories, as it played into these gendered stereotypes about women's temperament which were encouraged by prominent wartime discourses regarding industrial work and femininity.

However, placing women in charge did not always prove successful, that is, quell women's uncertainty and discontent about the factory environment so it would not impact industrial productivity. At Salisbury, women were supposedly even "more inclined to want to leave a job" over disagreements with forewomen or female supervisors.[60] In fact, several strikes were initiated by women as a result of tension with female supervisors or forewomen. In October 1942, a dispute at Islington was supposedly caused by the "antagonising and arrogant attitude" of a female welfare officer towards female employees. In March 1944, tensions at another private factory arose between a female welfare officer and female union leader, the latter who was accused of "creating and exaggerating" the objections of female

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[57] Dorothy Marshall, "Au Revoir," *AWLA Quarterly Journal,* vol. 7, July 1945, 2, SLSA.

[58] Miss B. M. Bentley, "Women in Wartime Industry," address, 6 January 1945, NAA, AP262/1, 3147/1.

[59] Mr R.J. Tilby interviewed by Margaret Allen, 1977, SLSA, OH 50/18.

[60] Bentley, address, NAA, AP262/1, 3147/1.

workers.[61] Age differences were also sometimes a source of tension. According to union leader Mary Miller, strike action was threatened against several middle-aged women at Salisbury who were working on their morning and afternoon tea breaks out of a sense of patriotism for their sons fighting abroad, which angered some younger female unionists who considered their actions threatened the progress they had been making in obtaining better working conditions.[62] As Penny Summerfield asserts, the relationships between female workers and female supervisory staff had the potential to be fraught as the factory hierarchy reinforced the notion that female workers should dislike women in authority, who were often represented as being similar to the "bossy schoolmistress" stereotype.[63] However, animosity toward the factory hierarchy was also bound up in the strike action that women undertook against male workers. Melva Waterman, who was one of the 807 women at Holden who went on strike for two weeks in October/November 1943, reflected it was a rare source of unification among the factory's female workers, stating that: "what annoyed us for many years as women was the fact that there might be a man with a disability, you know, that couldn't go to war. He'd be working on the machine next to you. But he got nearly twice as much money as what you did".[64] This example clearly establishes how unequal wages rates could have a tangible effect on how male and female workers related to each other, and shows how women's discontent with the factory hierarchy could be inherent to their personal experiences of their work.

While the *Hendon Howl* suggests that female workers forged strong connections with other female workers, women's oral histories indicate that opportunities to form friendships or a strong sorority with other female workers was relatively limited. In fact, it was common policy in many factories to separate women, even though Women's Employment Board policy stipulated that they should not work in any department in which all other employees were male.[65] At Islington, some women deemed "friends" were separated by officials, who

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[61] Secretary, Federated Ironworkers Association, to Conciliation Commissioner, 22 October 1942, NBAC, N370/39; Factory Welfare Branch Report, Area No. 3, Simpson and Son, March 1944, NAA, AP262/1, 3120/2/1.

[62] Miller, interview.

[63] Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives,* 166.

[64] Melva Waterman interviewed by Neil Baron, 8 July 1994, SLSA, OH 326/27.

[65] L.G. Cole, Preliminary Report on Female Employees, 13 November 1942, NAA, D1743/23, 1942/3897; Emergency Code of Conditions Regulating the Employment of Women, circa November 1942, NAA, A1928, 682/15 PART 1.

sometimes went as far as recommending that one be transferred to another factory.[66] Mrs McIntyre, who was an examiner in the cordite section at Salisbury, described the prevailing wisdom: "[if] you got too friendly with an operator you might pass bad work [and] could cause a 'premature explosion' … troops could be killed through bad ammunition [so] we were warned not to converse with the women staff at all".[67] The flip-side to this approach was that it sometimes fostered women's closer relations with male workers, which in some cases presented issues for factory management. At Hendon, a female welfare officer was contacted on one occasion by the wife of a male worker, who complained that her "handsome husband was being ruined by the attention he could command from so many young and pretty fellow workers".[68] Overall, however, the structure of the working day in most factories meant that women only met other workers of both sexes during lunch breaks and, even then, opportunities to interact were relatively limited. Melva Waterman recalled the exceptionally short mid-shift breaks at Holden, filled by eating lunch and going to the toilet, as well as the long hours and level of concentration that her work demanded, had made it impossible to form workplace friendships.[69] Indeed, memories of recollections of friendships or social interactions are notably absent in most women's oral histories of munitions work, in which they invariably speak in the singular and rarely divert from issues such as working conditions and wages.

In the AWLA, seasonal workers rarely saw their bosses, although the Manpower Directorate did implement regulations for workplace interactions between members and farmers. Both parties were encouraged to maintain personal boundaries, loosely regulated by the proviso that farmers should provide a report on the "conduct and manners" of AWLA workers in their service, and in the case of women on individual posts, that more than one other female was to be present in the farm house at all times.[70] Sexualised treatment still occurred, although instances of sexual assault do not appear in the historical record as they

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[66] Memorandum, Staff Officer to Area Controller, 12 July 1943, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774, PART 2.

[67] Mr and Mrs McIntyre interviewed by Margaret Allen, 2 June 1977, SLSA, OH 50/4.

[68] "Making Millions of Bullets a Week: Girls Busy at Hendon Factory," *News,* 16 July 1941, 3.

[69] Waterman, interview.

[70] See circular entitled "Standing Orders for Service, Conduct, Discipline etc. of Members of the AWLA," in SLSA, SRG, 266; Evans, interview.

do in other states.[71] However, some women recall they were made to feel uncomfortable by their bosses. Those engaged in planting rubber at Waite Institute Farm, for example, were teased by their boss, who said that they were working in a "condom patch".[72] In most cases, despite some initial antagonism, the majority of AWLA workers eventually enjoyed working with male labourers. Indeed, romances are a distinctive feature of women's recollections of AWLA service, especially in Berri, where dances were held multiple times a week. As Mary White recalled: "soldiers used to come into Berri from Loveday, [no] wonder we had a marvellous social life, because there were men available!"[73] A number of women also enjoyed getting to know Loveday internees, some of whom were posted to farms as labourers, although none pursued a relationship. One recalled the pleasure of talking to a "very handsome German chap" at a local dance, while Eileen Spencer reflected that Italian internees had been "beautiful" to dance with.[74]

Romantic relationships were relatively common among AWLA workers and the men they met in the course of their postings: either farmers and/or their sons, farmhands and itinerant male workers, servicemen, or local boys they met at dances.[75] These relationships sometimes resulted in marriage; Flora Kearvell married a soldier who was stationed at Loveday, while Margaret Lemmey and her sisters were all married to men they had met through AWLA work.[76] The romances of AWLA workers were frequently detailed in Adelaide's papers, arguably to convince the public that AWLA service had not completely eroded the feminine inclinations of members. Marriage announcements were also shared regularly in the *AWLA Quarterly Journal.* The anxiety surrounding the effect of the AWLA's same-sex environment on women's sexuality, based on the premise that women living and working in close quarters would encourage lesbianism, would have played a role in the

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[71] See Hardisty, *Thanks Girls,* 25–6.

[72] Gwen Rowe, "South Australian L.A. at Work," AWM, PR85/362.

[73] Margaret Lemmey interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 11 April 1985, AWM, S02703; Mary White interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 1985, AWM, S02700. Also see Makins, interview; Dodsworth, interview; Spencer, interview; Theel, interview; Schollar, interview. Frances Harvie's diary also records romances with soldiers she met at dances in other locations around South Australia, see Frances Harvie, "Land Army Days," SLSA, PRG, 596/1.

[74] White, interview; Spencer, interview.

[75] Kearvell, interview. Also see "Two Land Girls Wed Their Bosses," *News,* 5 May 1944, 5; "Land Army Winds Up," *Mail,* 1 December 1945, 7; "Land Girls Romance: Air Wedding," *News,* 29 January 1943, 5; "More Land Romances," *News,* 4 August 1944, 5.

[76] Kearvell, interview; Lemmey interview.

promotion of traditional heterosexual femininity.[77] However, AWLA officials were also strict at enforcing that women's heterosexual relationships did not interfere with their work. AWLA matron Lal Proudfoot reflected that some members needed disciplining because they "played up" after the arrival of American servicemen in March 1942; two members were immediately sacked after it was discovered they had skipped work to spend time with their American boyfriends.[78] But the majority of women recall they were aware of the standards set by AWLA officials and did their utmost to abide with the behaviour and conduct expected of them.

Women in private factories, some of which offered more flexible working hours, had relatively greater opportunity for socialising.[79] Beth Turner, who worked at the small Adelaide firm Noblett and Forrest, which employed just 17 women, stated that the workplace friendships she made, fostered at the dances and picnics organised by employers, made her time there a "turning point" in her life.[80] In an attempt to increase worker morale in larger government factories, social events, including concerts, sporting competitions, and weekends breaks were arranged.[81] Activities were heavily centred on voluntary efforts at Hendon.[82] But at Salisbury, such measures were arguably more a last chance attempt to increase employee productivity rather than a sincere effort to foster workplace sociability; during a staff meeting about how to improve the public's opinion of munition workers, welfare officers claimed that workers were "partly to blame by their irresponsible discussion [and] over-emphasising the social activities of the factory" while outside of work.[83] Social activities organised at some factories during lunchbreaks were also clearly forms of gender maintenance. Mona Maguire recalls women were encouraged to prepare a "glory box" at Ash & Company, a small military clothing manufacturer, where salespersons from Adelaide

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[77] See Ford, "Lesbians and Loose Women," 81–104.

[78] Evans, interview; Proudfoot, interview.

[79] See Fort, "Equality of Sacrifice?", 222.

[80] Beth Turner interviewed by Neil Baron, 14 July 1994, SLSA, OH 326/28. Also see Doreen Cox interviewed by Rachel Harris, 7 November 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/21.

[81] Meeting of Industrial Welfare Officers, 16 December 1943, NAA, AP262/1, 3112/1/2.

[82] The role of women's voluntary work in wartime workplaces is discussed at length in the next chapter.

[83] Minutes of Welfare Officer's Meeting, 17 December 1942, NAA, AP262/1, 3112/1/2.

department stores were invited at lunchtimes to sell homewares.[84] At Salisbury, lunchtime talks and film screenings were scheduled on family nutrition and housing and home planning, which they believed would "conform with the principles" that the factory wished to establish.[85] The measures taken to reinforce women's domestic identities within munitions factories were not always as overt as the one in this example—as this section has shown—however, their cumulative effect was significant as they shaped women's sense of self, their interactions with other workers, and the extent to which they could conceive paid industrial employment as a viable post-war avenue.

**Women in Munitions and the "Double Burden"**

For the majority of women employed in munitions, concern about how to negotiate feminine expectations did not stop when they left the factory. Although household tasks were not as strenuous or tedious as those undertaken at work, the inflexible attitude of employers towards female absenteeism and childcare made it a significant challenge for female workers to balance their long working hours with unpaid housework. The term "double burden" can be used to describe this situation, which became particularly strenuous during the war as the government became entirely dependent on women, even those engaged in full-time work, to fix wartime deficiencies in diet, clothing and other comforts.[86] Mona Ravenscroft, a Sydney University academic, explained the concept to readers of the *Australian Women's Weekly* in 1943:

> It is often forgotten that most women, married or single, have a double burden, home and job. The traditional role of the man as breadwinner usually allows him to relax in his time off. Women either have full responsibility at home, or must help with housework, very often under the worst conditions.[87]

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[84] Mona Maguire interviewed by Margaret Allen, 30 May 1985, SLSA, OH 78/2.

[85] Minutes of Meeting of Welfare Officers, 9 March 1944, NAA, AP262/1, 3112/1/2.

[86] Penny Summerfield, "Double Burden," in Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, eds, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars* (London: Pandora Press, 1987), 235.

[87] Mona Ravenscroft, "Home Worries Keep Many Women from War Jobs," *Australian Women's Weekly,* 13 February 1943, 16.

The Commonwealth and South Australian Governments recognised that women, and especially married women, had "considerable domestic duties".[88] Nevertheless, they were reluctant to alter women's conventional roles at home. In a letter to the Director-General of Manpower in November 1942, Leslie Hunkin, South Australia's Deputy-Director General of Manpower, stated that he dealt "very sympathetically" with requests from married women to terminate employment in munition factories because he believed "serious difficulties could easily be created if we unduly interfered with domestic affairs".[89] Women's paid wartime work was described in gendered terms in popular and political discourse, in which it was cast as being in aid of "male and national needs": women temporarily "assisted" fathers, brothers and husbands/boyfriends through wartime employment much in the same way they helped with household chores.[90]

Women's experiences at Islington reveal that domesticity and munitions work were often incompatible. While married women constituted 30 per cent of new recruits at the factory between 1942–45, they accounted for 50 per cent of resignations in the same period, with a variety of reasons given, most notably pregnancy, domestic workload, caring for children or other family members, and ill health.[91] Women's resignation letters clearly demonstrate the sacrifice inherent with balancing full-time work and domestic commitments. For example, Mrs Doris Adams asked for release when her young son Malcolm developed whooping cough and she had no one else to care for him at home, asking her employer "[if] you would rather dispense with my service; would you kindly advise me [so] that I may be free to seek other employment".[92] In addition to women who were already married, 25 per cent of single women asked for release due to their impending marriage; in all cases these requests were granted.[93] It should be noted, however, that gendered

[88] Deputy-Director General to Manpower to Wallace C. Wurth, Director-General of Manpower, 23 April 1942, NAA, MP39/1, 1942/29.

[89] Deputy-Director General to Wallace C. Wurth, Director-General of Manpower, 12 November 1942, NAA, MP39/1, 1942/29.

[90] Kate Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," in Joan Beaumont, ed., *Australia's War 1939-45* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 64.

[91] "Resignations, A–Z," NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774, PARTS 1–8.

[92] Doris Adams, letter, 11 October 1943, NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774, PART 2.

[93] See women's letters in NAA, D1743/18, 1942/3774, PARTS 1–8.

expectations worked both ways in these cases; many women intimated that their future husbands were not willing for them to remain in paid work once they were married women.[94]

The "double burden" was not isolated to married women or mothers; just because the Manpower Directorate deemed that unmarried women were suitable candidates for full-time industrial work did not mean they were free from domestic responsibility. A summary from the Department of Labour and National Service shows that of the 1,174 women who registered for munitions work in Adelaide in June 1943, 53 per cent were women who had previously registered and not accepted their first placements, which were for shift work, as it had been incompatible with their domestic commitments.[95] Oral histories further reveal the everyday activities that women juggled. Mona Maguire, who worked from 7.30am-5pm six days a week at Ash & Company, was also responsible for the housework in her parent's home and her future mother-in-law's home, and was expected to work in the family's grocery store in the evening.[96] When Mona was married in 1942, her workload remained the same, proving that married and unmarried women were both shouldered with significant domestic commitments. Indeed, for some women, their domestic responsibilities discouraged them from paid work altogether. Emily Batchelor, who eventually worked in a small munitions factory at Hindmarsh, did not believe that working in industry was the best way to help the war effort or her male family members. She told the Manpower Directorate that she:

> Didn't want to do anything. 'Cause I said I use my time helping other people … through sickness and all that sort of thing, and I thought I was doing my bit for the country, by helping out other people … and I didn't see why I had to be called up.[97]

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[94] *Ibid.*

[95] Deputy-Director General of Manpower to Director General of Manpower 17 June 1943, NAA, B551, 1942/110/2906. The situation was similar in rural South Australia, where many women were released and re-registered with the Manpower Directorate owing to issues with balancing domestic work and home duties. At the Mount Gambier munitions annexe, married women who absented from work because of domestic commitments were the first to be laid off in December 1943. See "Munitions Factories: Establishment in Country Towns, Clare, Port Pirie, Mt. Gambier," in NAA, MP39/1, 1942/506.

[96] Maguire, interview.

[97] Emily Eileen Batchelor interviewed by Susan Marsden, 12 October 1979, SLSA, OH 25/3.

When Emily began munitions work in 1942, she struggled to balance her home duties with long shifts at the factory. This struggle was exacerbated by her employer, who docked her pay when she took extended lunch breaks or left work early to do her grocery shopping. But Emily argued that she had little choice; her shift started before the local shops opened at 9am and did not finish until they had closed at 5pm.[98] Government restrictions on retail trading hours was a significant inconvenience for women in munitions, as shops were prevented from altering their hours, while factories were unwilling to alter working hours due to the impact on production. Employers were aware that a five-and-half day working week left no time for shopping. At Islington, employees unanimously supported a five-day week proposal that was put forth in September 1943, but it was never implemented.[99] Munitions Welfare Officers also passed a motion in April 1943 that acknowledged the "urgent need for making shopping and allied facilities available to day workers [and that] steps be taken to implement at the earliest possible moment … regarding alteration of shopping hours".[100] The fact that employers made no attempt to restructure the working day highlighted their apparent incapacity to think justly about the impact of a 51-hour week on women's ability to undertake basic domestic duties. Indeed, for some women it became a source of resentment. Mrs McIntyre, who worked at Salisbury, recalled that several women "felt they'd been made use of" because they had been "willing to work and perhaps with a great lot of inconvenience for some workers, [when] it took them a long time to get to work, and still had to do household chores".[101]

In April 1943, the average rate of absenteeism in South Australian munition factories was seven per cent for men and 13 per cent for women.[102] Rates at Salisbury were higher than average (8.1 per cent for men and 14.6 per cent for women), which was largely attributable to its isolated location and increased health risks associated with handling toxic chemicals.[103] While illness accounted for most cases at Hendon and Islington, "family ties

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[98] *Ibid.*

[99] Absentee Report, 25 September 1943, NAA, D1743, 1943/3808.

[100] Suggested Resolution for Combined Meeting of Welfare Officers, 27 April 1943, NAA, AP262/1, 3112/1/3.

[101] Mr and Mrs McIntyre interviewed by Margaret Allen, 2 June 1977, SLSA, OH 50/4.

[102] Carol Fort, "Equality of Sacrifice?", 34.

[103] *Ibid.*

and worries", including shopping, housework, husbands home on leave, sick children and visiting parents, were the next largest causes.[104] At some factories, attempts were made to "shame" workers with high absentee rates. At Hendon, employee absentee rates were displayed on a board in the factory for everyone to see.[105] At another factory, industrial unrest was threatened when its manager introduced a policy which stipulated that workers would be penalised if they were unable to produce a medical certificate for any unexplained absences.[106]

Factory employers accentuated certain causes of female absenteeism, especially among single women, in an attempt to prove the fickle nature of female employees, who, in the minds of many employers and politicians, were unreliable and physically incapable of enduring the same strain as men and could not produce the same output.[107] At Islington it was suggested by employers that absenteeism was endemic to female workers, because it was supposedly:

> less prevalent among more highly paid employees, probably because they have more definitive responsibilities, and also because they naturally comprise the more highly skilled and earnest workers … employees who regard themselves as being easily replaceable are more prone to stay away from work without sound reason.[108]

Islington welfare officers were ordered to make "special inquiries" to ensure the domestic arrangements of prospective female employees would not interfere with their work.[109] However, absenteeism remained high among married workers at Islington and elsewhere, especially at Finsbury, where women were on average were ten years older than women in

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[104] Helen Crisp, "Women in Munitions," *Australian Quarterly* 3 (1941): 75; Survey of Causes of Absenteeism, NAA, D1743, 1943/3808.

[105] Minutes of Welfare Officers' Meeting, 2 June 1943, NAA, AP262/1, 3112/1/2.

[106]"Trouble Over Absenteeism," *Advertiser,* 19 February 1943, 5.

[107] See Norman Makin's comments in "Equal Pay for Women in Government Factories," *Advertiser,* 30 July 1942, 3, and Mr F.T. Perry, President of the Metal Industries Association of South Australia, in "Wasted Working Hours," *News,* 17 September 1942, 3.

[108] Survey of Causes of Absenteeism, August–December 1942, NAA, D1743, 1943/3808.

[109] Islington Absentee Report, 1 June 1943–12 August 1943, NAA, D1743/18, 1943/3815.

other factories and accordingly a higher proportion were married.[110] According to Salisbury welfare officer Miss B.M. Bentley, while there was a "certain amount of glamour" attached to munitions work in the press, for women themselves it often meant "long hours … difficulties in transport, the problem of running a home and working at the same time, and often the need of a complete reorganisation of her social life".[111] Bentley also noted that, in addition to a higher rate of illness and fatigue among women workers, the fact supposedly remained that a "full pay envelope is more important to a married man with a family to keep than to a woman whose husband is also working".[112]

A survey at Richards industries revealed only 2 per cent of female absenteeism was due to "home ties". However, this figure is misleading, as the survey also revealed that 29 per cent of women had "no recorded reason" for their absences, which does not rule out the possibility that these women were also staying away for domestic reasons.[113] However, the author of the survey report lists "soldiers on leave" as a major reason for female absenteeism, despite accounting for less than 1 per cent of cases and argues, without evidential basis, that a substantial portion of the "no record" cases could be attributed to this cause.[114] The author also contends that several female workers planned to absent themselves from work in the near future when their boyfriends were home on leave, citing one woman's comment that spending time with her boyfriend was "just as important as work [because] giving the boys a good time on leave helps army morale".[115] The testimony provided by Richards employees as part of the WEB hearings between July and November 1942 painted a different picture. Irene Quigley, for example, stated she had applied for day work at the factory in order to *minimise* the impact of her domestic commitments on production (she did not like her 16 year-old daughter coming home from school by herself), but the foreman in her section

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[110] Finsbury Ammunition Factory Absenteeism Report, 28 June 1942–1 April 1944, NAA, AP262/1, 3000/05/2. For absenteeism rates at Hendon and an overview of absenteeism in all South Australian factories, as well as nationwide, see Absenteeism in Government Factories 1942–43, circa June 1943, NAA, AP262/1, 3000/05/2.

[111] Bentley, address.

[112] *Ibid.*

[113] Part III: Interviews with Absentees, NAA, B3533, 1615/3/7.

[114] Amalgamated Wireless (A'Asia) Ltd. and Richards Industries (Adelaide) Absenteeism Enquiry, Part III: Interviews with Absentees, circa May 1942, NAA, B3533, 1615/3/7.

[115] *Ibid.*

refused to move her to a department that rostered all-day shifts.[116] The struggle of domestic commitments was especially hard for women at Salisbury, where the extra accommodation provided for war workers and their families was acutely substandard. The Cabin Homes built by the State Government for munition workers at Salisbury were a source of constant complaint by their inhabitants, who struggled to live in such an isolated location without access to adequate health and childcare facilities.[117] The inherently gendered dimensions of this issue were encapsulated in a letter of complaint of one resident, Irene Beaton, who contended "until such time that either mothers hold more important positions in the country or more men are forced to manage and mind the families, it will not be realised the magnitude of such a task".[118]

Although most female munition workers had some form of domestic responsibility, inaction over childcare meant full-time industrial employment was hardest for mothers. The Commonwealth Government was responsible for wartime childcare provisions. Unlike in the United Kingdom, in-factory creches was deemed unnecessary given the supposedly small number of mothers in munitions work. In 1943, the Commonwealth Government introduced an "experimental" creche scheme, consisting of a £40,000 childcare subsidy to be allocated nationally between 1943-46 to extend childcare facilities run by voluntary organisations.[119] Only ten per cent of married women were employed in all industries in South Australia in 1943, but this still equated to a considerable number of mothers in munitions.[120] Of the 1,102 women employed at Salisbury in May 1942, 122 had children under 16 years, and 43 had children under 6 years of age.[121] Factories closer to Adelaide on average had more working mothers; one private factory near the city, for example, had 291

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[116] Irene Quigley, testimony before the Women's Employment Board, 16 September 1942, NBAC, N14/445.

[117] See letters from residents in "Salisbury Temporary Housing Scheme for War Workers: Management and Tenancy," NAA, A877, CL20228, Part 1.

[118] Irene Beaton, letter, 5 September 1945, NAA, A877, CL20028, Part 1.

[119] Davis, "Minding Children or Minding Machines," 97.

[120] "South Australia," in *Supplementary Civilian Register* (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1943), 8. By 1945, the total number of married women in South Australian industry was 22,411, see "Married Women Aid Industry Here," *News,* 8 September 1945, 3.

[121] Industrial Welfare Division, Report on Visit to Adelaide, 20-27 May 1942, NAA, B3533, 1233/5/4.

women employed as of February 1943, who had 452 children between them.[122] While female absenteeism came under intense public and political scrutiny, childcare was regarded as a "woman's issue" that did not need government support despite its significant impact on production, demonstrating the gendered inequality that lay at the core of women's involvement in munitions work. South Australian politicians strongly resisted the employment of mothers in industry, especially in the early stages of the war, when it was anticipated that creches for the children of war workers would not be required.[123] But even in October 1942, when Adelaide's factories were entering their peak of production, the Director-General of Manpower instructed Leslie Hunkin not to consider the extension of childcare facilities, deciding that women with young children who "come forward solely for patriotic motives should be discouraged as much as possible".[124]

The prospect of establishing childcare centres for factory workers was also met with resistance by certain sections of the community, including some women's organisations and religious groups. Joan Watson, Secretary of the South Australian Catholic Guild for Social Studies, wrote to Leslie Hunkin in July 1942, stating that while it "may be thought" childcare centres and creches could help mothers in industry, "we are of the opinion that this is not the case", arguing that "[no] creche or nursery school, however expertly conducted, can replace the environment of the home and the mother's attention".[125] Nancy Grant-Allen, head of the South Australian branch of the Housewives Association, came under scrutiny for her supposedly "narrow, short-sighted, and parochial" comments about child delinquency and mothers in munitions at the 1943 Conference of the Federated Association of Australian Housewives, after which W.H. Trehy, organiser of the Federated Ironworkers Association (FIA), wrote to the *News* to say that if "Miss Grant-Allen had seen young children sitting in the gutters" it only proves further that the Commonwealth Government should establish

[122] "Day Nurseries Aim of Child Committee," *News,* 3 February 1943, 5.

[123] "No Call Here Yet for Munition Work Creches," *News,* 3 April 1941, 10.

[124] Director-General of Manpower to Deputy-Director General of Manpower, 9 October 1942, NAA, B551, 1942/110/2033. For more on the national approach to the employment of mothers see, "Employment of Married Women with Children (Principles)," NAA, B551, 42/16/2562.

[125] Joan Watson, Catholic Guild for Social Studies, to Director-General of Manpower, 10 July 1942, NAA, B551, 1942/110/2033.

more facilities "so the children whose mothers are helping in this war against Fascism may be adequately provided for".[126]

The South Australian Childcare Committee, formed in 1942, comprising of the Kindergarten Union, Mothers and Babies Health Association, and Women's War Service Council, also resisted the establishment of additional childcare centres. It argued that the call up of mothers into industry should be regarded as a "last resort" and that efforts should centre on freeing more single women in non-essential occupations for munitions work, thus negating the imperative behind the need for more creches. However, by November 1942 the situation had become so urgent that the Committee decided to support the expansion of existing day nurseries.[127] However, due to South Australia's small population, the Kindergarten Union received only £4,831 of the Commonwealth Government's £40,000 subsidy, which had to be spread across Adelaide's nine existing childcare centres; four in the city, and one each in North Adelaide, Bowden, Parkside, Hackney and Kensington.[128] Attempts to establish additional centres were continually hampered by insufficient funding and ongoing struggles to recruit voluntary staff. In June 1943, two kindergartens were opened especially for the children of munition workers—the Lavis Kindergarten on Wright Street and the Keith Sheridan Kindergarten on Cairns Street—both funded through the Australian Association for Pre-School Development.[129]

Despite the obvious need, only 50 extra childcare places were made available in Adelaide between 1943 and 1945.[130] In addition to the lack of government funding, many mothers were unable to make use of them because of the relatively expensive fees that kindergartens charged and the fact that daytime schemes were of little use to the majority of women who worked in government factories that refused to introduce 9am-4pm shifts. Many women therefore secured childcare any way they could. Mary Miller recalls at Salisbury that

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[126] W.M. Trehy, to The Editor of the *News,* 24 November 1943, in NBAC, E170/48/13.

[127] Memorandum, Childcare Joint Committee, War Service Council, 2 June 1942, and Memorandum, Childcare Joint Committee to Premier, 14 November 1942, in NAA, B551, 42/16/2562.

[128] Department of Labour and National Service, Localities Served by Existing Pre-School Child Organisations in Australia, circa September 1943, NAA, B551, 42/16/2562; Davis, "Minding Machines," 98.

[129] Government of South Australia, Minister of Health, Quarterly Bulletin: Health Notes for South Australia, January 1945, NAA, AP262/1, 3000/05/6; "Mother Works in Munitions," *News,* 16 November 1942, 5; Helen Jones, *In Her Own Name: Women in South Australian History* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), 295.

[130] Davis, "Minding Children," 97.

the majority of women relied on their mothers and grandmothers.[131] For those without family, finding childcare was more difficult. Mrs Klingberg, who worked at Richards Industries, left her children with her neighbours in the evenings.[132] Anna Morrison, who worked as a physiotherapist during the war, recalls that local mothers in her area, some of whom worked in munitions, took a more industrious and organised approach and established a community childcare centre at a hall in Fullarton, where they rostered themselves on to work when they could. This meant they were able to provide childcare themselves five days a week. As she noted, "we didn't have childcare centres … there was no thought of not looking after your own children when they were young".[133]

The idea persisted throughout the war that women were "giving up" or "sacrificing" their children if they placed them in childcare while they were at work. The notion that working mothers would be the downfall of society was a common theme in press reports on female employment in munition factories. A feature entitled "Our Eight-Hour Orphans", published in the *Mail* in December 1942, claimed some children were living a "waif-life existence [in] the hours when their mothers are on war employment … the small victims of the general war upheaval".[134] The view of welfare officer Miss B. M. Bentley reflected these fears. She alleged in her address that the employment of mothers had led to a "decrease in maternal care" as "the mother who tended to be careless and neglect her children now feels she does it with Government sanction, because she is doing a war job".[135] At the Women's Conference of the FIA in September 1943, it was likewise argued that "no mother can work effectively if she is worrying about the welfare of her children".[136] It is thus not surprising that many women simply offered their resignation when they could not find suitable childcare. This avenue was strongly encouraged by employers, who were directed by the

[131] Mary Miller interviewed by Margaret Allen, 23 January 1984 and 5 and 18 June 1986, SLSA, OH 78/1.

[132] Mrs Klingberg, Mrs Goodes, Mrs Manuel and Mrs Tozer interviewed by Margaret Allen, January 1984, SLSA, OH 78/5.

[133] Anna Morrison interviewed by Rachel Harris, 10 July 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/3.

[134] "Our Eight Hour Orphans," *Mail,* 26 December 1942, 5. Also see "Factory 'No Place for Mothers,'" *News,* 24 July 1942, 6; "Some Children Neglected: Mothers' War Jobs," *News,* 2 July 1942, 5.

[135] Bentley, address.

[136] Report on Women's Conference of Amalgamated Ironworkers and Munition Workers Union, 12 September 1943, NBAC, E170/48/14.

Commonwealth Government to release mothers before other women at war's end.[137] Considering the gendered prejudice and sexual devaluation that women experienced both in and outside the factory, the lack of public recognition their work received, and exhaustion from long hours and poor working conditions, it was only logical that female absenteeism was a major issue.

**Social Life in the AWLA**

While the economic conditions of the AWLA left much to be desired, women's testimonies reveal they nevertheless relished in the social side of their service. For many, the AWLA was their first and only experience of living away from a family unit and working outside of a traditional female setting such as an office, shop, factory or household. It was the only wartime occupation that allowed women to remain on the home front (unlike servicewomen, who were often posted interstate and, rarely, overseas) and also offered the opportunity to live, work and socialise in a largely female environment.[138] Indeed, anxiety about the disreputable effect of a masculine workplace, especially in the case of women from middle and upper-class families, was sometimes a main factor in their decision to join the AWLA. Kath Vivan and Win Dodsworth recall that their fathers had disapproved of them working in close proximity with other males, either in munitions or the auxiliary services, and thus viewed the AWLA as a suitable way to contribute to the war effort.[139]

In contrast to munition workers, many of whom abided their mobilisation with limited enthusiasm, AWLA members embraced the opportunities that land work offered. Many from the city had never before experienced outdoor employment and found that the

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[137] "Employment of Married Women with Children (Principles)," NAA, B551, 42/16/2562.

[138] While many female munition workers stayed in war worker accommodation, the nature of shift work meant metropolitan hostels, located on Hindley Street and East Terrace in the city, as well as Woodville, Finsbury and Salisbury, were organised on a rotational basis, meaning women were rarely in each other's company. The archival record reveals several instances of antagonism between female lodgers and hostel welfare officers and landlords. The YWCA hostel in Hindley Street, for example, evicted 11 women when they asked if they could make their breakfast at 6am, due to the fact their shifts had changed at Salisbury. No provision was made for single women in the State Government's War Workers Housing Scheme, which was restricted to working men and their families. See Susan Marsden, "Housing the Workers," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 16 (1998): 60–9; Carol Fort, "Equality of Sacrifice?", 227. Female munition workers also received criticism when lodging in private or rented homes. Complaints regarding the "objectionable types of tenants" that were lodging at cottages rented in Gilbert Street, Adelaide, were received from a neighbour who argued that the cottages were "not meant for that class". See letter, 10 March 1941, Adelaide Benevolent and Strangers Friend Society Records, SLSA, SRG, 573/44/1.

[139] Kath Vivian interviewed by Rachel Harris, 21 November 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/23; Win Dodsworth interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 13 April 1985, AWM, S02706.

chance to work so far from home to be their favourite aspect of AWLA service.[140] The sense of independence it offered made some women reluctant to return to Adelaide. Frances Harvie recorded in her diary the momentous personal change that her AWLA service had brought about:

> The end of the second phase of my life. Found the city to be oppressive. Couldn't get used to the idea that there would be no more open spaces to go back to. Oh, to live always on the land! Oh, to marry a farmer![141]

That Frances believed the only way for her to stay on the land would be through marriage is telling of the gendered barriers that existed in regard to the suitability of land work for women outside of its temporary wartime context. Indeed, fellow AWLA worker Lois Makins asserted that she was only able to continue with rural labour because she married a market gardener.[142] But her situation was an exception; most women interviewed by Hardisty who married men they had met through AWLA work were disappointed when they were ushered back into domestic roles, and some moved back to the city so their husbands could find stable post-war employment. Nevertheless, nearly all the women asserted that their AWLA service changed their outlook and life experience. Jean Bennier reflected that the "very fact of having that free, open life" largely counteracted the economic deficiencies.[143] Freedom from constraints of family and home life also instilled younger workers with a newfound sense of maturity. Daisy Evans believed the AWLA had been "special" for so many members because it allowed them to "stand on [their] own two feet".[144] Jean Price reflected this sentiment, noting that AWLA service "broadened my outlook on life [as] I went to places

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[140] White, interview; Spencer, interview; Lemmey, interview; Humble, interview; Price, interview.

[141] Frances Harvie, "Land Army Days," 1943–45, SLSA, PRG, 596/2.

[142] Makins, interview.

[143] Bennier interview. Also see Lemmey, interview; Humble, interview.

[144] Evans, interview.

that I may not have seen [otherwise] … [an]d gave me an opportunity to find out how other people lived and just what sort of different types of work there is to be done".[145]

Perhaps the most striking feature of women's recollections of seasonal AWLA service is their emphasis on friendship. The chance to live and work in such close proximity generated a sense of camaraderie unique to their wartime role, the depth of which is alone evident in the frequent divergence women take from questions about working conditions and wages in order to share memorable anecdotes, amusing conversations and personal reflections. The majority of women expressed that the "best part" of AWLA service was being with and meeting other women from such a variety of social backgrounds and the sense of equality and comradeship they quickly developed.[146] In fact, women recall they had rarely questioned each other about their backgrounds, even in the case of AWLA workers with German descent. As Mary White noted, the ability of women to be more "discreet" about politics and religion meant there was "never any resentment … you judged everybody as you found them [and] you took your friends from anywhere".[147] This sentiment was expressed by workers in a song they often recited:

> The Land Army girls are happy, the Land Army girls are free,
> The Land Army girls are happy when out upon the spree,
> They never never quarrel, they never disagree,
> Three loud cheers for the Land Army and three for liberty.[148]

While it is highly improbable that AWLA relations were as perfect as these lines imply — some disagreements between workers are featured throughout women's testimonies—they clearly represent the unique social dynamics of AWLA service, made even more visible when compared to women in munitions. Flora Kearvell recalled she had "cried and cried" on her last day of work because "we were parting [from each other] … we'd become such good friends [so] it was a very sad day". She had not reacted to her departure from munitions

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[145] Price, interview.

[146] See, for example, Madge Hastings interviewed by Sue Maslin, AWM, S02696; Makins, interview; Spencer, interview; Lemmey, interview; White, interview.

[147] White, interview.

[148] Schollar, interview.

in the same manner, having not had the opportunity to form close workplace friendships.[149] In contrast, the AWLA gave women the opportunity to socialise during working hours; being far out in fields and paddocks meant their bosses could not overhear or stop their conversations, which, as Jean Bennier recalled, meant they were "able to have more fun and get to know people".[150] These friendships were not just frivolous; they helped women to cope with the exhausting tasks they encountered and many supplemented each other's wages if they lost hours of work due to sickness or other reasons. Eileen Spencer reflected that AWLA work felt significantly more challenging alone, noting, in summary of her service, that "we enjoyed each other's company. It was hot and cold, and you were dirty, but you sort of accepted it and every second was a giggle, always".[151]

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have examined how femininity shaped the representations and experiences of women employed in South Australia's munitions industry and the Australian Women's Land Army. In munitions factories, traditional gendered stereotypes were reinforced by a patriarchal environment that discouraged women to view themselves as competent industrial workers. At Hendon, the publication of the *Hendon Howl* accentuated the sex appeal and desirability of female workers, casting munitions employment much like a dating opportunity; a stepping stone to meeting a future husband and raising a family, rather than a chance to form a new sense of economic identity away from the confines of domesticity. In reality, antagonism between male and female workers was common and in the case of government factories, little effort was made to encourage socialising between workers. The "double burden" carried by many women, but especially married women and mothers, meant domestic commitments were not left at home. Lack of childcare facilities and the inflexible attitude of employers and Commonwealth Government towards female absenteeism and shopping hours meant many women, forced to choose between keeping house or keeping long hours of shift work, found that resigning was the only way to reconcile their situation. Mothers who stayed in work thus had to be resourceful. Government action on childcare led to the domestication of women's work at a much broader level, in that the involvement of

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[149] Kearvell interview.

[150] Bennier interview.

[151] Spencer, interview. This accords with Alison's Woodeson's conclusion in the British context that the camaraderie between Land Army workers mitigated many of its economic hardships, see Alison Woodeson, "'Going Back to the Land': Rhetoric and Reality in Women's Land Army Memories," *Oral History* 21, no. 2 (1993): 65–71.

mothers in the war effort was facilitated by the domesticity of many other women: the family and friends who cared for their children.

Turning attention to rural areas, the unique workplace dynamics of the AWLA and the camaraderie that formed between workers meant that many women found their wartime experiences, albeit as they understood them to be temporary, as personally liberating. That women's involvement in hard, manual labour was incompatible with, or posed a threat, to desirable femininity and women's domestic aptitude was a notion that persisted throughout the war. Rural life was romanticised by AWLA officials, while the romances of AWLA workers were emphasised in the press and the *AWLA Quarterly Journal* to signify that the distinctive social opportunities offered by a free, open air life in the country would eventually be tamed by pre-war conventions. Indeed, the notion of patriotic femininity—that women should be willing to make personal sacrifices without complaint on the understanding that such sacrifice would be temporary—defined their involvement in both wartime industries. As the next chapter will demonstrate, in addition to balancing paid work and domestic duties, voluntary work was also a major feature of wartime workplaces.

## Chapter Three

## "Armed with Glamour and Collection Tins": Femininity and Wartime Voluntary Work*

In August 1945, Adelaide's daily paper, the *Advertiser,* published a review of women's wartime work that, somewhat surprisingly, made no mention of those employed in South Australia's vast wartime industries. Instead, six of the eight categories of work it recounted were of a voluntary nature.[1] In this chapter, I explore the place of voluntary work in women's lives in South Australia during World War II, first, by establishing the scope of women's voluntary activities, and second, by examining the intersection between volunteering and paid employment. I consider how and to what extent the social and economic opportunities that arose from women's voluntary work were obscured by the notion that it functioned to ease male anxieties about the war's effect on gender norms, particularly as many activities often mobilised and reinforced an ideal femininity based on maternal and domestic ideology, as well as women's physical attractiveness and sexuality. Rather than providing a systematic examination of individual organisations, I will illuminate the gendered aspects of women's voluntary work common across the wide spectrum of wartime voluntarism that existed in South Australia.

Although voluntary work was a key part of the home front experience for many Australian women, it has received limited attention in social and national histories of World War II, which generally place far more emphasis on paid work.[2] Indeed, in her short 1970s feminist interpretation, Carmel Shute dismissed the potential for future research in the area

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[1] "S.A. Women's Great War Effort Reviewed," *Advertiser*, 15 August 1945, 3.

[2] This includes Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945,* 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009); Michael McKernan, *All In! Australia During the Second World War* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1983); Marilyn Lake and Joy Damousi, eds, *Gender and War* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995). Voluntary work is briefly mentioned in Sara Buttsworth, "Women Colouring the Wartime Landscape," in Jenny Gregory ed., *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1996), 56–70. International studies of the World War II home front also largely omit reference to voluntary work, however some key works focusing on women's volunteering include James Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership and the Second World War: Continuities of Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Maggie Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: The Women's Institute as a Social Movement* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2015); Maggie Andrews and Janis Lomas, eds, *The Home Front in Britain: Images, Myths and Forgotten Experiences Since 1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); James H. Madison, *Slinging Doughnuts for the Boys: An American Woman in World War II* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); D'Ann Campbell "Volunteer, Worker or Housewife?" in D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 63–100.

of women's wartime voluntary work, arguing that it depreciated women's paid wartime labour, and thus, according to the author, eradicated any lasting social and economic benefits for working-class women in wartime industries.[3] Joy Damousi, Joan Beaumont and Bruce Scates, in examining female voluntary work in Australia during World War I, have suggested the prevalence of masculinist definitions of "war work" have overshadowed the historical value and substantial legacy of wartime voluntary efforts, which have been typically understood as "retrogressive" and feminine.[4]

Currently, Melanie Oppenheimer's *All Work, No Pay* is the only study that specifically considers voluntary work in Australia during both world wars.[5] Indeed, Oppenheimer has pioneered the study of wartime voluntary work in Australia, and since completing her doctoral thesis in 1997, has largely made this field her own.[6] I build on her research, particularly in regards to the connections she has made between voluntary work and labour history, as covered in a *Labour History* special issue in 2001, and her recommendation for further research into the type of wartime volunteering undertaken in workplaces and the public sector.[7] I contend that voluntarism and working class industrial

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[3] Carmel Shute, "From Balaclavas to Bayonets: Women's Voluntary Work, 1939–41," in Elizabeth Windschuttle ed., *Women, Class, and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia* (Melbourne: Fontana Books, 1980), 353–87.

[4] Joan Beaumont, "Whatever Happened to Patriotic Women, 1914–1918?" *Australian Historical Studies* 31, no. 115 (2000): 273–86; Joy Damousi, "Marching to Different Drums: Women's Mobilisations 1914–1939," in Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton, eds, *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation,* (Sydney: Harcourt, 1992), 350–73; Bruce Scates, "The Unknown Sock Knitter: Voluntary Work, Emotional Labour, Bereavement and the Great War," *Labour History* 81 (2001): 24–49.

[5] Melanie Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay: Australian Civilian Volunteers in War* (Walcha, NSW: Ohio Productions, 2002).

[6] See Melanie Oppenheimer, "Control of Wartime Patriotic Funds in Australia: The National Security (Patriotic Funds) Regulations, 1940–1953," *War & Society* 18, no. 1 (2000): 71–90; Melanie Oppenheimer, "Controlling Civilian Volunteering: Canada and Australia during the Second World War," *War & Society* 22, no. 2 (2004): 27–50; Melanie Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity: 100 Years of Australian Red Cross, 1914–2014* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2014); Melanie Oppenheimer, "Working for the Duration? Aspects of Voluntary Work in Queensland during World War II," *Queensland Review* 3 (1996): 73–82; Melanie Oppenheimer, *Red Cross VADs: A History of the VAD Movement in New South Wales* (Walcha, NSW: Ohio Productions, 1999). For World War I see Melanie Oppenheimer, "Opportunities to Engage: The Red Cross and Australian Women's Global War Work," in Kate Ariotti and James Bennett, eds, *Australians and the First World War: Local-Global Connections and Contexts* (Melbourne: Palgrave, 2017), 85–101; Melanie Oppenheimer, "Red Crossing for War: Responses of Imperial Feminism and the Australian Red Cross during the Great War," in Michael Walsh and Andrekos Varnava, eds, *Australia and the Great War: Identity, Memory and Mythology* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2016), 25–39; Melanie Oppenheimer, 'Shaping the Legend: The Role of the Australian Red Cross and Anzac," *Labour History* 106 (2014): 123–42.

[7] Melanie Oppenheimer, "'We All Did Voluntary Work of Some Kind': Voluntary Work and Labour History," *Labour History* 81 (2001): 1–11; Melanie Oppenheimer, "Voluntary Work and Labour History," *Labour*

labour were not mutually exclusive activities, but rather that voluntary efforts and patriotic functions—ranging from the stereotypical female pursuits of knitting and baking to "glamorous" fundraising events such as beauty pageants and pin-up competitions—were an integral part of wartime workplaces. Accordingly, I situate voluntary work as a crucial site of study for understanding wartime gender relations, particularly as it shaped a wartime model of desirable femininity.

My work also adds to the three existing local studies on wartime voluntary work in South Australia, namely Robert Thornton's survey of the Cheer Up Society, Melissa Barratt's honours thesis on women's voluntary work in South Australia during both world wars, and Peter Stanley's research on voluntary efforts in Whyalla during World War II.[8] While these works provide useful information on voluntary activities across South Australia during World War II—indeed, Barratt draws on gendered analysis by arguing that voluntary work reinforced women's status as "servants of domestic ideology"—their short length and focus on both wars means there is significant scope for me to develop, and to some extent contest, their findings. Christeen Schoepf is undertaking the only detailed study of the Cheer Up Society, but with a focus on its activities in World War I. Her use of oral histories to add detail to the little documentary evidence that remains about the Society during this period means she provides a useful model for my consideration of its function during World War II.[9]

### Establishing the Scope of Wartime Voluntary Work

According to Melanie Oppenheimer, South Australia makes an interesting case study for wartime voluntary work because of the high membership rates that voluntary organisations attracted, and the stringent control of these organisations by the State Government via the *Charitable Purposes Act 1939*, which sought to increase financial productivity as well as

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*History* 74 (1998): 1–9; Also see Joanne Scott, "Voluntary Work as Work? Some Implications for Labour History," *Labour History* 74 (1998): 10–20.

[8] Melissa Barratt, "For the Boys: Women's Voluntary Work in South Australia During Two World Wars," (B.A. Hons thesis, University of Adelaide, 1995); Peter Stanley, "'Don't Let Whyalla Down': The Voluntary Effort in Whyalla, 1939–1945," (Litt. B thesis, Australian National University, 1984); Robert Thornton, "Practical Patriots: The Work of the Cheer Up Society in South Australia, 1914–1964," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 13 (1985): 45–56.

[9] Christeen Schoepf, "Oral History and Object Biography as Companion Methodologies in Researching the Cheer Up Society of the First World War South Australia," *Oral History Association of Australia* 35 (2013): 68–76.

patriotic sentiment and social cohesion within and among different organisations.[10] A gendered analysis gives opportunity to further understand this unique situation, particularly in regards to how voluntary work was presented to and perceived by the state's women. In this chapter, I explore whether South Australian organisations made a distinct effort to appeal to women's femininity and whether women viewed their involvement in voluntary activities as an expression of feminine patriotism.

There were three main ways women could engage in voluntary activities: by donating, organising and participating.[11] This could be done on an unstructured or individual basis, through membership of a voluntary organisation or wartime patriotic fund, or through fundraising activities that were part of wartime workplaces. I am concerned with voluntary organisations and activities that were established or undertaken specifically as a result of the war and that required women's ongoing commitment: that is, activities which necessitated gendered labour, rather than fundraising schemes that involved minimal time and energy, such as investment in government-administered war loans.[12] The vast majority of wartime voluntary work in South Australia centred on the welfare of servicemen, providing them with entertainment, material comforts, nursing and healthcare, meals and temporary accommodation. The main exception were civil defence societies, which, as I discuss in the last section of this chapter, largely failed to attract an adequate number of volunteers and accordingly were not greeted with the same public commendation as other voluntary organisations.

The capacity of voluntary work to have shaped public understandings of wartime femininity should not be underestimated. More than 500 patriotic organisations operated across South Australia during World War II.[13] The largest organisation was the Red Cross, which in June 1943 had approximately 35,000 female members across 588 local branches.[14] This equated to 11 per cent of South Australia's female population; notably above the

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[10] Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay,* 137.

[11] Schoepf, "Oral History and Object Biography," 88.

[12] For an overview of war loan schemes see Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay,* 132–44.

[13] A definitive list of these organisations does not exist, although one was compiled of the organisations remaining in 1947. See "Patriotic Funds (Winding Up) South Australia Branch," National Archives of Australia [henceforth NAA] A2421, G1272/1/S. Also see Melanie Oppenheimer, "Volunteers in Action: Voluntary Work in Australia, 1939–1945," (PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1997), 406.

[14] Australian Red Cross Society [henceforth ARCS], South Australian Division, Annual Report, 30 June 1942, 15–16, State Library of South Australia [henceforth SLSA].

national average Red Cross membership of 8.5 per cent.[15] This trend can be in part attributed to the overwhelming success of Red Cross recruitment drives in South Australia. The Fighting Forces Comfort Fund (FFCF), known nationally as the Australian Comforts Fund, had 500 local branches and 30,000 female members in 1942 (some of whom would have likely also been members of the Red Cross).[16]

The Women's Voluntary National Register (WVNR) also provides an idea of the scale of voluntary work undertaken by women in South Australia. Established by the Commonwealth Government in February 1939, after insistent campaigning by women's organisations in Victoria and New South Wales, the WVNR, according to the *Advertiser,* was met with "keen interest" by South Australian women.[17] The WVNR's purpose was twofold. It gave centralised representation to South Australia's 65 existing women's voluntary organisations and provided individual women with the opportunity to register interest in undertaking voluntary activities. By December 1939, the WVNR had registered 3,826 South Australian women, which rose to 8,780 by March 1942 and 13,476 by June 1943.[18] Exactly how many women actually undertook voluntary activities through the WVNR is uncertain, although a circular from September 1942 indicates that 6,132 women had been placed in voluntary positions since April 1939.[19] In any case, these numbers clearly attest to women's strong support of voluntary work. Indeed, until the opening of Hendon Ammunition Factory in December 1940, it would have been the main avenue open to those who wanted to contribute to the war effort.

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[15] Oppenheimer, "Volunteers in Action," 269–70.

[16] Fighting Forces Comfort Fund, South Australian Division of the Australian Comforts Fund, pamphlet, 1942, SLSA. These high membership rates far eclipse the number of women employed in any one paid wartime industry in South Australia, which correlates with Harold Smith's conclusion in the British context that traditional gender roles were strengthened in World War II, rather than undermined. See Harold L. Smith, *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 194–5, 209–10.

[17] "Keen Interest in Women's Register: Desire To Do Their Bit," *Advertiser,* 2 May 1939, 19; "Keen Interest in Women's Register," *Advertiser,* 10 May 1939, 8; "Enthusiasm for Register: Women Preparing Applications," *Advertiser,* 5 May 1939, 28. For more on the establishment of the WVNR across Australia see Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay,* 104–14.

[18] The South Australian Branch of the WVNR eventually closed in April 1944. See Women's Voluntary National Register Section Return of Summary of Registration, 31 December 1939, NAA, A663, O130/4/120; Women's Voluntary National Register Report for three months ending 31 March 1942, NAA, A663, O130/4/120; Women's Voluntary National Register Return of Summary of Registration, 30 June 1943, NAA, A663, O130/4/120.

[19] Circular, South Australian Council, Women's Voluntary National Register, 30 September 1942, NAA, A663, O130/4/120.

Oral histories indicate that voluntary work was a central wartime experience of many women. Of the 23 women I interviewed, aged between 16–30 during the war and from working or lower middle-class backgrounds, only one had not participated in voluntary work of some kind. For one, volunteering as a Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment or "VAD" (work consisting of hospital care, home nursing and air-raid warden training) had been a full-time occupation.[20] Others were involved in various kinds of voluntary activities alongside their paid war work or domestic duties. This included assisting and fundraising for various wartime organisations, including South Australia's Cheer Up Society, while many were also involved through local churches and Girl Guide groups, and two volunteered with civil defence societies as enemy plane spotters.[21] Knitting in aid of the Red Cross and FFCF proved to be the most popular activity, undertaken by 14 of the women I interviewed. Statistical data supports this view: between November 1939 and January 1944, the FFCF received 1.6 million hand-knitted garments from women across South Australia.[22]

Whether women perceived their decision to undertake voluntary work as an intuitive reaction to the war or fulfilment of social expectation was a focus of my oral history interviews. Overall, women provided similar reasons for starting voluntary activities, including to support the war effort and/or male family members on active service, a desire to imitate the voluntary contribution made by their mothers during World War I, or because they thought it was "something everybody did". Nearly all remarked they had not previously viewed their wartime volunteering as particularly important or special—it was "one of those things" or "just something that happened".[23] These responses arguably highlight the gender-specificity of voluntary work. The familial impetus that often underpinned women's decision to volunteer meant from the outset they were defined by a prevailing femininity, which, in addition to causing women to dismiss the value of their efforts, reinforced the extent to which organisations could mobilise a discursive construction of female voluntarism as non-work more closely related to housewifery than to paid wartime employment.

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[20] Joan Willats interviewed by Rachel Harris, 27 July 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/5.

[21] See Jennifer McDonald interviewed by Rachel Harris, 2 June 2017, SLSA, OH 1117/25; Joy Noble interviewed by Rachel Harris, 15 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/10.

[22] Fighting Forces Comfort Fund (South Australia) Quarterly Review, January 1944, SLSA.

[23] See Merle Glasson interviewed by Rachel Harris, 11 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/9; June Hanley interviewed by Rachel Harris, 16 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/11.

Although none of my interviewees recalled having felt pressured to undertake voluntary activities, some questioned its ideological premise. Munition worker June Hanley reflected that her decision to undertake voluntary work had been intuitive but was unsure whether it was perceived as fulfilling social convention. Given the ample opportunities available to volunteer with patriotic organisations, she noted that voluntary work was viewed among women as an obvious means of socialising with friends and maintaining personal connections: "you [volunteered] because you wanted to [or because] your friends were doing it … I suppose it was [altruistic] in a way … maybe it was expected of us … it didn't impact on [our] lifestyles too much".[24] Another woman, who worked as an office clerk and knitted for the FFCF in her spare time, believed providing comforts was viewed by South Australian society during World War II as "what [women] were put on earth for".[25] This statement points to the highly gendered nature of voluntary work as a war activity: South Australia's wartime gender contract, as in other places, functioned on the expectation that men went to fight and women fulfilled auxiliary roles in support.

**Voluntary Work and Emphasised Femininity**

Contrary to the traditional stereotype of wartime voluntary workers as mainly consisting of philanthropic groups of middle and upper-class married women—described by Melanie Oppenheimer as being akin to the nineteenth century caricature of "Lady Bountiful"[26]—women of all ages and social backgrounds undertook voluntary activities. In South Australia, 68 per cent of WVNR registrants were aged between 17 and 35, while single women of all ages accounted for 65 per cent of total registrations.[27] This is not to say married women or those over 35 years of age did not make a significant contribution to the state's voluntary sector—the Executive Committee of the Cheer Up Society was led by middle-aged women who had volunteered with the organisation during World War I—but rather that participation

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[24] Hanley, interview.

[25] Mrs X interviewed by Rachel Harris, 5 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/7.

[26] Oppenheimer, "We All Did Voluntary Work of Some Kind," 4–5.

[27] Given WVNR records exist only for Victoria and South Australia, it is difficult to judge whether this percentage was unique to South Australia, that is, below or above the national average. See Women's Voluntary National Register, Section Return of Summary of Registrations, June 1939–1943, NAA, A663, O130/4/120; Oppenheimer, "Volunteers in Action," 183.

in voluntary activities was not contingent on marital status, class or age; it was an acceptable expression of wartime femininity for almost all types of South Australian women.[28]

With the "average" female voluntary worker established, I now consider the notion of the "ideal" female wartime volunteer. Focusing on the gendered discourses that were invoked alongside women's material involvement reveals that voluntary organisations often mobilised two ideal, but divergent, constructions of femininity, which focused on women's roles as mothers or nurturers, or, especially in relation to younger women, as figures of physical and romantic attraction. A maternal or "sisterly" mode of femininity was employed in voluntary activities that centred on the welfare and morale of servicemen, such as providing nursing or domestic comforts through hospital or VAD work, the production of material items for patriotic organisations, and the provision of meals and accommodation. In contrast, women's physical attributes and sexual attractiveness were utilised in beauty contests and fundraising pageants, and in dancing and other entertainment functions.

These two modes of womanhood are similar to those described by Raewyn Connell in her theory of "emphasised femininity". Connell proposes that ideal womanhood can be defined through two kinds of femininity, which "at a mass level [are] organised around themes of sexual receptivity in relation to younger women and motherhood in relation to older women".[29] Both models emphasise women's affinity with the private or domestic sphere and are centred on accommodating the needs and interests of men. In a wartime context, emphasised femininity can be used to examine a range of gendered experiences, such as the ways in which women adopted or challenged traditional feminine norms in new areas of employment.[30] In her study of World War I nurses and sexuality, for example, Katie Holmes employs a dual analysis of femininity in which she argues that women used a language of maternal or sisterly devotion to describe their relations with injured servicemen in order to downplay their position as sexual subjects.[31]

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[28] The main exception to this was along the lines of race and/or ethnicity. The refusal of Anna Trimper, of Australian birth with German parentage, to join the Red Cross or FFCF featured in a statement she provided to authorities in September 1943. See Sergeant Scruton interview with Anna Bertha Mary Trimper, 2 September 1943, NAA, D1915, SA12900. For more on wartime femininity and ethnicity, see Chapter Five.

[29] R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 187.

[30] See, for example, Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 23–4.

[31] Katie Holmes, "Day Mothers and Night Sisters: World War I Nurses and Sexuality," in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, eds, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century,* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press 1995), 43–59.

The notion that wartime voluntary work "emphasised" certain types of femininity has received limited attention outside of its material context or practical impact on the gendered division of labour. However, given that women's ability to display compliance, nurturance and empathy are central to Connell's theory,[32] women's wartime voluntarism is a logical area for its application. An emphasised femininity took on greater significance during the war as the interests and needs of men, public and personal, were imbued with increased national importance, alongside women's need to preserve the domestic space as a source of safety and stability for those on active service. The objective of the Cheer Up Society to "promote and provide for the comfort, welfare and entertainment" of servicemen explicitly reflects this sentiment.[33] In this sense, women's voluntary work, and especially that which brought them into close contact with servicemen, can be described as morale maintaining services. In addition to a material contribution to the war effort, voluntary work encouraged a mode of femininity that upheld dominant heterosexual relations and supported domesticity, docile sexuality and glamour as central tenets of acceptable womanhood. Public representations of voluntary activities, found in newspapers, magazines, and promotional materials, reinforced this image: an "ideal female volunteer" was constructed for both male and female readers, whose appropriate and desirable femininity was depicted as a crucial part of the war effort, and provided a model for other South Australian women to emulate.[34]

Feminine attributes of women's voluntary work were clearly foregrounded in articles appearing in Adelaide's daily papers, especially during the early years of the war. A *Mail* article in May 1941 emphasised the "thousand little ways" that women could aid the war effort from the comfort of their own homes, such as knitting socks for servicemen or making baby clothes, children's toys and baked goods to sell in support of voluntary organisations.[35] Volunteers were also referred to by epithets reflecting the domestic nature of their activities:

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[32] Connell, *Gender and Power,* 188.

[33] Cheer Up Society South Australia Incorporated, New Rules, August 1940, SLSA, SRG, 6/1.

[34] For more on the connection between femininity/sexuality and wartime media see Philomena Goodman, "'Patriotic Femininity': Women's Morals and Men's Morale during the Second World War," *Gender & History* 10, no. 2 (1998): 278–92; Marilyn Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 110–27; Andree Wright, "The Australian Women's Weekly: Depression and the War Years, Romance and Reality," *Refractory Girl* (1973): 9–13; Bilge Yesil, "'Who Said This is a Man's War?' Propaganda, Advertising Discourse and the Representation of War Worker Women during the Second World War," *Media History* 10, no. 2 (2004): 103–17.

[35] "They Also Serve – Even Tho' the Task be Unspectacular," *Mail,* 31 May 1941, 14.

"Sister Susans" sewed canvas bags for the FFCF, "Kitchen Katies" worked in servicemen's clubs across Adelaide, while a "league of fairy godmothers" sent garments and foodstuffs to the Cheer Up Society.[36]

A subtext of wifely duty characterised the messages adopted by voluntary organisations themselves. The FFCF's motto, which appeared on the front page of its Quarterly Review, told women to: "work, sew and knit/ for the lads who are doing their bit/ if you can't help that way/ give a slice of your pay/ it's our duty we all must admit".[37] This verse, by suggesting a woman's financial support of the war effort was secondary to her investing time and energy into gender typical voluntary work, demonstrates the emphasis that the organisation placed on traditional femininity as a mode of wartime support. This notion was further elucidated in a statement from the Honorary Commissioner of the Australian Comforts Fund to South Australian FFCF units in October 1944, which praised "wives, mothers, daughters and sweethearts [for] working for their men-folk because they love doing it".[38] While many women would have become involved with voluntary organisations because they wanted to assist male relatives on active service, the effect of framing the participation of *all* women within this familial context—rather than promoting the FFCF as an opportunity to learn and apply new skills—indicates how discourses surrounding voluntary work encouraged women's affinity with the private sphere: women's patriotism was aligned with an innate desire to undertake domestic activities.

**The Cheer Up Society**

The Adelaide-based Cheer Up Society, despite not attaining the high membership rates of the FFCF and Red Cross, was lauded by the *Advertiser* at war's end for being "largely responsible for building [South Australia's] reputation as the most hospitable State in the Commonwealth".[39] The Cheer Up Society was often described as "uniquely" South Australian, and, indeed, promoted itself as the "only organisation of its kind in the world".[40]

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[36] "Women's Sewing Bee for Soldiers," *Advertiser,* 31 January 1940, 8; "Thousands of Women are Working in Clubs for Allied Troops," *Advertiser,* 3 June 1942, 5; "Fairy Godmothers," *Mail,* 29 June 1940, 11; "Valuable Gifts for Cheer Up Hut," *Advertiser,* 25 November 1940, 14; "Regular Gifts Assist Hut Service," *Advertiser,* 5 September 1942, 5.

[37] Quoted in Barratt, "For the Boys," 19.

[38] Fighting Forces Comfort Funds News, October 1944, SLSA.

[39] "S. A. Women's Great War Effort Reviewed," *Advertiser,* 15 August 1945, 3.

[40] Cheer Up Society South Australia Incorporated, "A Home from Home for all Servicemen," brochure, SLSA. For more examples, see "Cheer Up to End Soon, Amazing Work of Unique Hut," *Advertiser,* 19 January 1946,

Although the Society did not keep official membership records, committee minutes reveal that at least 1,500 women became members between 1941 and 1945 inclusive, and approximately 2,000 women were offering voluntary services in June 1942.[41] An indeterminate number of women also joined local Cheer Up branches across South Australia—the main locations including Port Adelaide, Mount Gambier, Kangaroo Island and Murray Bridge—and women in over 300 country towns assisted the Adelaide branch by sending foodstuffs and other items for servicemen.[42]

The personal contact that Cheer Up volunteers had with servicemen stationed or on leave in Adelaide distinguishes it from other voluntary organisations, such as the Red Cross and FFCF, which primarily focused on providing comforts for overseas troops. The main "Cheer Up Hut" was opened in June 1940, located on North Terrace adjacent to Adelaide Railway Station, and provided refreshments, meals, lounge facilities, and evening concerts for servicemen free of charge.[43] A hostel was opened in the same location in August 1941, while in March 1942, the Palais Royal, also on North Terrace, was requisitioned by the Society as a dance venue.[44] Between 1940 and its closure in April 1946, Cheer Up volunteers served an estimated 3,000,000 meals and accommodated 410,319 servicemen at the hostel.[45] On its busiest days, a group of about 50 women could serve 2,000 meals, with rosters beginning at 3.00am and finishing at 11.00pm.[46] Long hours were viewed by volunteers as

11; "Third Birthday of Cheer Up Hut Tomorrow," *Advertiser,* 16 June 1943, 3; "Cheer Up Hut," *Advertiser,* 26 April 1946, 10; 'six Years of Service in Cheer Up Hut Ending," *Advertiser,* 24 April 1946, 3; "The Cheer Up Hut," *Advertiser,* 21 January 1946, 4.

[41] Executive Committee Minutes, Cheer Up Society (Adelaide Branch), SLSA, SRG, 435, Box 396; Thornton, "Practical Patriots," 52.

[42] "330 Country Towns Assisting Cheer Up Hut," *News,* 21 November 1941, 8; Gloria Kay, "Country Aid to Cheer Up," *Mail,* 12 August 1944, 15.

[43] Cheer Up Society South Australia Incorporated, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 30 June 1940, SLSA.

[44] Cheer Up Society South Australia Incorporated, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 30 November 1941, SLSA; Cheer Up Society South Australia Incorporated, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 30 November 1942, SLSA.

[45] Cheer Up Society South Australia Incorporated, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 30 November 1946, SLSA.

[46] "2,000 Cheer Up Meals in Busy Day," *News,* 26 April 1941, 4; 'Service Hostels Provide Meals, 2,000 at Cheer Up Hut for Lunch," *Advertiser,* 26 April 1946, 11; "Our Cheer Up Hut Has Done Quite a Job," *News,* 28 February 1946, 2.

a necessary sacrifice in order to entertain and keep up the morale and cheerfulness of servicemen they served.

These efforts were acknowledged in press coverage and promotional materials, however writing on the Cheer Up Hut more commonly emphasised the "feeling" and "atmosphere" it provided servicemen. It aimed to be a physical embodiment of family life, with significant effort taken by organisers to see the Hut resembled an ideal domestic space. In a physical sense, this was achieved by floral arrangements, lace tablecloths and picture hangings in the dining room, and board games, books and writing equipment, big easy chairs and billiard tables in the lounge areas.[47] Men were served and waited upon by women, who were encouraged to construct a patriotic feminine identity through their roles. When the Society was founded by Alexandrine Seager in World War I, her aim, alongside providing material comforts, was to bring servicemen into contact with the "highest type of womanhood".[48] This continued in World War II through emphasis on a "high standard of membership", which the Society believed would create a collective "idea of service" that ensured it offered a "real home from home for all servicemen".[49] A letter given to new volunteers by Society organiser Mrs D. Hay defined this service as "[giving] happiness to the forces, making our Huts so attractive that they [the servicemen] do not drift on to the streets [and] to command the respect of the 'boys' at all times, by an unceasing attitude of cheerfulness with dignity".[50]

While the physical activities that Cheer Up volunteers undertook—making beds, ironing uniforms, preparing meals, setting tables, washing up, distributing bathroom linen, serving drinks—were clearly similar to those performed in a domestic setting, it was women's feminine qualities that distinguished their work from that offered by other organisations. According to the Society "it was not what you did, but the way you did it".[51] The tasks assigned to female volunteers imitated the roles of mothers, sisters and sweethearts. Older and married women were often rostered in the kitchen, younger married

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[47] Cheer Up Society, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 30 June 1940, SLSA.

[48] Helen Jones, *In Her Own Name: Women in South Australian History* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), 280–1.

[49] Cheer Up Society, Upon the Termination of Activities, brochure, SLSA.

[50] Quoted in Helen Caterer, *People, Places and Blankets Galore: Fifty Years of Memorable Encounters* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1990), 23.

[51] Cheer Up Society, Upon the Termination of Activities, brochure, SLSA.

women as waitresses in the dining room, while single women acted as dance partners for servicemen in both the Cheer Up Hut and Palais Dance Hall.[52] These tasks were described in terms typically associated with family relationships: one brochure stated that cheerful service, pleasure, comfort, happiness, cleanliness, and homely atmosphere were the "real worth" behind the services that the Hut offered.[53] Indeed, Mrs D. Hay told the *News* in 1946 that "making the place as much like home as possible was the aim of the Society all through the war … we didn't charge anything at all for meals [because] we wanted the men to feel they'd come into a home and that they really were our guests".[54]

Cheer Up volunteers often went over and above their expected duties by performing familial roles; "the sort of things that mothers and sisters did for a chap".[55] This included advising servicemen on personal issues, ironing clothes and shopping, writing letters and sending baked goods to servicemen's mothers, and billeting servicemen in their own homes or inviting them for meals.[56] The effort taken by volunteers to acknowledge Christmas and birthdays—events usually celebrated with family—was especially praised by the *News,* as it showed a "good Cheer Up worker manage[d] to be a cook, a housemaid [and] a second mother".[57] One of my interviewees, Jennifer McDonald, who volunteered at the Millicent Cheer Up Hut, recalled some older women had viewed themselves as "substitute mums" to the servicemen.[58]

Cheer Up uniforms further reinforced the feminine nature of the Society's work, which, unlike munitions uniforms, accentuated a traditional female silhouette. The white dresses, white shoes and blue veils that were worn by volunteers shared similarities with nursing uniforms of World War I, which Katie Holmes argues were often imbued with

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[52] For descriptions of these activities, see Mifanwy Hawkins interviewed by Rachel Harris, 2 September 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/14; Joan Aikman interviewed by Rachel Harris, 22 September 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/17.

[53] Cheer Up Society, Upon the Termination of Activities, brochure, SLSA.

[54] "Our Cheer Up Hut Has Done Quite a Job," *News,* 28 February 1946, 2.

[55] "'There's Angels Here,' The Digger Said," *Mail,* 20 April 1946, 5.

[56] "Work of the Cheer-Up Hut: Entertainment for Servicemen," *Advertiser,* 28 March 1942, 4; "Mothering Soldiers at Cheer-Up Hut," *News,* 14 July 1942, 5; "Our Cheer-Up Hut Has Done Quite a Job," *News,* 28 February 1946, 2; "Thousands Billeted by Cheer-Up," *News,* 18 April 1942, 3; "'There's Angels Here,' The Digger Said," *Mail,* 20 April 1946, 5.

[57] "Mothering Soldiers at Cheer-Up Hut," *News,* 14 July 1942, 5.

[58] Jennifer McDonald interviewed by Rachel Harris, 2 June 2017, SLSA, OH 1117/25.

gendered meaning: symbols of virginity, disembodiment and devotion, or indeed, as a "terrain for male fantasies".[59] According to one report, the Cheer Up uniforms had the desired effect:

> Three men of the 2nd AIF were on leave in Adelaide [and] decided to go to the Cheer Up Hut. They were about to enter when the soldier in the lead stopped dead in his tracks. Through the glass doors he had seen the girls inside, wearing their white uniforms and veils. 'Struth,' he told his comrades, 'there's angels here!'[60]

The Cheer Up uniforms feature prominently in women's recollections of their work. Helen Caterer, for example, drew on the Cheer Up's blue veil—symbolic of Alexandrine Seager's blue hat, divided into pieces and given to servicemen at the end of World War I—as a way of giving meaning and coherence to her Cheer Up Hut experiences.[61] Daynea Hill, who volunteered at the Hut on Saturdays, was even more specific about the uniform's significance:

> We always felt we looked like nurses … we would make ourselves look as attractive as we could [and] dance with the boys [and] hear their stories, listen to them, and flirt with them and they'd flirt with us … it was [a] deadly serious business … there's nothing quite like dancing with a man, or a series of men, who you know may die … this pervaded everything. The whole building oozed of fear, and us trying to negate that fear, trying to be cheerful and happy.[62]

This reflection indicates that younger Cheer Up helpers did not always maintain a "sisterly" mode of femininity, and that in some instances a romantic or courtly role emerged. The transitory status of the servicemen did not mean, of course, that sexual or romantic feelings

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[59] Holmes, "Day Mothers and Night Sisters," 43–4, 52.

[60] "'There's Angels Here,' The Digger Said," *Mail,* 20 April 1946, 5.

[61] Caterer, *People, Places and Blankets Galore,* 21; Helen Caterer interviewed by Rachel Harris, 7 November 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/20.

[62] Daynea Hill interviewed by Madeleine Regan, 1 February 2013, SLSA, OH 730/29.

did not arise. However, the uniform helped servicemen to view Cheer Up workers as sisterly or maternal figures and discouraged women from constructing themselves as sexual subjects, and, as in the case of Daynea Hill, to enhance a perception of themselves as nurses tasked with providing emotional care to servicemen. The sense of professionalism that came with having a uniform meant volunteers also found fulfilment and purpose in their work, which had the added benefit of strengthening the friendships among volunteers. Helen Caterer noted it had been a "privilege" to volunteer as the Society had "demanded high standards from their helpers … girls earned the respect of the men and a wonderful sense of comradeship developed".[63]

**Paladettes, Beauty Pageants and Pin–Up Girls**

While the Cheer Up Society was the main provider of entertainment for servicemen in Adelaide, it was not the only organisation to promote male/female relations as a form of patriotic service. Sexual relations between women and servicemen were strongly discouraged by defence authorities, but female companionship that could be placed within a voluntary context was strongly encouraged, the view being that it preserved women's respectability and ensured servicemen's morale would be maintained within appropriate boundaries. The activities organised for servicemen and female volunteers were those typically favoured by respectable, courting couples. A record of patriotic functions arranged for Australian and allied forces stationed in Adelaide, kept by the District Naval Office, show dances, musical concerts, suppers and "all-day picnics" were frequently arranged by voluntary organisations and workplace voluntary clubs.[64] In addition to the twice-weekly dances held by the Cheer Up Society, all five of Adelaide's munitions factories regularly invited servicemen to balls in aid of the FFCF and Red Cross.[65] Significant effort was taken by organisers to ensure every serviceman had a female partner, and the events were framed within the same patriotic context as other types of voluntary activities. VAD worker Joan Miller recalled that being a dance partner for servicemen on Saturday nights was an expectation of her unit commandant, even though it was not a designated VAD activity.[66]

[63] Caterer, *People, Places and Blankets Galore,* 21.

[64] "Recreation and general hospitality extended to officers and rating etc. including American and allied forces," NAA, D292, 110/3/14.

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] Joan Miller interviewed by Rachel Harris, 25 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/12.

As a well-defined area of voluntary work, the South Australian Allied Forces Coordination Committee considered that volunteer dance partners should have an official designation; the term “paladette” was offered as a feminine form of paladin: “a woman who helps men”.[67]

Oral histories and memoirs reveal many women volunteered as dance partners because of the enjoyment, independence and possibility of romance it offered. However, some voluntary groups regarded the task of organising entertainment for servicemen as an essential and serious contribution to the war effort. Adelaide speech pathologist and socialite Olive Abotomey, for example, formed a small committee of women who organised weekly musical parties for visiting servicemen in 1943. After a successful opening night, she recorded in her diary that the women had “proved themselves a grand lot—whether scrubbing floors, washing curtains, removing furniture, arranging flowers, juggling electric jugs or chatting gaily to guests, we’ve all done our bit [and] proved that if only they send us the right men, we can do our part”.[68] (In this instance, the “right” men being well-behaved and morally reputable servicemen recommended by the Allied Services Information Bureau.) Numerous newspaper articles on these “intimate and homely” musical parties demonstrated to women that they could also provide servicemen with respectable entertainment.[69] Frequent coverage of fundraising dances and concerts held by female munition workers—often accompanied with large photographs of the workers in their dresses—further demonstrated that women’s support of the war effort, and particularly their involvement in “masculine” wartime industries, need not be at variance with their traditional feminine roles as sweethearts, wives or mothers.[70]

Queen competitions were numerous across South Australia and received significant community support. These were annual contests in which attractive young women were nominated to represent a suburban or regional district of a voluntary organisation, or a particular department in the case of workplace-run competitions, and given the duty of arranging voluntary activities with the aim of collecting the most donations for their

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[67] “Digger Suggests Paladettes for Dance Partners,” *News,* 20 May 1942, 6.

[68] Olive Abotomey, “Record describing Musical Parties for Servicemen,” June 1943, SLSA, PRG, 1434/3.

[69] See “Musical Parties for Servicemen,” *News,* 17 June 1943, 5; “Musical Party for Servicemen,” *News,* 20 July 1943, 5; “70 Servicemen Enjoy Party,” *News,* 26 June 1944; “Musical Party for Soldiers, Airmen,” *News,* 23 August 1943, 5.

[70] “Munitions Workers Hold First Dance,” *News,* 5 December 1940, 22; “Dancers at Munitions Ball,” *News,* 6 December 1940, 7; “Cordite Girls Plan FFCF Dance,” *News,* 11 July 1941, 5; “Munitions Ball Last Night,” *News,* 20 November 1941, 10; “Munitions Dance,” *News,* 23 March 1942, 5; “Munitions Girls Partner U.S. Men,” *News,* 18 June 1942, 4; “Munition Showgirls” Ball,” *News,* 17 September 1943, 5.

respective organisations and attracting the highest number of votes. The winner of the 1945 South Australian Red Cross Queen Competition raised £3,413/11/7 equal to 819,259 votes, this however, being a mere fraction of the £83,608/5/4 and 20,065,984 votes collectively raised by all entrants.[71] The "coronations" of Red Cross Queens were major social events that often attracted local political leaders and press attention. The 1941 South Australian ceremony, held at Adelaide Town Hall, was attended by the Lady Mayoress, council and business dignitaries and given a two-page spread in the *News.*[72] Women, however, did not view these efforts as superficial or without practical value. Grace MacDonald, who won the 1941 Savings Bank of South Australia "Miss Bank" Competition, had thought it was her "moral duty" to enter the competition, even though she was a "shy person and hated [personal] publicity".[73] Kath Vivian, who placed second in the Goolwa Red Cross Queen Competition in 1943, recalled it was "a lot of hard work" even to raise the modest sum of £90.[74] Women were often suitably rewarded for their efforts: the metropolitan winner of "Miss Munitions" 1943 received a crystal dish for her glory box.[75]

Beauty competitions were even more overt in their use of feminine glamour as a form of fundraising. While they did not provide material comfort to servicemen, they were still promoted as morale-maintaining services. For example, the voting card of a Young Men's Christian Association "Miss YMCA Bathing Girl Competition" stated that the contest would "bring comfort to [fighting men] in places where little comfort exists" and reminded entrants that there was "no higher form of civilian patriotism than to care for the men who are fighting for their country".[76] Although popular with young women, many bathing, showgirl and "pin-up" competitions were organised and judged by men. The FFCF's 1944 "Bathing Beauty Contest" was arranged by a group of Adelaide businessmen, the 1945 "Miss South Australia Bathing Belles" was organised by men of the Returned Services League (RSL), and the "Showgirls of 1943" contest was launched by Mr Harold Atkinson, secretary-treasurer of

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[71] "Walkerville Red Cross Queen Wins," *Mail,* 11 August 1945, 12.

[72] "Red Cross Queen Coronation," *News,* 4 July 1941, 8.

[73] Grace McDonald interviewed by Denise Schumann, 15 February 1990, SLSA, BRG, 285/1/4.

[74] Kath Vivian interviewed by Rachel Harris, 21 November 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/3.

[75] "Miss Red Cross in Munitions," *News,* 2 August 1943, 5.

[76] Young Men's Christian Association South Australia, Youth Effort: Miss YMCA Bathing Girl Competition, brochure, in NAA, D292, 110/3/14.

Salisbury Explosives Factory social club.[77] "Pin-up girl" competitions were often judged by servicemen themselves, demonstrating a direct connection between this type of wartime fundraising and the cultural objectification of women. Indeed, Philomena Goodman argues that such images reinforced patriarchal assumptions and emphasised women's femininity and sexuality as being defined and consumed by men.[78] A particularly illustrative example of this connection can be observed in a fundraising event that combined elements of wartime beauty contests and "pin-up" competitions. At a dance evening held as part of the "South Australian Industries Bathing Beauty Contest" in 1944, held in aid of the FFCF, the legs of female guests were used as a means of fundraising, being judged by the crowd and then "sold" to the highest male bidder.[79]

**Volunteering in Wartime Workplaces**

Just as the distinction between the public and private sphere was blurred by the support that women gave to servicemen through voluntary organisations, so too was the boundary between voluntary and paid wartime work. The most direct connection between the two was made by the WVNR, which, from early 1941 to mid-1943 was also responsible for registrations of women's auxiliary services, the Australian Women's Land Army, and various other training bodies.[80] The WVNR's role as an organiser of paid *and* unpaid work has been interpreted as both a success and a limitation. Melanie Oppenheimer argues the WVNR's amalgamation into the Manpower Directorate in July 1943 is one of the "clearest examples of a government intent on marginalising the role of women in wartime" because it signalled the demise of the WVNR and the attitude of the government that women's paid war work was the only "real work" that women could do.[81] Carmel Shute, while arguing that wartime voluntarism fatally stigmatised women's paid work as it reinforced the traditional

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[77] Fighting Forces Comfort Fund Quarterly Review, January 1944, SLSA; "15 Bathing Belles in Beach Parade," *Mail,* 29 December 1945, 3; "Munitions Search for Ideal Showgirl," *News,* 3 September 1943, 5.

[78] See Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War,* 110-4.

[79] Kelvinator Australia Limited, Parade of the Fair to Aid the Brave: S.A Industries Bathing Beauty Contest in Aid of the Fighting Forces Comfort Fund*,* 1944, brochure, State Library of Victoria.

[80] Between March 1941 and September 1942, for example, it processed 4,162 auxiliary enrolments and 5,767 enrolments in training bodies such as the Women's Air Training Corps (WATC) and the Women's Australian National Services (WANS). See Circular, S.A. Council Women's Voluntary National Register, 30 September 1942, NAA, A663, O130/4/120.

[81] Oppenheimer, "Volunteers in Action," 198–9.

sexual division of labour, asserts that the Directorate's support of the WVNR gave respectability and a measure of control to the activities it coordinated.[82]

I take a middle position, namely that women's paid and unpaid work during World War II is best viewed on the same continuum, meaning both were equally subject to a discursive construction of femininity that sought to uphold the gender order. That is, while in economic terms women's wartime voluntary work differed from paid employment, the social experiences it provided were largely similar. Wartime volunteering could consist of the same activities and working hours as paid civilian employment. The WVNR indicates many volunteer women were hired as typists and clerks in government departments across Adelaide. In the quarter ending 30 June 1942, for example, 2,594 women had filled clerical positions for various government and military departments, including the Department of Army, finance department of the Second Australian Imperial Forces, and the Volunteer Defence Corps.[83] This type of volunteering was popular with those interested in joining the women's auxiliary services as it acted as a type of "work experience" until such time as they could join these services in a paid capacity.[84] The majority were engaged outside of their usual working hours, namely between 7.00pm–9.30pm on weekdays and Saturday afternoons, while housewives were often engaged from 10.00am–4.00pm.[85] In an example of the flexibility of women's paid and unpaid work, some employers allowed women to volunteer as WVNR typists in the day if they agreed to make up time after hours.[86] Some women, if they owned a typewriter, also volunteered to undertake typing duties, which was gender typical work, at home, again demonstrating the unclear division between the public sector and domestic space.[87]

Voluntary activities were also organised within wartime workplaces. While similar to those undertaken by individual women, and in aid of organisations such as the Red Cross

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[82] Shute, "From Balaclavas to Bayonets," 371–2.

[83] Clerical, Women's Voluntary National Register, 30 June 1942, NAA, A663, O130/4/120.

[84] Oppenheimer, "Volunteers in Action," 185.

[85] List of voluntary clerical workers used during quarter ending March 31/1943, NAA, A663, O130/4/120; "Business Girls as War Typists," *Advertiser,* 30 April 1942, 3; "Voluntary War Jobs by Typists," *News,* 8 May 1942, 6.

[86] "Voluntary Typists Help War Effort," *Advertiser,* 21 January 1942, 10.

[87] "Voluntary Typists' Fine Response," *Advertiser,* 22 January 1942, 4.

and FFCF, the entirely public setting of this work heightened its ideological function; quite literally, in some instances, women brought the domestic into male-dominated spheres of work. From December 1940, both of Adelaide's daily papers published regular columns on the voluntary efforts of "Adelaide's Business Girls" which reveal a vast amount of fundraising was being undertaken in establishments across Adelaide. Knitting circles, tennis tournaments, picture evenings, market stalls, bridge parties and cash contributions were staple activities for female employees of leading South Australian companies, while Red Cross and FFCF knitting circles existed in nearly all of Adelaide's small industrial firms and manufacturers. Knitting circles were also formed by female employees in the city's main department stores, some of which also organised regular dances and fashion parades, made donations to voluntary organisations, sent food hampers and camouflage netting to overseas troops, and established funds for the purchase of store items on behalf of servicemen.[88] Female workers in various State Government offices also formed knitting circles, held regular patriotic functions, and participated in "queen" competitions.[89]

This work was largely undertaken during lunch breaks and in the evenings, when it was seemingly common for women to stay late at work to use their employer's equipment.[90] The large number of garments and donations received indicate both the dedication of female employees and the significant contribution that South Australian businesses made to the voluntary sector. During a 12-month period, female employees of Myer Emporium knitted more than 2,000 items, while those at Charles Birks, another Adelaide department store, raised £2,430 in a three-day war loan drive.[91] The regular coverage of these activities by the press implies they were of public interest, or at least, that they should have been; *Advertiser*

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[88] For a list of all activities in business and retail establishments in Adelaide see the following newspaper articles: Marian March, "Business Girls are Busy War Workers," *Advertiser,* 22 January 1941, 6; Marian March, "Business Girls' Big Part in War Effort," *Advertiser,* 15 January 1941, 6; "Adelaide's Business Girls – On the Home Front," *News,* 12 December 1940, 16; "Adelaide's Business Girls – On the Home Front," *News,* 5 December 1940, 14; "Girls on the Home Front," *News,* 8 August 1941, 4; "Business Girls' War Effort," *Advertiser,* 9 April 1941, 8; Marian March, "Business Girls are Helping the War Effort," *Advertiser,* 22 July 1942, 5.

[89] Marian March," Government Girls Help the War Effort," *Advertiser,* 23 July 1941, 10; "G.P.O Girls Keen as Mustard," *News,* 27 February 1941, 9; Also see *The Public Service and the War,* issued by Authority of the Honourable the Premier (Adelaide: State Government of South Australia, 1944); "PMG's Department Patriotic Fund –Victoria and South Australia," NAA, MP721/1, W130.

[90] "Adelaide's Business Girls: On the Home Front," *News,* 5 December 1940, 1; "Business Girls' Big Part in War Effort," *Advertiser,* 15 January 1941, 6.

[91] "Marian March "Business Girls are Helping the War Effort," *Advertiser,* 22 July 1942, 5; Marian March, "Business Girls' Big Part in War Effort," *Advertiser,* 15 January 1941, 6.

columnist Marian March described "business girls" as being like a "vast women's army which not only makes a huge monetary and material contribution to patriotic bodies, but also engenders a general spirit of self-sacrifice and cheerfulness, the psychological value of which is considerable".[92]

For women who were employed in "masculine" wartime industries, volunteering was central to the workplace experience. At Hendon Ammunition Factory, charitable activities were an almost daily occurrence. Between June and November 1942, employees raised over £1,000 through regular donations, a servicemen's ball, in-factory flower stalls, and sales of the *Hendon Howl* social club magazine.[93] Talent quests were held in lunchbreaks, with female winners performing for servicemen at the Palais Royal.[94] The Hendon Girls' Choir also performed in aid of various organisations, during and outside of working-hours.[95] Knitting for the Red Cross and FFCF was also encouraged by Hendon employers and fellow workers. In 1944, the factory's social club organised for 25 female workers to knit baby clothes for Adelaide's Children's Hospital.[96] The public setting of this knitting is important, as it meant an activity usually undertaken in the private sphere was transformed as a performance of gendered work in the public sector. Anxiety about the effect of munitions work on women's femininity would have likely been eased by an ongoing and visible commitment to domestic labour.

The most successful voluntary activities at Hendon were those that specifically utilised the feminine appearance of female workers. The "Girl with the Cheeriest Grin" competition, in which photographs of 18 women, each representing a different department, were displayed in the factory in order to attract the most votes and donations from fellow workers, raised £1,200 in less than a month.[97] The 1944 "Hendon Howl Covergirl" Contest also raised £1,150 in the same time.[98] These competitions functioned on the physical

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[92] Marian March, "Business Girls' Big Part in War Effort," *Advertiser,* 15 January 1941, 6.

[93] Hendon Social Club, *Hendon Howl* vol. 3, November 1942, 1, Australian War Memorial [henceforth AWM].

[94] *Hendon Howl* vol. 3, November 1942, 1, AWM, *5.*

[95] *Ibid.*

[96] "Knit One … Purl Two," *Hendon Howl* vol. 10, August 1943, 8, AWM.

[97] *Hendon Howl* vol. 10, August 1943, 1, AWM.

[98] *Hendon Howl,* special issue December 1944, 5, AWM.

attractiveness and sexual allure of female employees—which as I discussed in the last chapter, was consistently reinforced by the *Hendon Howl*—and further accentuated the notion that women's efforts to maintain a feminine appearance held equal or greater value to the workplace than the tasks they were paid to undertake. While mentioning the extensive efforts of all workers, a report on this latter contest in the *Hendon Howl* argued that the contest's success rested on "girls armed with glamour and collection tins".[99] Through its metaphoric comparison of women's fundraising efforts with men's combatant roles, this statement highlights the gender divide in wartime work, but also the strong admiration that women's voluntary work attracted. It also arguably points to the extent that voluntary work was expected of female workers, and to the role that femininity played in creating such an expectation.

Wartime volunteering could increase women's social and economic status. At an immediate level, this could mean receiving payment for services rendered. For example, Cheer Up Society organiser Mrs D. Hay received an honorarium of £156 per year to recompense the 12-hour days she often worked.[100] For others, the connection between voluntary and paid work was indirect, but nevertheless significant. Melanie Oppenheimer has discussed how the increase in voluntary assistance provided to servicemen and their families during World War II led to the professionalisation of social work, opening new avenues of employment for women in the post-war period, albeit ones that ascribed to gendered conventions.[101] This was the case for two women I interviewed, Joy Noble and Helen Caterer, who, inspired by their wartime voluntary work, found prominence in South Australia's social welfare and voluntary sectors. During the war, then-teenager Joy Noble volunteered as an enemy plane spotter out on the sand hills of Port Augusta. While she did not particularly like this work—it was "something you thought perhaps you should do, rather than something you enjoyed"—it was her first experience of volunteering, and thus shaped her later enthusiasm for advocating its social and economic benefits.[102] Upon learning, some years after the war, that social work could be studied at university, she enrolled and was later employed as a social worker and administrator by the State Government. In the early 1970s,

[99] *Ibid.*

[100] Cheer Up Society, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 30 June 1942, SLSA.

[101] Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay,* 194–8.

[102] Joy Noble interviewed by Rachel Harris, 15 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/10; Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay,* 86.

she was the first woman appointed to the position of regional director of South Australia's Department for Community Welfare, and in 1982 co-founded the South Australian Volunteer Centre (now Volunteering SA & NT Inc.). She has written and edited numerous books on the principles and practice of volunteering, which contributed to her 2002 receipt of an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in this area.[103]

Helen Caterer likewise received an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 2016 for service to the community. During the war, Helen had volunteered as a Cheer Up helper and Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), the latter role eventually leading to her enlistment in the Australian Army Medical Women's Services (AAMWS). Having found self-reward and enjoyment in providing for the welfare of servicemen, she had hoped to train as a social worker after the war, but eventually joined the *Sunday Advertiser* as a journalist.[104] This position gave her the opportunity to contact many social welfare groups and gave her a platform to organise her own voluntary endeavours. In 1958, Helen established the *Sunday Mail* Blanket Appeal, Winter Clothing Appeal and Christmas Gift Appeal, and in 1960 was founder and patron of the South Australian Association of Supporting Mothers. She was also appointed to the State Government's Social Welfare Advisory Panel, through which she formed close contact with many Adelaide social workers. Upon reflection, Helen connected these achievements both to her paid and unpaid wartime work: "[the war] made me feel part of a very big thing …and I was glad to be a part of it. And so, I think it broadened my horizons immensely, and helped me to the things I did later on".[105]

The experiences of Joy Noble and Helen Caterer, while relatively unique amongst the vast majority of South Australian women who volunteered during World War II, demonstrate that the war's effect on women's status should not just be measured in terms of paid employment: wartime voluntary work offered comparable long-term opportunities for women's social and economic advancement. But its gendered implications were not always

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[103] See Joy Noble and Margaret Curtis, *Volunteer Management: A Resource Manual* (Adelaide: Volunteer Centre of South Australia, 1988); Joy Noble, *Volunteering: A Current Perspective* (Adelaide: Volunteer Centre of South Australia, 1991); Joy Noble, *Dear Chris: The Challenge of Work in the Community* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1991); Joy Noble, *A Quick Guide to Volunteering: The Concept and the Activity* (Adelaide: Volunteer Centre of South Australia, 1993); Joy Noble, *Volunteers and Paid Workers: A Collaborative Approach* (Adelaide: Volunteer Centre of South Australia, 1997); Joy Noble and Roger Dick, eds, *Australian Volunteers at Work: 101 Stories* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2000); Joy Noble and Fiona Johnston, eds, *Volunteering Visions* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2001).

[104] Caterer, *People, Places and Blankets Galore,* 29; Caterer, interview; Helen Caterer interviewed by Susan Mann, 4 April 2006, SLSA, OH 773.

[105] Caterer, interview.

as straightforward. The public recognition that female voluntary work attracted, during and after the war, at once elevated and reinforced women's identification with unpaid, domestic-type labour, despite the fact, as in the cases of Joy and Helen, they were making a significant contribution to public life. Accordingly, it was the feminine rhetoric used to describe women's voluntary efforts, as much as the voluntary activities themselves, that obscured the gains many women achieved through both paid *and* unpaid wartime work.

**"These Women Wardens!": Lucy Lockett Ayers and Women in ARP**

The final area of wartime volunteering undertaken by South Australian women was civil defence work, which consisted of first aid and gas mask training, the patrol of streets during black-outs, plane-spotting, construction of shelters, and the organisation of air-raid tests. As Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird argue in their analysis of the British Home Guard, civil defence was a visible site of gender instability as it directly challenged the idea that men were the sole defenders of the home front and encouraged a quasi-military feminine identity for its women volunteers.[106] However, this was not the case in South Australia, as despite being the first state to establish a women's defence society, it had significant difficulty in recruiting and retaining female volunteers.

South Australia's first civil defence organisation, the Defence Society, was founded by school teacher Natalia Davies in 1933, its main purpose being to rouse women's interest in ARP work in response to the rise of Nazism.[107] By the time World War II began, membership had risen to 130 and regular classes in first aid, home nursing, engineering, electrical work and gas precautions were being held. In July 1941, its focus shifted to teaching the practice and theory of Air Raid Precaution (ARP) work and training women in rifle handling—classes in this latter activity had already attracted 400 women by mid-1942.[108] The ability to exercise self-defence in the possibility of an invasion evidently appealed to many types of women, as the classes attracted both married and unmarried women of all ages.[109] These women undertook these activities despite the prospect of

[106] Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, *Contesting Home Defence: Men, Women and the Home Guard in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 15-6.

[107] Natalia Davies Summary Record, SLSA, PRG, 925/1/1, 1.

[108] Natalia Davies Summary Record, SLSA, PRG, 925/1/3, 1.

[109] "Women Rush to Join Rifle Classes," *Mail,* 9 August 1941, 7; "Straight Eye and Steady Nerve: Adelaide Girls Train as Rifle Shots," *Mail,* 30 November 1940, 11.

looking unfeminine and having their efforts parodied in the press. In an article appearing in *South Australian Home and Gardens* in December 1943, a female writer, in an attempt to rebuff the novelty of women learning to shoot rifles, recounted a conversation between herself and a male colleague:

> On hearing she does rifle practice—I mildly suggested that They Knew What They Were Doing, after all you Never Know What Might Happen, and it was Just as Well to Make Sure, and a few other meaningless platitudes, before being forced to take up the cudgels in a spirited defence of the right of my fellow woman to accept a responsible part in the happenings of the world in general. [He] was not the least bit concerned over the possibility of Jennie or any other girl losing her femininity … his argument was just a peg on which to hang his subconscious male antagonism towards the idea of the incursion of woman into a domain hitherto regarded as the exclusive stamping ground of the male.[110]

From February 1942, Civil Defence members also carried out plane-spotting from roofs across Adelaide and received accompanying training in firefighting and rescue work. Perhaps surprisingly, the women involved earned high praise from the Civil Defence Department for a "sheer devotion of duty and defiance of the weather".[111] From 1943, however, and as the threat of Japanese invasion receded, focus shifted again to the production of camouflage netting and uniforms for the military services, which was far more consistent with typical feminine work. The extent to which Natalia Davies challenged gender expectations by establishing the Society should not be overstated; Davies herself was the only female civil defence officer in Adelaide.[112] Ultimately, the Society's activities received limited press attention, particularly in comparison to organisations that focused on the care of servicemen, and indeed, its full-time membership remained relatively small.

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[110] "Losing my Femininity by 'Annie,'" *South Australian Home and Gardens,* 1 December 1943, 6-10.

[111] Davies, Summary Record, SLSA, PRG, 925/1/1.

[112] Natalia Davies was also appointed Chairman of Executive and Deputy State Commandant of the Women's Air Training Corps, a voluntary body that prepared women for paid work in the WAAAF. See Natalia Davies, War Service Record, SLSA, PRG, 925/11.

The ARP, on the other hand, had 2,800 female wardens across South Australia in March 1942.[113] While this indicates a substantial membership, it was less than half of the female volunteers it required, and the only reason that women were considered for ARP work at all was because a sufficient number of men—set by the Commissioner of Civil Defence at an estimated 10,000—could not be compelled to join. When the ARP was established in mid-1939, it was unknown how many wardens would be required, however by the end of 1941 it became clear that lack of recruits was severely frustrating its operation. A campaign for an extra 2,435 male wardens in September 1941 went largely unanswered, as did numerous calls for thousands of extra female wardens between November 1941 and March 1942.[114] While the need for volunteers was desperate, it was apparently not so much so that it demanded gender norms be overturned. It was decided by the Chief Controller of Wardens that female wardens should ideally be appointed for day-time duty and only when the ARP post was close to their homes, which, he argued, would give the "added incentive of looking after their own families and neighbours".[115] A *News* article from November 1941 further reinforced the supposed compatibility of civil defence work and domesticity, arguing that if a sufficient number of suburban housewives volunteered, they would "still be able to carry on their normal work" as they would only be required to "leave their ironing or house cleaning, take along the socks they're knitting for the soldiers, and go to the [local] wardens' post" when an emergency alarm sounded.[116] This plan, however, never eventuated, which meant that the women who did apply for ARP work were required to travel outside their local district and to be on call during the evenings and at night. This significantly curtailed ongoing interest, eventually lead to drop-outs, and contributed to a supposed culture of apathy, which, according to the Civil Defence Commissioner, "nothing short of Japanese bombs would overcome".[117]

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[113] "More Women for ARP: 1,200 Sought as Wardens," *Advertiser,* 26 March 1942, 5.

[114] See "Women Needed for ARP," *Border Watch,* 26 March 1942, 2; "10,000 Wardens Needed in Metropolitan Area," *Advertiser,* 11 February 1942, 8; "2,435 ARP Wardens Still Needed; Special Campaign," *News,* 3 September 1941, 7; "ARP Still Needs Wardens: Effect of Call-Up," *News,* 19 December 1941, 3; "Call for 2,400 ARP Women," *News,* 17 November 1941, 3; "More Women for ARP: 1,200 Sought as Wardens," *Advertiser,* 26 March 1942, 5; "500 Women Wanted Urgently for ARP," *Advertiser,* 25 March 1942, 4; "Demand for Women in ARP," *News,* 26 November 1941, 3.

[115] "More Women for ARP," *Advertiser,* 26 March 1942, 5.

[116] "Women Wardens Could Knit," *News,* 19 November 1941, 8.

[117] "Urgent Need for ARP Volunteers," *News,* 27 January 1943, 5.

The diary of Lucy Lockett Ayers, which covers her experiences as an ARP warden in Adelaide between December 1941 and January 1945, attests to the notion that the majority of ARP volunteers were disinterested in their work, although Lucy herself still took her position seriously. At 55 years of age, unmarried, and holding a respectable position among Adelaide's upper classes, she had been reluctant to involve herself in the war effort, being particularly indifferent towards volunteering that consisted of typical feminine work. Indeed, she noted in her diary in December 1941 that "I don't want to join the Red Cross or Comforts Fund, I don't want to sew or pack or do clerical work and I have had no training for anything else".[118] Despite reservations that she did not have the right personal qualities to handle an emergency, Lucy nevertheless enrolled as an ARP warden with the resolution it would give her an opportunity to widen her knowledge base and break away from feminine stereotypes usually applied to women volunteers. She captured her feelings in the poem "These Women Wardens!", which she wrote three weeks after her enlistment:

> Have you seen 'Sister Susie' since she joined the ARP?
> She was a Red Cross Worker, and then a VSD.
> But they gave no scope for talent,
> So she firmly turned them down,
> And now patrols the streets all day,
> The saviour of the town …
>
> And her life is very serious, it's more than just a fad.
> She knows where every hydrant is,
> and every fire alarm.
> And how to stop the gas bombs,
> from doing any harm …
>
> The telegraph and telephones are child's play to her,
> Burst water mains and gas pipes, her spirit won't deter,
> And if you are asphyxiated, she will bring you back from death,
> With expert resuscitation while you're gasping for your breath …
> In fact, she's most efficient,
> And she does her work so well.

[118] Lucy Lockett Ayers, ARP diary, 9 December 1941, SLSA, PRG, 67/45/1.

She could save our population from the very jaws of hell,
We know this for a fact,
We have so often heard it said,
The only thing we do not know is—can she keep her head?[119]

However, Lucy discovered that ARP work did not offer the personal fulfilment or public recognition she had initially anticipated. First, lack of organisation led to boredom on the part of both male and female wardens. According to Lucy's experience, ARP lectures were commonly repeated or cancelled, causing a feeling of unpreparedness, as did a lack of practical training. Communication between different posts was also not uniform, leading to further confusion, and the public was often antagonistic when approached by wardens who found issue with their blackout and air-raid precautions. While lectures and air-raid tests were fully attended by wardens of both sexes at the beginning of 1941, by late 1943 Lucy records that, on average, only six of the 58 wardens in her post regularly attended ARP meetings, of which Lucy was the only female.[120] Indeed, the gendered dimensions of the work, and in particular the unequal gender dynamics between male and female wardens, stands out most in Lucy's account and contributed to her eventual dissatisfaction with ARP work. Of particular contention was the protocol surrounding promotion. Despite undertaking the duties of a Senior Warden, this role was reserved for men only. It was supposedly deemed "unwise" to appoint a woman to this post as it might cause discontent among male wardens. Thus, she was given the alternative title of "secretary to the Senior Warden" and then eventually "Deputy Senior Warden".[121] While initially satisfied with this arrangement, the supposed lack of time and effort the actual Senior Warden contributed in comparison to Lucy, and the associated recognition he and other male wardens received, became a source of resentment. On the event of their final ARP lecture, Lucy accordingly recorded in her diary that "no one can imagine how relieved and thankful I am that the silly nonsense is over".[122]

[119] For the full poem see Lucy Lockett Ayers, ARP diary, 1 January 1942, SLSA, PRG, 67/45/1.

[120] Lucy Lockett Ayers, ARP diary, 22 November 1943, SLSA, PRG, 67/45/6.

[121] Lucy Lockett Ayers, ARP Diary, 31 March 1942–7 April 1942, SLSA, PRG, 67/45/3.

[122] Lucy Lockett Ayers, ARP Diary, 27 March 1944, SLSA, PRG, 67/45/6.

Lucy's diary also gives a degree of insight into both the treatment and attitudes of other female wardens. The male viewpoint that younger women would be "prone to hysteria" reoccurred throughout her time as warden, and in one instance Lucy noted that female wardens were sent to patrol areas of the city in which it was known that no air-raid tests would be held.[123] Because of the lack of duties allotted to female wardens, aside from Lucy herself, their disinterest in ARP work increased. One resigned from ARP duties to join the VADs because she thought it would provide greater opportunity to gain skills and paid employment.[124] Another struggled to fit ARP duties alongside her paid work, writing in a letter to Lucy that as her free evenings were "very precious" she would only give up her time if there was "plenty of activity, [as] on the last occasion I was at the Post from 7.30 to 10.30 with absolutely nothing to do and when leisure is necessary … it seemed so unworthwhile [sic]".[125] For another woman, the incompatibility of ARP work and her domestic duties was the reason behind her resignation, conveying in a phone call to Lucy that she had "talked matters over with her husband, [and] decided that in an event of an air-raid, her place was at home with her child".[126] Fundamentally, however, patrolling streets in the dark, often in cold and wet weather, and being pulled away from social events was largely unappealing to both men and women of the ARP and Defence Society, especially when the perceived threat of Japanese invasion receded. The relative lack of acknowledgment that female wardens received in comparison to the "Sister Susies" of the Red Cross and Cheer-Up Society, coupled with the feminine rhetoric used to downplay the potential of ARP duties to unsettle gender identities, meant the gendered legacy of civil defence work on women's social and economic status in South Australia was arguably that of a missed opportunity.

## Conclusion

In examining the scope of women's voluntary work in South Australia during World War II, two dominant constructions of the "ideal" feminine volunteer become clear. While some women found voluntary work could lead to both paid employment and personal fulfilment, public discourses reinforced the concept that women's involvement in voluntary activities stemmed from an innate desire to preserve domestic relations. Indeed, the success of the

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[123] Lucy Lockett Ayers, ARP Diary, 9 January 1942, SLSA, PRG, 67/45/1.

[124] Lucy Lockett Ayers, ARP diary, 5 March 1942, SLSA, PRG, 67/45/2.

[125] Lucy Lockett Ayers, ARP diary, 1 February 1943, SLSA, PRG, 67/45/5.

[126] Lucy Lockett Ayers, ARP diary, 10 February 1942, SLSA, PRG, 67/45/2.

Cheer Up Society rested on its ability to produce an idealised version of home and femininity, although instances of flirting suggest that a romantic or sweetheart mode existed too. The fact the Society proclaimed to be a "unique" South Australian organisation, in addition to the unwavering praise its volunteers received in press reports, suggest a "maternal" or "sisterly" mode of femininity was highly valued by South Australian society, especially because this discourse actively encouraged other women to emulate and admire their devotion to the servicemen they accommodated, fed and entertained.

The popularity of pin-up contests, beauty pageants and fundraising balls, which constructed women as romantic or sexual objects, demonstrates that the female body itself was viewed as a form of patriotic display, and accordingly, these events accounted for a significant portion of the funds raised by organisations including the Red Cross and FFCF. In contrast, the unglamorous and supposedly "masculine" nature of civil defence work meant it did not attract comparable public commendation. That women should ideally contribute to the war effort by any means possible was a notion also upheld by women themselves. While reluctant to describe voluntary work as having been expected of them, their recollections suggest it was an intrinsic aspect of the female home front experience, thus pointing to the notion that women had internalised a discourse of voluntary work as a natural outlet for femininity during wartime. Ultimately, the sheer number of South Australian women who undertook voluntary activities means its power to shape the gender order was substantial, and, indeed, volunteering was a wartime contribution to public life they had in common more than any other.

# Chapter Four

## "Some of our South Australian Girls Should Remember that a War is in Progress": Public Discourse and the Regulation of Female Sexuality

So far, I have focused on the constructions of ideal femininity that shaped women's experiences of paid and unpaid wartime work. This chapter diverges and extends my analysis in two ways: by examining their lives outside of work and in the home, and on the discourses that constructed certain women as "transgressive" and antithetical to both feminine norms and the war effort. As my last chapter demonstrated, women were encouraged to interact with allied servicemen through wartime voluntary work, which, especially in the case of younger women volunteers, rested on emphasising their sexual attractiveness and glamour. But women's relations with American and other allied servicemen outside of these activities were often represented by the press, politicians, police and the public as a legitimate cause for alarm. There was a boundary, often unclear, that demarcated an appropriate femininity, embodied in respectable women who aided servicemen through patriotic means, and a deviant female sexuality evinced by women who pursued sexual relations with allied servicemen, partook in excessive drinking, and contributed to the spread of venereal diseases. First, I consider the public discourses and state controls that were implemented in South Australia in response to these concerns. Focusing on the legislation and the language invoked alongside these measures, I argue that the pejorative labels applied to women in public discourses of the time had a self-disciplinary effect, especially prompting some who had romances with American servicemen to adopt a discourse of feminine patriotism when recounting their relationships in oral histories. But while women, married and single, strived to fulfil the desirable wartime modes of femininity expounded to them, I reveal the reality for many was starkly different: the domestic ideal was complicated by economic difficulties, and in extreme cases, sexual victimisation and domestic violence.

Study of women's sexuality in Australia during World War II largely falls into two categories: the social effect of the American presence and the regulation of venereal diseases. Marilyn Lake's article on the supposed transformation of female sexuality in the 1940s pivots on the arrival of American servicemen, which she argues "sexualis[ed] the local female population" because it generated a social environment "increasingly conducive to sexual activity".[1] This contention arguably over-emphasises the number of young women

[1] This article appears in many forms: Marilyn Lake, "Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II," in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, eds, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 60-80; Marilyn Lake, "Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II," in Gordon Martel, ed., *The World War Two Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), 359-76; Marilyn Lake, "The

who had sexual contact with Americans and over-generalises its effect on women's sexuality at large. Indeed, Kate Darian-Smith, Frank Bongiorno and Lisa Featherstone have all tempered Lake's view. They assert, to varying degrees, that marriage and maternal identity were probably reinforced: negative public stereotypes and press reports during the war, and post-war popular narratives and collective memory, have served to exaggerate the extent to which the American presence unsettled conventional sexual values.[2] Literature on the experiences of Australian war brides also upholds this view.[3] Indeed, Bongiorno argues in particular that the study of wartime sexuality should not be read in terms of freedom or constraint, but should acknowledge that the "sexual terrain" of the time was "uneven and contested".[4]

The corpus of works that specifically consider the Americans in Australia primarily focus on the military and political aspects of the American presence and have limited references to South Australia.[5] Regional studies are therefore more useful models. There is a significant body of literature—led by Michael Sturma, Kay Saunders and Rosemary Campbell—that considers the regulation of female sexuality and venereal diseases in

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Desire for a Yank: Sexual Relations between Australian Women and American Servicemen during World War II," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2 (1992): 621-33.

[2] Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939-1945,* 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), 207–33; Kate Darian-Smith, "Morality and Feminine Patriotism in Melbourne During the Second World War," *Victorian Historical Journal* 59, no. 2 (1988): 47–54; Lisa Featherstone, "Sexy Mamas? Women, Sexuality and Reproduction in Australia in the 1940s," *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 126 (2005): 234–52; Frank Bongiorno, "The Two World Wars and the Remaking of Australian Sexuality," in Martin Crotty and Marina Larsson, eds, *Anzac Legacies: Australians and the Aftermath of War* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2010), 84-106.

[3] Robyn Arrowsmith, *All the Way to the USA: Australian WWII War Brides* (Mittagong, NSW: Robyn Arrowsmith, 2013); Annette Potts and Lucinda Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier: Australian War-Brides and Their GIs* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1987); Catherine Dyson, *Swing by Sailor: True Stories from the War Brides of HMS Victorious* (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2007).

[4] Bongiorno, "Remaking of Australian Sexuality," 84. Marilyn Hegarty presents an American version of this argument, stating that conflicting wartime circumstances saw female sexuality cast as "dangerous" but also simultaneously constructed as a morale-builder in advertisements and entertainment for troops. She concludes that anxiety about female immortality during the war effectively devalued women's wartime service and generated suspicion about women's sexual lives well into the post-war era. See Marilyn Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality During World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

[5] Annette Potts and Daniel Potts, *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945: The American Impact on Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985); John Hammond Moore, *Over-Sexed, Over-Paid and Over-Here: Americans in Australia 1941–1945* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1981); John McKerrow, *The American Occupation of Australia 1941–1945: A Marriage of Necessity* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013); Ralph Barry, *They Passed This Way: The United States of America, the States of Australia and World War II* (Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 2000).

Queensland.[6] A key premise of these works is that the large American presence in Queensland had a distinctive effect: tensions between American and Australian servicemen were especially violent, sexual victimisation of women was acutely increased, and venereal disease regulations—which saw women detained in "lock hospitals" for the duration of their treatment—were virulently applied.

Other regional studies often use Queensland as a measure of how repressive or liberal the control of female sexuality was in their respective states. In Western Australia, Anthony Barker and Lisa Jackson, for example, are far more positive, asserting that Western Australia is distinctive because its people enthusiastically embraced the American arrival.[7] They also claim that negative aspects of women's relations with American servicemen have been exaggerated, stating that the historical record is "more likely to be swollen by complaint and controversy than the gratitude of the contented".[8] While oral histories provide a different view of women's relationships with American servicemen, as this chapter demonstrates, to downplay the social tensions that emerge from the archival record in order to accentuate the uniqueness of the Western Australian experience is problematic, especially as it obscures the nuances of the gendered expectations that shaped women's lives during the period.

Gail Reekie's Western Australian study is far more circumspect. She examines the intense suspicion of female working-class sexuality on the part of middle and upper-class women, who were especially concerned about the effect of the American presence on public sexual behaviour, prostitution, access to contraception, and the spread of venereal diseases.[9] She argues that women's organisations experienced deep political and personal confusion about the meaning of female sexuality, treading a fine line between the protection and coercion of working-class women's behaviour and agency. Monica Dux similarly focuses

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[6] Michael Sturma, "Loving the Alien: The Underside of Relations Between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942–1945," *Journal of Australian Studies* 13, no. 4 (1989): 3–17; Michael Sturma, "Public Health and Sexual Morality: Venereal Disease in World War II Australia," *Signs* 13, no. 4 (1988): 725–40; Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989); Kay Saunders and Helen Taylor, "To Combat the Plague: The Construction of Moral Alarm and State Intervention in Queensland During World War II," *Hecate* 14 (1988): 5–30; Kay Saunders, "The Reception of Black American Servicemen in Australia During World War II: The Resilience of 'White Australia,'" *Journal of Black Studies* 25, no. 3 (1995): 331–48. Also see Judith Allen, *Sex and Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women Since 1880* (Melbourne: Oxford, 1990).

[7] Anthony Barker and Lisa Jackson, *Fleeting Attraction: A Social History of American Servicemen in Western Australia During the Second World War* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1996).

[8] *Ibid.,* 143.

[9] Gail Reekie, "War, Sexuality and Feminism: Perth Women's Organisations, 1939–1945," *Australian Historical Studies* 21, no. 8 (1985): 576–91.

on women's subjectivity in the Victorian context. Dux considers the representation of "amateur prostitutes" in wartime press reports and its influence on women's conception of their sexual health, as expressed in letters by women regarding venereal diseases published in the "Own Doctor" section of Melbourne's *Truth* newspaper.[10] Danielle Broadhurst expands on this analysis by examining the implementation of venereal disease regulations in Victoria and how they operated to unfairly target women.[11] In this chapter I build especially on these three studies, as I aim to accentuate the connections between public discourse, government regulation and women's lived experiences.

Currently, there is one study on the regulation of female sexuality in South Australia during World War II: that by Susan Lemar on the policing of female venereal disease cases in Adelaide from 1942–45.[12] Lemar argues that social conditions for women in Adelaide were less repressive than in other states, given a—supposedly—limited number of American servicemen and the role of Women Police in enforcing venereal disease regulations. (Women Police were a dedicated branch of the South Australian Police, formed in 1915 to deal with crimes committed by and affecting women and children.)[13] To an extent, this is correct. South Australia did not introduce compulsory notification or the mandatory detention of women suffering from venereal diseases. However, Lemar overlooks some vital considerations. First, she perpetuates the historical misconception that there were few American servicemen stationed in Adelaide, and that South Australia did not experience the "moral panic" that affected other states from 1942–45. Indeed, there are limited references to South Australia in all literature on Americans in Australia during World War II and they make no mention of the large number of troops stationed here. However, between March and December 1942, there were approximately 20,000 American servicemen hosted in

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[10] Monica Dux, "'Discharging the Truth': Venereal Disease, the Amateur and the Print Media, 1942–1945," *Lilith* 10 (2001): 75–91.

[11] Danielle Broadhurst, "'Politics of Purity': Venereal Disease Legislation and the Melbourne Home Front, 1939–1945," *Lilith* 25 (2019): 23–36. Also see Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front,* 176-206.

[12] Susan Lemar, "'Sexually Cursed, Mentally Weak and Socially Untouchable': Women and Venereal Diseases in World War Two Adelaide," *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no. 79 (2003): 153–64. Also see Susan Lemar, *Venereal Diseases and the Reform Enigma: The Lesser of Two Evils* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019).

[13] See Patricia Higgs, *To Walk a Fair Beat: A History of the South Australian Women Police, 1915–1987* (Adelaide: Past and Present Women Police Association, 1987).

Adelaide and Mount Gambier, a town in the state's South East.[14] They accounted for a quarter of American land forces in Australia at the time, roughly equal to the number located in Victoria and Queensland.[15] This means a significant part of the social history of the Americans in wartime Australia has been absent from academic scholarship, which this chapter aims to rectify.

Lemar also relies on quantitative analysis. A key premise of her argument is that only one warrant for arrest was issued out of the 374 cases of venereal disease referred to the Female Investigation Clinic in Adelaide between 1942–45. She uses this as evidence to claim that venereal disease regulations in South Australia were "less the instrument of repression [than] in other sites around the country" and especially refutes the existence of gendered bias in their implementation.[16] In making this contention, Lemar downplays the pervasiveness and power of the gendered discourses that existed in public discussion of these measures and of female sexuality at large. I demonstrate that Women Police operated within a framework of patriarchal discourses, at times actively contributing to the pejorative coverage of South Australian women in the press. The journals of the Women Police are also my main source for the wartime instance of domestic violence. Operating within the social and legal conventions of the time, they reveal that Women Police were not compelled to alleviate the social and economic conditions within families that were productive of these circumstances.

### The Policing of Female Behaviour

There were three main ways that women's sexuality was regulated in South Australia during the war: by policing, through legislation, and in the effects of public discourse. I start with the Women Police, who had direct contact with women and were first to respond to the American arrival in Adelaide in March 1942. The increase in warnings handed down to women by Women Police between March and August 1942 appears sudden: nearly 1,500 women were reprimanded for alleged "improper conduct" while a further 280 parents were approached regarding the conduct of their daughters.[17] During the year ending 30 June 1942,

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[14] Conduct of Women and American Soldiers at Gawler, 8 June 1942, State Records of South Australia [henceforth SRSA], GRG, 5/2/1942/940.

[15] Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942–1945,* in Series 4, vol. 2 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1970), 224.

[16] Lemar, "Sexually Cursed," 163–4.

[17] "Police Warn 1,485 Women," *News,* 4 August 1942, 3; Lemar, "Sexually Cursed," 155.

more than 2,300 persons, the majority women according to Police, were cautioned for their behaviour. This was an increase of 1,176 warnings from the previous 12-month period.[18] Soon after the Americans arrived, serious reprimands were given to three women who were suspected of providing a place of "rendezvous" for servicemen on leave (i.e. inviting them into their homes for sex).[19] Of particular concern to Women Police were four unmarried women who had contracted venereal diseases or become pregnant after sexual relations with American servicemen.[20]

These instances suggest an increase in female immorality, but they really say more about the widening institutional definition of inappropriate female conduct and sustained police emphasis on curtailing female behaviour: women with American servicemen gave police a renewed and easily recognisable target. The upheaval associated with wartime conditions prior to 1942—such as the absence of fathers and husbands on military service, the entry of mothers into wartime industries, and the state's acute housing shortage, which forced some families to take in boarders—had already generated anxiety about female immorality. The American presence intensified existing unease. The rise in warnings issued to women from March 1942 arguably reveals that Women Police anticipated that the presence of American servicemen would see an increase in sexual promiscuity, rather than there being a tangible increase in any pre-existing behaviour. (Although some individual women would have likely succumbed to the supposed allure of American servicemen.)

It was virtually impossible for police to ascertain the true extent of women's contact with American servicemen. Women Police could advise women to check their conduct while in public; however, the private nature of romantic relationships makes them difficult to measure effectively. This means it is unhelpful to rely on statistical evidence—such as the number of arrests, illegitimate pregnancies or abortions—to examine the impact of the American arrival on female sexuality. Indeed, of sex itself, Lisa Featherstone asserts that its defining historical quality is that it was "not always hetero, marital, reproductive and easily contained".[21] Police reports also distorted the fact that women were just as likely to find

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[18] Police Commissioner's Office, Annual Report, 30 June 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1505/1942.

[19] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1942–July 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3/1942-1943; Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1941–January 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3/1941-1943.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Lisa Featherstone, *Let's Talk About Sex: Histories of Sexuality in Australia from Federation to the Pill* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 2.

themselves in similar circumstances as a result of sexual relations with local men. Indeed, in the same five-month period that Women Police were alerted to the above cases of illegitimate pregnancy and venereal disease involving women with Americans, they also handled ten other cases arising from relations with South Australian men. These went unmentioned in the public annual police report for 1942–43, which instead emphasised the "special attention" that Women Police had fixed on patrolling the behaviour of women in the company of American servicemen.[22]

The daily patrol of city hotels and the night-time patrol of other entertainment venues in which women and servicemen were often seen together commenced just days after the arrival of American troops. According to the South Australian Police Commissioner, "much time and energy" was spent by Women Police in visiting hotel lounges, dance halls, parks and city squares and streets with the aim of preventing "unseemly conduct" amongst women.[23] Such conduct, according to Women Police, included excessive drinking and "lounging [on] the laps of soldiers [in] familiar attitudes".[24] The earliest recorded instance of Women Police escorting young women from a city hotel is 9 March 1942, which arguably indicates that the attitude of police in regards to women's immorality while in the company of Americans was formed well before any real change in behaviour could be substantiated.[25] The responses of women to police warnings vary according to the source. An observer from *The News* said that the majority of women spoken to by Women Police at one city hotel "generally took their quiet questioning in good part".[26] Reports of Women Police present an opposing view: Daisy Curtis, Principal of Women Police, described women as "appear[ing] quite unconcerned when detected other than to ask whether there will be any publicity".[27] The viewpoint of the women that were questioned is unknown; their supposed attitude is mediated to us through the biased accounts of the police and the press. What the latter remark arguably reveals, however, is an awareness that women's behaviour could be shaped by

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[22] See Women Police Journals, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3/1941-1943; Police Commissioner's Office, Annual Report, 30 June 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1505/1942.

[23] Police Commissioner's Office, Annual Report, 30 June 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1505/1942.

[24] Letter from Daisy Curtis to Commissioner of Police, 27 July 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1168/1942.

[25] "How Adelaide Takes its Liquor," *News,* 9 March 1942, 6.

[26] "Women Crowd into Hotel Lounges," *News,* 3 August 1942, 6.

[27] Daisy Curtis to Chief Secretary, South Australian Police, circa July 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1168/1942.

public opinion and appearances. Indeed, the actions of the Women Police were an attempt at moral control: there were no laws at the time which prohibited women and girls over the age of 16 years from patronising hotel lounges or from showing physical affection in public however "undesirable their conduct may be".[28]

As the American presence continued, a supposed increase in amateur prostitution came under police notice. Daisy Curtis related to the South Australian Police Commissioner in June 1942 that "confidential reports and complaints ha[ve] been received from parents and husbands, [and] licensees, that soldiers are encouraging women to visit their rooms at hotels".[29] Police recorded that "many women and girls had admitted staying the night with a soldier".[30] This included one married woman who confessed that she and another married woman had booked rooms at a city hotel and arranged for American servicemen to visit in the night.[31] The State Government and South Australian Police, intent on "stamp[ing] out drinking orgies and immorality in hotel bedrooms", focused on how existing laws could be used to target women in the company of American servicemen. Those found in the hotel bedrooms of American and Australian servicemen were fined under the state's licensing regulations, which stipulated that guests of hotel guests could be arrested after 11pm on the pretext they were on the premises to obtain alcohol outside legal trading hours.[32] By late August 1942, this had led to a "number of prosecutions" against women who were found in the bedrooms of servicemen.[33] A raid on Hotel Richmond in Rundle Street in the early hours of 12 July 1942 led to the arrests of ten women alone. Press reports exposed the names, occupations and personal details of these women, which emphasised the perception that immorality was sweeping through all levels of the community.[34]

In August 1942, five women were found in city air-raid shelters with American servicemen. They were charged under the *National Security Regulations* for entering the

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[28] Daisy Curtis to Commissioner of Police, 27 July 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1168/1942.

[29] Commissioner of Police to General Secretary, United Licensed Victuallers' Association, 22 June 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/995/1942.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Memorandum, Daisy Curtis, Women Police, 22 June 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/995/1942.

[32] "Tighter Control Over Lounges: Night Club Ban," *News,* 4 August 1942, 3.

[33] Memorandum, Commissioner of Police, 21 August 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/995/1942.

[34] "Girls at Hotel with U.S. Soldiers Fined," *News,* 20 August 1942, 3.

shelters without lawful authority. All the women were fined notably more than individuals found in the shelters in the same period, and certainly received more coverage in Adelaide's daily papers. What is especially interesting about the press coverage of these cases is the lack of discussion about the servicemen involved and the punishment they incurred. Indeed, in most press coverage of women's relations with American servicemen, the servicemen are presented as having little responsibility for the situation. Such coverage was inherently gendered, but it was also in part due to the American-Australian military alliance, which barred the censure of American servicemen in Australia by the authorities and the press.[35] This meant even more focus on naming and shaming women. According to Adelaide's daily papers, the women found in the shelters had succumbed to the "glamour" of the American uniform, were victims of excessive drinking and unsatisfactory parental supervision, or suffered from the general "foolishness" that supposedly afflicted all young women.[36] The Police Commissioner's report for 1942 reveals that the women convicted of such offences were henceforth warned by the courts about their "mode of living".[37]

### Introduction of the *Liquor Control Orders* and *National Security (Venereal Diseases and Contraception) Regulations*

While the patrols of Women Police made some progress in curtailing women's "undesirable" behaviour, by July 1942 the scale of the problem was supposedly escalating at such an alarming rate that the State Government decided to take legislative action. Reports of women's excessive drinking in the company of allied servicemen were coming from across the state. The Mayor of Mount Gambier, W.E. Pyne, appealed to the State Government to act quickly to restrict women's drinking at dances held for American servicemen in the town, which had supposedly reached "alarming proportions".[38] Even in the isolated community of Bordertown, the moral panic was enough that locals sent a petition to the Premier, Thomas

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[35] Sturma, "Loving the Alien", 16.

[36] "Couples Using Hideouts Raise Problem," *News,* 2 July 1942, 3; "Unlawfully in an Air-Raid Shelter," *Advertiser,* 20 August 1942, 5; "In Raid Shelters After Dance: were with American Soldiers," *Advertiser,* 19 August 1942, 9; "£15 Fine for Waitress in Raid Shelter," *News,* 19 August 1942, 8; "Girl, 16, in Shelter with Soldier," *News,* 14 August 1942, 3.

[37] Lemar, "Sexually Cursed," 155.

[38] "Mount Gambier Town Council Alarmed at Excessive Drinking," *Border Watch,* 7 August 1942, 1.

Playford, in support of the "drastic curtailment" of women's access to alcohol.[39] At the time, the restriction of women's alcohol consumption was viewed as being of paramount importance to the war effort: women who drank lowered their moral standards and opened the way for "what appears to usually happen".[40] This was, of course, unprotected sex, which led to the spread of venereal diseases, and in turn—without the existence of antibiotics—seriously threatened the health of allied troops.

In South Australia, alcohol consumption was framed and prosecuted as a female problem. While frequent drunkenness among Australian and American servicemen was noted by police and politicians,[41] the State Government focused on restricting women's access to alcohol. In March 1942, the first "Liquor Control Order" was issued, which banned hotels and other licensed venues from serving alcohol between 2–4pm, but this had little effect on lessening the number of women and servicemen that frequented hotel lounges.[42] In August 1942, the State Government introduced a number of regulations that particularly targeted women. These regulations, according to the Premier, were ordered to target the "distinct problem" of women's excessive alcohol consumption in hotels, dance halls, nightclubs, and taxi-cabs.[43] The new regulations completely barred women under 21 years of age from entering hotel lounges.[44] If a woman under 21 years was found on licensed premises, she would be taken to court where the onus would be on her to prove that she did not enter the premises to obtain liquor. Alcohol consumption was also banned in dance halls and taxi cabs. Finally, and seemingly of little practical effect, it imposed that alcohol could not be served to women in licensed premises if they were standing up. A second regulation enforced at the end of August extended the restriction of alcohol consumption near dance

[39] Tatiara Council Joins Move Against Excessive Drinking," *Border Chronicle,* 14 August 1942, 1; "Dramatic Moments in Drink Debate," *Northern Argus,* 31 July 1942, 5.

[40] Commissioner of Police, Statement by Rev H.G. Hackworthy, re girls in hotel lounges, 29 July 1942, SRSA GRG, 5/2/1942/1168.

[41] See, for example, Cecil Hincks, address in reply, *South Australian Parliamentary Debates,* House of Assembly, 5 August 1942, 253.

[42] This was in addition to the 6pm closing that had been in force in South Australia since 1916. See "National Security (Supplementary) Regulations, Order No. 6 of 1942 – Sale and Consumption of Liquor," *South Australian Government Gazette,* 21 March 1942.

[43] "Restrictions on Liquor Announced by Premier," *Chronicle,* 6 August 1942, 24.

[44] "National Security (Supplementary) Regulations, Order No. 15 of 1942," *South Australian Government Gazette,* 6 August 1942.

halls. To combat women and servicemen drinking alcohol in vehicles parked outside dance venues, the consumption of alcohol was banned within 300 yards of any hall. The proximity of dance halls and similar venues within the metropolitan area meant that drinking in all public areas of Adelaide was effectively made illegal.[45]

Liquor Control Orders were also introduced in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland between August and December 1942. However, the South Australian orders were arguably the first to define wartime alcohol consumption as a women's problem. The Victorian orders in December 1942 introduced similar provisions in regard to the service of alcohol to women in hotel lounges. However, at a Commonwealth Government conference on liquor control held in Melbourne—only a week after the South Australian order came into force—Playford failed to convince other state premiers of the effectiveness of his new regulations.[46] Their focus was on the hotel and liquor trade, rather than the conduct of women. The conference was terminated without national consensus on alcohol consumption and received negative coverage by the South Australian press.[47]

This makes the control orders imposed by the State Government even more distinctive, as they were seemingly instigated at a time when other states were still showing some reluctance to approach the problem in gendered terms. It is also important to note the distinctive South Australian parochialism that influenced the orders. Sir Thomas Playford's 27-year premiership, which began in 1938, is renowned for its stringent social and moral conservatism.[48] Playford himself was a teetotaller and gained much party support from church leaders who pressured for restrictive legislation.[49] Indeed, police reports did not indicate a notable increase in women prosecuted for drunkenness in the lead up to the control orders.[50] When State Opposition Leader Robert Richards asked Playford why the orders had

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[45] "National Security (Supplementary) Regulations, Order No. 16 of 1942—Sale and Consumption of Liquor," *South Australian Government Gazette,* 27 August 1942, 306.

[46] "Restrictions on Liquor Announced by Premier," *Chronicle,* 6 August 1942, 24; "Liquor Action Watered Down," *News,* 12 August 1942, 2.

[47] "Liquor Control Only a Pretence," *Advertiser,* 20 August 1942, 6; "No New Liquor Restrictions Likely in S.A," *News,* 10 August 1942, 3; "Liquor Action Watered Down," *News,* 12 August 1942, 2.

[48] See Clare Parker, "Abortion, Homosexuality and the Slippery Slope: Legislating 'Moral' Behaviour in South Australia," (PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 2013); P.A. Howell, "Playford, Sir Thomas (Tom)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography,* vol. 18 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2012).

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] The 1942 report states that there were 183 charges of drunkenness against women, in comparison to 120 charges in 1941, but that the "majority of these women [were] old offenders, often needing treatment within

been implemented without a clear statistical increase in female drinking, he replied that they rather reflected the "great tendency for moral values to be broken down in wartime".[51]

Government action was thus arguably more based on the eyewitness accounts of police, as well as public hearsay. A journalist for the *News* had fuelled anxiety just before the controls were introduced in early August, claiming that he had seen more than 200 women across city hotels in just one evening. In their drunkenness, they had supposedly clung to servicemen to stay upright or "staggered, stumbled and reeled" onto the city streets.[52] The State Government also received numerous petitions from women's organisations, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and Housewives Association, to restrict hotel lounge trading hours due to members who had allegedly seen large numbers of drunken women.[53] However, at least one member, Isabel Drummond, recognised the gendered double standards that were guiding liquor restrictions. She wrote to the *Advertiser* in mid-August stating that she had "heard men and women in [our] city indulging in strong drink to excess and promiscuous conduct, [but that only] women have been charged with the resultant offences".[54] She asked if police had "special orders" in regards to prosecuting women for drinking, and concluded that the "statistics of crime are favourable to women; in fact, we rather rely on our own to uphold family standards, [so] surely men and women should be treated equally".[55]

Like drinking, venereal disease was characterised as a female-driven crisis. The *National Security (Venereal Diseases and Contraception) Regulations* in September 1942 were likewise introduced amidst a frenzy of gossip and unsubstantiated reports. The main difference between the liquor control orders and *Venereal Disease Regulations* was that the latter was issued by the Commonwealth Government. The regulations gave power to each

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an institution. One offender was arrested on 13 different occasions". See Police Commissioner, Annual Report 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1505/1942.

[51] "Restrictions on Drinking Announced by Premier," *Chronicle,* 6 August 1942, 24.

[52] "Women Crowd into Hotel Lounges," *News,* 3 August 1942, 6.

[53] "A Housewife Reads the News," *Housewife Magazine,* August/September 1942, State Library of South Australia [henceforth SLSA]; Housewives Association, Minutes of General Member's Meetings, 16 June 1942 – 4 August 1942, SLSA, SRG, 581/1/3-4; "Women Ask for Closing of Hotel Lounges," *News,* 6 August 1942, 4; "Undermining National Morale," *News,* 30 July 1942, 5.

[54] "Women and Drink," *Advertiser,* 22 August 1942, 8.

[55] *Ibid.*

state's Chief Health Officer to require persons suspected of having venereal diseases to present for medical examination. They also banned advertising of contraceptives or medicines for reproductive issues without approval by the Director-General of Health.[56] As I have mentioned, this first power—known as "compulsory notification"—was not taken up in South Australia.[57] However, Women Police were given the responsibility of locating female "suspects" during their patrols, who they would then "advise" to seek medical attention "for her own safety".[58] From 1944, some women were admitted to the "Cottage Ward", a building adjacent to the Royal Adelaide Hospital, for the duration of their treatment, but were free to come and go.[59] Lemar argues these measures negated the "system [of] misogyny" that shaped the implementation of the regulations interstate. The Cottage Ward indeed offered women more dignity than lock hospitals. But the lack of compulsory detention did not totally counteract the fact that, in practice, the legislation unfairly targeted women. Arguably, the application of the regulations in South Australia was even more gendered. While the attention of police in other states was "firmly fixed on females",[60] Women Police were *specifically* directed to seek out women for treatment. The regulations remained in force across Australia until November 1945.

Lack of compulsory notification also did not mean that the public's treatment of women was any more sympathetic: accusations still came from all sectors of the community, as well as military authorities. In June 1942, American military officials accused six women of being sources of infection, while Adelaide's Board of Health accused one woman of infecting 15 Australian soldiers, and two Aboriginal women of infecting another ten

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[56] "National Security (Venereal Diseases and Contraceptives) Regulations," National Archives of Australia [henceforth NAA], A6388, 498.

[57] For historical context regarding the attitudes of South Australian health officials towards the effectiveness of compulsory notification, see Lemar, "Sexually Cursed"; Susan Lemar, "'Oh God That Our Own Lovely City of Adelaide Be Not Placed in the Same Category': Venereal Diseases in Interwar Adelaide, 1920–1939," *Health and History* 6, no. 1 (2004): 67–86; Susan Lemar, "'Outweighing the Public Weal': The Venereal Diseases Debate in South Australia, 1915–1920," *Health and History* 5, no.1 (2003): 90–114.

[58] Lemar, "Sexually Cursed," 158.

[59] *Ibid.,* 161.

[60] Yorick Smaal, *Sex Soldiers and the South Pacific 1939-1945: Queer Identities in Australia in the Second World War* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015),142; Broadhurst, "Politics of Purity," 34.

Australian soldiers each.[61] Daily complaints were made in July, with American military authorities claiming that 153 men were suffering with venereal diseases caught from South Australian women.[62] Parents of these young women allegedly requested their daughters be examined by a Police Medical Officer to ascertain whether sexual intercourse had taken place.[63] One parent contacted Woman Police, stating her daughter was a "sectional manic for soldiers".[64] However, very few of the 153 servicemen were actually found to be carrying venereal diseases: for the women accused, just being in the company of allied servicemen had been suspicion—and risk—enough.

Working class women were especially suspect. Numerous unfounded reports were received by Women Police that female munition workers were spreading venereal disease after they were seen with American servicemen. Nellie Campbell, a 14 year-old Cotton Mill employee, for example, was accused by another woman of having venereal disease because she was "not to be trusted with boys".[65] 17 year-old Holden employee Beryl Nesbitt was anonymously reported to the military as a source of infection in October 1942. She was sent for a medical examination by her mother after she told police that an American serviceman friend visited her home.[66] Two women at another factory were reported to police after absenting themselves from work to spend time with their American boyfriends.[67] As Marilyn Hegarty notes in the American context, the visibility of working-class women as part of the war effort had the added effect of perceivably "broaden[ing] the pool of sexually suspect women and girls".[68] In South Australia, health authorities indeed firmly directed their energy towards working-class women. Adelaide's Board of Health concentrated efforts on munitions factories, with sex education films screened in lunch breaks. Factory welfare

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[61] Medical Officer to Chief Secretary of Health, 9 June 1942, Adelaide City Council Archives [henceforth ACA], 194a; "Urgent Health Question," *News,* 23 June 1942, 2.

[62] "Spread of Disease: Board's Move," *News,* 22 June 1942, 3.

[63] Daisy Curtis to Chief Secretary, circa. July 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/1168.

[64] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1941–January 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[65] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1942–July 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[66] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1941–January 1943, SRSA, GRG, 105/3.

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] Hegarty, "Victory Girls, Khaki–Wackies and Patriotutes," 156–63.

officers were also given the unprecedented power to approach workers they suspected of infection and report them for examination.[69] These measures seem especially contradictory in light of the fact women munitions workers were encouraged to flaunt their attractiveness and, in the case of Hendon, that their sexuality and physical appeal was depicted as a form of entertainment and amusement in their staff newsletter. It arguably provides more evidence that women's physicality was only approved if it could be constrained within the bounds of morale-boosting. Regardless, despite the stereotypes that were perpetuated by health officials and the press, women from all social backgrounds came under the *Regulations* as morality was not the barrier that many assumed. Indeed, Women Police themselves must have known this as they dealt with several women who had contracted venereal diseases from unfaithful husbands.[70]

**Public Discourse and the Victimisation of Women**

As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, wartime discourses of femininity, such as those in the press, workplace publications, advertising and propaganda material, largely focused on what an ideal woman should be, rather than what she was not. Public commentary on female sexuality was the main exception to this. But, much in the same way that discourses of ideal womanhood placed unrealistic expectations on women, the continued emphasis on sexual promiscuity and excessive drinking obscured the actual endemic issues that many more real women faced. The introduction of the "Liquor Control Orders" and *National Security (Venereal Diseases and Contraception) Regulations*—while claiming to protect women—ran parallel with a wartime increase in gender violence and sexual victimisation. By early August 1942, 17 American servicemen, six Australian servicemen and six civilian men had been questioned regarding the indecent assault of South Australian women.[71] The 1942 police report notes that a greater number of sex offences were brought under the notice of Women Police as a result of contacting young women "who had left home or were out late at night".[72] The most serious of these cases involved an American aircraft mechanic,

[69] Factory Welfare Branch conferences and meetings – Adelaide Welfare Officers, NAA, AP262/1, 3112/1/2; Ada Bromham to Adelaide Health Officer, 13 November 1942, ACA, Town Clerk's Special Files, 194a.

[70] See, for example, Port Adelaide Women Police Journals, December 1944–June 1945, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3; Port Adelaide Women Police Journals, August 1943–March 1944, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[71] Memorandum, Commissioner of Police, circa July/August 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/1168.

[72] Police Commissioner, Annual Report, 30 June 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1505/1942.

who was accused of the alleged rape of 22 year-old factory worker Phyllis Glossop, whom he had met at a city dance hall, in April 1942.[73] This case specifically reveals a lack of either understanding or sympathy on the part of both police and medical authorities to issues of sexual violence against women; the case was dropped after an examination concluded that Phyllis had been a "consenting party" because she did not have any obvious bruises or scratches.[74]

Women were commonly viewed as morally responsible for such predicaments, regardless of which party instigated sexual relations. In fact, in a memorandum on the indecent assaults I have mentioned, the Police Commissioner specifically stated the "evil" of "drinking by young females" was their primary cause.[75] Later commenting on the rape case in particular, the Commissioner noted that the mechanic had "seemed surprised" when accused, as Phyllis was supposedly the "easiest [woman] he had so far come in contact with".[76] Disregard for the welfare of women was widely present in the language that police used when detailing cases involving women, drinking, and venereal disease, exposing the gendered bias that influenced their responses to these problems. In correspondence with the General Secretary of the United Victuallers' Association, for example, the Police Commissioner recorded that a main reason for wanting to stop women entering the hotel rooms of American servicemen was to save the servicemen "possible embarrassment" as their reputations would allegedly be compromised by their association with the women once they were under criminal prosecution.[77] By September 1942, it was apparently well-known among Women Police that "American soldiers [have] one hobby, that of women, [who] appear to be *willing victims* in the majority of cases detected".[78]

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[73] Memorandum from Solicitor to Attorney General, 6 May 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/720.

[74] Police Commissioner's Office, "Offences by US Solders etc. Trial by Court Martial and not by Civil Courts," SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/720.

[75] Memorandum, Commissioner of Police, circa July/August 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/1168.

[76] Memorandum from Solicitor to Attorney General, 6 May 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/720. Of the ten rape cases that came under police notice in South Australia between June 1941 and June 1942, four men were arrested and only one was convicted. See Police Commissioner's Office, Annual Report, 30 June 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1505/1942.

[77] Commissioner of Police to General Secretary, United Licensed Victuallers' Association, 21 August 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/995.

[78] Memorandum from Women Police to Chief Secretary, circa August 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/1168.

These so-called "official" positions on female morality were matched by negative discourse in the press. Adelaide's daily papers offered an array of pejorative labels: "loose", "unseemly", "foolish", "piggish", "precocious", "wanton", "luxury-loving", "parasites", "lounge lizards", "gold-diggers", and "soldier-struck" to name but a few.[79] Vitriolic discourse was especially present in letters to the editor. Letters were received and published by the *News* throughout 1942 from male readers appalled with women's behaviour. One of the first letters, in March 1942, from a reader called "Hugh Hudson", stated that "women of Adelaide who patronise lounges can be blamed for a big share in the orgy of drunkenness that is imperilling our war effort … surely [they] must be devoid of national sentiment".[80] Hudson's letter generated a significant response from other readers. Three days later, the *News* published an anonymous female response, which defended the right of women to "drink in moderation" but agreed it was not "right for them to … get so intoxicated that they can hardly walk home".[81]

Both the *News* and *Advertiser* continued to publish letters that characterised female drinking as a scourge, disease or epidemic that threatened to destabilise the home front. Another letter, published in early July, criticised the supposed "lenient attitude" of police towards female drunkenness, and voiced "disgust" at the conduct of young women who inhabited hotel lounges until 6pm before joining American servicemen to "further their fun for the night's entertainment".[82] Newspapers also gave a platform for religious groups to voice their opinions on female immorality. A *News* article in May 1942 included the comments of clerics from various denominations, who blamed the crisis on inattentive parents, lack of self-discipline and absence of "wholesome entertainment" options.[83]

One can only speculate about the extent to which press coverage influenced the public's treatment of women. In some instances, however, such discourse clearly played a key role. A slander campaign against members of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air

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[79] "Girl, 16, in Shelter with Soldier," *News,* 14 August 1942, 3; "Couples Using Hide-Outs Raise Problem," *News,* 2 July 1942, 3; "Hit at Idle Girls in Hotels," *News,* 9 October 1942, 6; "Parents Blamed for Girls' Behaviour," *News,* 4 July 1942, 3; "Liquor Trade: Letter to the Editor," *News,* 28 July 1942, 5; "Women Drinkers: Letter to the Editor," *News,* 23 March 1942, 4; "Doctor on Need for Notifying Disease," *News,* 13 July 1942, 5.

[80] "Women Drinkers," *News,* 23 March 1942, 4.

[81] "Right to Drink," *News,* 26 March 1942, 7.

[82] "Girls Criticised," *News,* 1 July 1942, 5. Also see "Liquor Monster," *News,* 16 July 1942, 4.

[83] "Cleric Says Girls 'Soldier Struck'," *News,* 16 May 1942, 3

Force (WAAAF) made headlines in July 1942. A married woman from Mount Barker, alongside prominent citizens of Victor Harbor, had spread the rumour that 27 WAAAF members stationed in the seaside town had been sent to a maternity home because they were prostitutes for male officers.[84] Complaints were also received from Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) members, who alleged that they were being called "officer's groundsheets" by members of the public while on duty in Adelaide.[85] Anti-social behaviour eventually reached a climax in May 1944, when a 19 year-old woman was brutally attacked by an Australian soldier in front of the State War Memorial on North Terrace, after he had complained to her about the way that South Australian women were supposedly treating Australian servicemen.[86] It is unknown whether the soldier was identified and charged for the crime.

Woven through the commentary of community groups, individuals and authorities was the notion that women's interest in American servicemen was symptomatic of the moral failing of South Australian women at large. For example, Labor politician Sydney McHugh, in an address to State Parliament in July 1942 about women's drinking and association with servicemen, contended that "some of our South Australian girls should remember that a war is in progress, and that serious times are ahead".[87] He then claimed that "when the morality of the womanhood of a country deteriorates, the morality of the whole nation starts to crumble".[88] The South Australian Police—and especially the Women Police—actively supported and promulgated this discourse in press interviews and in their annual public reports. Daisy Curtis, head of the Women Police, severely criticised the ability of mothers to supervise their daughters in a *News* interview in July 1942. She argued it was "no wonder [girls] are left prey to the unscrupulous" given the "number of adults and parents who have themselves been adversely affected in their morals by the changed [wartime] conditions".[89] She duly warned readers that "unless the home atmosphere is such that wrong behaviour is

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[84] "Rumours about WAAAFs Called Malicious," *News,* 27 July 1942, 3.

[85] "WAAAF member of the RAAF, AWAS, investigation into allegations and rumours of conduct of women of the defence services," NAA, D1919, SS1080.

[86] "Severe Assault on Young Woman: Soldier's Act Near War Memorial," *Advertiser,* 3 May 1944, 5.

[87] Sydney McHugh, address in reply, *SAPD,* House of Assembly, 29 July 1942, 209-10.

[88] *Ibid.*

[89] "Parents Blamed for Girls' Behaviour," *News,* 4 July 1942, 3.

noted immediately, a bad habit is formed which later [may] brand the girl a menace to the community".[90] She also asserted that the tendency for older women to hold celebrations in hotel lounges, before and during the war, had encouraged their daughters to do the same; the American presence just increased the chance of immoral behaviour.[91] The wartime diary kept by Carys Harding-Browne, a young woman from Adelaide's upper-classes, indeed reveals how often "respectable" women frequented night clubs and hotel lounges, often as a group of friends.[92] Such outings, according to Police, were to be condemned; sorority among men and women was best confined to approved means such as voluntary activities and socials, picnics and charity dinners, to name but a few of the "socially acceptable" events that were organised by munitions factories and other wartime workplaces.

Memoranda of Women Police further reveal the extent to which they operated within patriarchal discourses. In numerous instances, Curtis claimed a widespread decline in motherly duties, lamenting to the Police Commissioner that the "women and girls who are concerned [in] excessive drinking and lax morals are the nation's potential mothers".[93] She also related the instances she encountered of mothers supposedly dropping off their children at creches before heading to city hotel lounges, noting that "daily complaints are being made by relatives re[garding] women neglecting their homes and spending time in hotel parlours … a large number of elderly people now have the care of their grandchildren and would be relieved to know that mothers were not allowed in hotel lounges".[94] The Police Commissioner's 1942 report also argued that the entry of teenagers and mothers into war industries, such as munitions factories, was responsible for much of the "undesirable conduct" taking place.[95] The notion of Women Police as agents of moral control is explicit in these statements: their dedicated patrol of women, in the view of the South Australian Police, was just as much about preserving ideal womanhood as it was about protecting

[90] *Ibid.*

[91] *Ibid.*

[92] Ann Barson, ed., *Carys: Diary of a Young Girl, 1940–42* (Sydney: ETT Imprint, 2017).

[93] Daisy Curtis to Chief Secretary, South Australian Police, circa July 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1168/1942.

[94] Daisy Curtis to Chief Secretary, 8 April 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/634/1942.

[95] Police Commissioner's Office, Annual Report, 30 June 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1505/1942.

women's welfare. Indeed, the Police Commissioner's 1943 report praised the Women Police for "safeguard[ing] the unity of the home as the nation's greatest asset".[96]

**Memories of American Servicemen**

Despite the risk of obtaining a reputation for immoral behaviour—or placing themselves at risk of possible sexual victimisation—many women pursued American servicemen. The first wedding of a South Australian woman to an American serviceman took place at Glenelg in July 1942, and more than 70 South Australian women eventually became American war brides.[97] Memories of women who dated or were associated with American servicemen through patriotic means provide an important counterpoint to the negative stereotypes that pervaded public discourse. However, their memories are nevertheless shaped by these discourses. Annette Potts and Lucinda Strauss, who interviewed Australian war brides for their project *For The Love of a Soldier*, observed that women were hesitant to talk of the Americans they had dated during the war as they still appeared to be conscious of the "malicious gossip" which circulated about women at the time: "Australian women talk about how they were personally all right but 'you should have seen the others'".[98] The notion of self-discipline is clearly evident in the following accounts, which are drawn solely from the corpus of 23 interviews that I conducted and which are now held in the State Library of South Australia. As no other oral history collection has a focus on South Australia's response to the American arrival, the question I posed to women was deliberately broad: do you remember when the Americans were stationed in Adelaide, and, if so, what opinion did you hold about them?

Two distinct lines of recollection emerged from women's responses. However, in both cases, the Americans loomed large in their wartime memories and most women notably deviated from the fondness and romance that typifies popular representations, usually based on the motto that American servicemen were "over-paid, over-sexed and over-here". Given South Australia's relatively small population at the time, the Americans would have been a highly visible presence. Betty Hayford, who worked in a city car-dealership during the war,

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[96] Lemar, "Sexually Cursed," 159.

[97] "Our U.S Brides Say They're Happy: Over 70 Wed," *News,* 1 August 1945, 7. Also see "S.A Girl Weds U.S Soldier," *Mail,* 11 July 1942, 2; "Last G.I. Brides' Act," *News,* 13 December 1948, 1; "Bride Ships to Take 1,500," *News,* 31 January 1946, 4; "Marriage of Australian Girls to American Soldiers," 14 December 1942, NAA, MP508/1/115/701/352.

[98] Potts and Strauss, *For the Love of a Soldier*, 5–12.

estimated that at certain times "there [had been] more Americans walking the streets of Adelaide than Adelaide men".[99] Somehow, many of the women had been able to avoid American servicemen. They recalled this had been common-sense; they had been too young, dating someone else, or were already married. Others expressed that American servicemen had come with a sense of notoriety. They were terrifying, drunk and violent; they spent too much money and were disdainful towards Australian soldiers. Then 18 year-old Adelaide University student Betty Gransbury recalled it had been a natural response: "don't get involved with [Americans] oh no, [we were] terrified [if we saw them walking down the street] and walked the other side".[100] For office worker Mifanwy Hawkins, it was the drunken and violent behaviour of some American servicemen, alongside the dominating presence of the U.S Provost Corps, which stopped her from becoming involved with them outside her role as a Cheer Up Hut volunteer.[101] These impressions can certainly be corroborated with police documents on the behaviour of American servicemen when they were in Adelaide. They reveal numerous instances of violence—including a brawl between 16 members of the U.S Provost Corp and 50 Australian soldiers on the corner of King William and Grenfell Streets in April 1942—as well as public drunkenness and women being frequently accosted on city streets.[102]

Then there were three women who had dated American servicemen or became closely acquainted with them through voluntary work. They remembered their relationships as exciting—and even liberating—but nevertheless described them within a traditional framework, downplaying the romantic attraction between themselves and their American boyfriend. They instead framed their relationships as being an extension of a nurturing, patriotic role. This mode of femininity, as I discussed in the last chapter, was particularly encouraged by South Australian voluntary organisations, and helped to counteract negative discourses surrounding irresponsible women and lax mothers in the press.

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[99] Betty Hayford interviewed by Rachel Harris, 11 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/8.

[100] Betty Gransbury interviewed by Rachel Harris, 5 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/6.

[101] Mifanwy Hawkins interviewed by Rachel Harris, 2 September 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/14.

[102] See Principal Women Police, Conduct in Hotel Lounges and City Streets between 5pm and 7pm, 28 June 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/634; Women Police to Commissioner of Police, 29 June 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/634; "Disturbance caused by soldiers fighting with members of Provost Corp at Intersection of King William and Grenfell Streets," 21 April 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/707; "Alleged selling liquor to soldiers at No. 2 Cheer Up Hut (Palais Royal)," 18 March 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/2/1942/549.

The first woman who dated an American serviceman was Doreen Cox.[103] They met at a dance held in Adelaide and she dated him for the duration of his posting. She recalls that he was a "thorough gentleman" and proposed to her early in their relationship. However, she declined as she felt she "didn't love him enough to marry him" because of their vastly different backgrounds. She also implied that her decision was influenced by the sense of patriotic duty that had motivated her to seek his company. She said that while some women had "gone out with [Americans] for pleasure", she was contributing to the war effort: "he [had] nobody here … that's why [we] took them [the Americans] in hand. When we [went] to dances we used to try and get them to come in, that's how I felt too". By framing the relationship within a discourse of femininity that was approved and encouraged, Doreen created a safe space to pursue a romantic relationship with an American serviceman. This later helped her to justify, to herself and others, why it was respectable even though it had not ended in marriage.

The second woman was Marj Bruhn, who met American serviceman Jimmy Deal in Mount Gambier in March 1942 and became "immediately smitten" by his "very good looks [and] beautiful personality".[104] Their affection for each other is displayed in a short film recorded by Marj's employer, in which they and another Australian-American couple were asked to kiss for the camera.[105] But Marj was hesitant to define their short relationship as anything more than platonic. She noted that she had not deviated from proper feminine conduct while in his company:

> To me I suppose he was ten foot tall. I hadn't been with anyone so good looking [but] you were good. You weren't bad or anything; we would have been killed [laughs]. You just didn't have that sort of thing happen. You could have a kiss and a cuddle [and] we liked that.[106]

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[103] Doreen Cox interviewed by Rachel Harris, 7 November 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/21.

[104] Marjorie Bruhn interviewed by Rachel Harris, 21 September 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/16.

[105] "The Kiss," *Border Watch,* video accessible at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsFvnBEDP_k

[106] Bruhn, interview.

The fact that Marj and Jimmy were seemingly accepted by her employer and other Mount Gambier locals suggests she was successful in adhering to the traditional femininity that was expected of her. It also shows that American servicemen were not always viewed as a socially disruptive presence within Australian communities. But the emphasis Marj placed on ensuring I understood that her and Jimmy were no more than friends is demonstrable of the social expectations that compelled women to define non-marital contact with servicemen in a way that adhered to gendered norms, even if it did not necessarily reflect the true dynamics of their relationships.

For women whose association with American servicemen was confined to voluntary work, the risk of appearing immoral was considerably lessened. Irene Dihm was 16 when the Americans arrived in Mount Gambier.[107] They were entertained in the café where she worked, while on Sundays she attended a weekly supper held for them by her middle-aged co-worker, Mrs Boothey. On other nights, Irene and her friends accompanied American servicemen to the cinema or local charity dances. She was too young to "date" a serviceman, although her older co-workers did. She nevertheless formed a close association with them. However, she recalled one instance when she had questioned the appropriateness of her conduct. As part of their "pass-out" parade, the Americans wanted to kiss each of the women who worked in the café. Irene decided to ask her male boss for permission:

> He said it wouldn't hurt to kiss them, half [will] never get home ... they'll get killed … and I said, 'oh well, that's alright then,' … I was shy back then; I wasn't upfront because the other girls were older than me [but] we used to kiss them [up] at Mrs Boothey's anyway.[108]

This is largely an innocent example of the way that female sexuality was mobilised in aid of the war effort. But the response of Irene's employer assumes that the prestige and national sacrifice linked to military service permitted certain sociosexual expressions if they were for the purpose of morale-building. Kisses, in this instance, became patriotic actions in support of the war effort. The fact that Irene felt compelled to ask permission to kiss the servicemen clearly demonstrates an awareness of the need to regulate her behaviour to avoid the pejorative labels and "unseemly" reputation that some South Australian women gained as a result of their association—romantic or otherwise—with American servicemen.

[107] Irene Dihm interviewed by Rachel Harris, 23 September 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/18.

[108] *Ibid.*

**The Underside of Wartime Domestic Relations**

As women's testimonies show, not all those who associated with American servicemen were in moral peril: they were capable of regulating their own behaviour, based on the desirable models of wartime femininity that were presented to them. However, some South Australian women were struggling to obtain the feminine ideal, but largely not for the reasons that dominated public discourse. In this section, I shift to examining the issues that married women faced, which have been arguably neglected—both by authorities at the time and now by historians as a topic of research—through the overwhelming emphasis placed on the American presence. Aside from oral histories, the most valuable—and indeed, underused—source for ascertaining the domestic issues facing Australian women during the war is the findings of the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) 1944 inquiry into the (supposedly) declining birth-rate. The inquiry called on Australian women to write to the Director-General of Health, Dr J.H.L Cumpston, outlining the difficulties they experienced in choosing to start a family or extend their family size. While it was focused on the plight of young married women and mothers, it was still a reflection of the negative moral stereotypes that pervaded public discourse, evinced by the fact that, when seeking the opinion of health authorities about current birth-rate figures, Cumpston also asked after the causes of venereal disease among young women.[109] Indeed, in 1943, the NHMRC had resolved that in order to curb venereal diseases, "serious consideration be given by the appropriate authorities to severe restriction on the sale of alcohol for consumption by women, especially young girls [and] stricter control by public authorities on laxity of conduct by young women in public places".[110]

However, the 1,400 women who wrote in as part of the inquiry presented a vastly different picture from the one created by the negative discourse of the press and police. The majority of original letters no longer exist; however, their contents were summarised in four main points: "(1) no home, (2) no help, (3) no security—national or economic, and (4) no hope for any change for the better in any of these things".[111] The hardships faced by women,

[109] See statements from M. Joynt, Director of Obstetrics, University of Adelaide, 18 April 1944, and Ronald Beard, Senior Gynaecologist, Royal Adelaide Hospital, 27 April 1944, in NAA, A14374/17/1. Stuart Macintyre argues that Cumpston was a "strong pro-natalist". See Stuart Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2013), 233–36.

[110] Report quoted in "Plans to Check V.D." *News,* 29 May 1943, 3.

[111] National Health and Medical Research Council Interim Report on the Declining Birth Rate, Analysis of the Contents of Letters Received, 18th Session, Canberra, 22–24 November 1944, 7. Also see Julie Harvey, "The

including financial insecurity, limited help with household chores, lack of affordable maternity services, and difficulty in providing for their family on wartime rationing—alongside the practical impediment of husbands being absent on active service—dominated responses, although Cumpston made a point of listing extracts from the "unexpectedly large number" of anonymous writers who admitted to having had abortions.[112] In South Australia, less than ten people were convicted of abortions or attempts to procure abortions each year from 1940–44 inclusive.[113] (This, of course, does not include the innumerable number of abortions that did not come under police notice, and thus, are difficult to locate within the historical record.)[114] The extracts presented in the NHMRC's interim report do not outline where the women were from in Australia, however one letter from a South Australian woman still exists. From Peterborough, Rose Ritchie had six children and was expecting a seventh. She outlined the numerous difficulties she faced, including clothing and feeding her children in wartime conditions, and concluded that "I would not advise any woman to have children under our present-day conditions. I am finding things so very hard and worrying".[115]

Adelaide's daily papers reported the results of the NHMRC interim report and surveyed women's responses. According to the opinions collected by the South Australian Housewives' Association and published in the *News*, the state's housing shortage was the most prominent reason for women's reluctance to have children.[116] Government reports on substandard housing in the metropolitan area and in regional South Australian towns conducted between 1940–44 also concluded that nearly 50 per cent of houses were "unfit for habitation" but nevertheless occupied by large families out of economic necessity.[117]

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Truth About Mothers and Babies? The NHMRC and the Declining Birth Rate," *Melbourne Historical Journal* 27, no. 1 (1999): 37–49.

[112] NHMRC, Interim Report, 91.

[113] *South Australian Statistical Register 1944–45* (Adelaide: South Australian Government Printer, 1947), 8.

[114] For more on the experiences of South Australian women who underwent abortions during the war, see Barbara Baird, *I Had One Too… An Oral History of Abortion in South Australia Before 1970* (Adelaide: Women's Studies Unit, Flinders University, 1990).

[115] Letter, Rose Ritchie to Dr J.H.L. Cumpston, 26 May 1944, NAA, B5661, 1944/2467.

[116] "S.A. Wives and the Birth Rate," *News,* 30 August 1944, 2. Statistics from the Fighting Forces Comfort Fund (FFCF). Nearly 900 families appealed to the FFCF Family Bureau from July 1943 to November 1944 for help to find adequate accommodation; only 131 cases were successful. See Fighting forces Comfort Fund, Annual Report, November 1944, SLSA.

[117] South Australian Government, No. 32, "Second Progress Report of the Building Act Inquiry Committee: Substandard Housing Conditions in the Metropolitan Area," 12 September 1940. See Commonwealth Housing

Miss Grant-Allan, head of the South Australian Housewives' Association, told the *News* that the report formed "an intensely human document … [a] wonderful sign of the future [that] mothers were giving this problem of more children serious thought".[118] The report is indeed a rich source for understanding women's concerns about pregnancy, childbirth and rearing children during the war. However, it also reveals that fulfilling an ideal mode of womanhood was harder and far more complex than wartime discourses conveyed. As Julie Harvey asserts, the report's composition was inherently biased and ideological: it emphasised both women's willingness and natural desire to have more children.[119] Its "pro-natalist" focus was consistent with the government objective of shifting women out of the workforce at the war's end. The report's recommendations—including child endowments and more help in the home—were intended to make domestic life an interesting and viable alternative to women who had worked in wartime industries.[120] But women in South Australia, where the birth-rate remained consistently high and actually increased for the war's duration, seemed committed to domesticity regardless of the privations many endured.

One issue notably absent from the report was the state of relations between husbands and wives, other than a sentence to say that an "appreciable number of writers complained that, owing to the present divorce laws, they could not obtain release from undesirable husbands, with whom they were not prepared to have children".[121] The prevalence of domestic violence in Australia during World War II, particularly within civilian families, has not been studied to an appreciable extent. Most existing studies of war and gender violence focus on the post-war trauma of returned soldiers. Joy Damousi's *Living with the Aftermath* is the leading text, which examines the experiences of war widows from World War I to Vietnam, many of whom had struggled with volatile changes in their husbands' personalities before their deaths as a result of their military service.[122] Damousi's work

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Commission reports for Millicent, Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Whyalla and Naracoorte in NAA, A11625, Z122–Z129.

[118] "Mothers Fear for Future: Comment Here on Birth-Rate Letters," *News,* 5 December 1944, 3.

[119] Harvey, "The Truth About Mothers and Babies," 43–4.

[120] *Ibid.*

[121] NHMRC, Interim Report, 76.

[122] Joy Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

clearly establishes a link between wartime conditions and domestic violence, however it does not examine the "underlying culture of domestic brutality" that was rife in marriages during the first half of the twentieth century.[123] Elizabeth Nelson, in her study of domestic violence in Victoria during World War I, argues that the conflict exacerbated the social conditions that were conducive to wife abuse, especially because men's involvement in violent conflict excused, and thus reinforced, tolerance for men's violence against women.[124] There were, of course, violent husbands who were not servicemen. Nelson identifies that civilian men too were influenced by wartime conditions, arguing that emphasis on military masculine identity served to exacerbate feelings of inadequacy, which sometimes manifested in an exertion of power through controlling and intimidating behaviour and physical violence towards their partners. She also identifies that support of men's right to drink during the war increased anti-social and drunken behaviour at home.[125] Support for men's right to drink was certainly still present in World War II South Australia. In comments regarding the relative alcohol consumption of men and women, State Liberal Member Cecil Hincks argued to the House of Assembly in August 1942 that the criticism "hurled" at South Australian soldiers regarding excessive drinking and disorderly behaviour should be condemned: "sufficient allowance" should be made for a "certain exuberance of spirits on the part of the men so recently returned from the hardship and perils associated with campaigning in the Middle East".[126]

Concealment or omission of domestic violence within the historical record is common as authorities and communities were long disinclined to interfere in private family matters.[127] This makes the wartime journals of the Women Police an extremely valuable source for historical domestic violence cases. They confirm that alcohol-induced violence in the home was a distinct social problem during this period, at least among the working-class families that the Women Police patrolled in Adelaide's north-western suburbs. On 23 July 1940, a Woman Police officer recorded the following after an interview with housewife Nora

[123] Elizabeth Nelson, *Homefront Hostilities: The First World War and Domestic Violence* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014), x.

[124] Nelson, *Homefront Hostilities,* x–xi.

[125] *Ibid.,* 34–58.

[126] Cecil Hincks, address in reply, *SAPD,* House of Assembly, 5 August 1942, 253.

[127] Alana Piper and Ana Stevenson, eds, *Gender Violence in Australia: Historical Perspectives* (Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2019), xiv–xv.

McFarlane: "husband Alexander Jack, 27 years, Largs Bay … two children … husband drinks and smashes and burns the household articles, uses filthy language and hits his wife. Husband has a shipping office in Port Adelaide [and] family is well-known locally. Insanity on husband's side. Wife does not wish him seen, just a record kept of her complaint".[128] Another entry from May 1944 records that Charles Rebbeck, husband of Florence Rebbeck, a married couple aged in their 40s, forced his wife to leave her home as he attacked her in a drunken rage. It was recorded that she "was afraid of her husband" and Women Police assisted in getting her belongings from the home.[129] Another woman called the Women Police about her "brutal" husband, who she alleged in a drunken evening had burned all her and her children's clothing.[130] The action taken by police after these instances varied. Usually a warning was issued, however in some extreme cases, the husband was arrested.[131]

They are also innumerable cases of violence, bullying and intimidation between husbands and wives without a reason indicated other than that the husband appeared to be of an abusive nature. The serious injuries that women sustained are listed in detail by the Women Police, such as the bruising to the nose and hand and bump to the back of the head that Lucy Lamont of Exeter sustained after her husband, a Peace Officer on the Port Adelaide wharves, punched her in the face and then hit her with a saucepan.[132] Women Police record that another woman had her face "blackened [and] neck, chest and upper-arm badly bruised" by her husband, who had "thrashed her" one night in June 1941.[133] The case of Lorna and Leslie Battye, while particularly extreme, is also illustrative of contemporary attitudes towards domestic violence. The couple in their early 20s came under the notice of South Australian Police in July 1942 as Holden employee Leslie was refusing to work. Women Police attended the home, recording that he had:

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[128] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, July 1939–April 1941, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[129] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, March–September 1944, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3. Also see 26 October 1942, Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1941–January 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[130] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1941–January 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[131] See, for example, entry for 4 March 1940, Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, July 1939–April 1941, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[132] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, August 1943–March 1944, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[133] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1941–January 1942, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

> struck his wife on the mouth this [morning] and pulled her out of bed by the feet and hurt her head. Recently he struck her on the breast, bruising same. When she was five months pregnant, he beat her and she had a miscarriage. Called on Mr Ryan of Rosewater Police who would go to the home [and] send the man to work. Also, a boarder to be secured for company for this man, otherwise a legal separation.[134]

This example demonstrates the limited options available to women who found themselves in abusive marriages; to modern readers, the solution offered by the Women Police appears woefully inadequate, especially because it did not immediately remove Lorna Battye from danger, nor punish Leslie Battye for his alleged crimes. Until 1959, with the introduction of the *Commonwealth Matrimonial Causes Act* (which established grounds for divorce, namely after three years desertion or five years of separation), marriage laws were administered by each state. The South Australian *Matrimonial Causes Amendment Act (1938)* legalised divorce after five years of separation; this route was still expensive and especially difficult for women who had no means of obtaining their own economic support.[135] The breaking up of the family unit was also strongly discouraged by authorities. In some cases, Women Police suggested that the best course of action was for the husband and wife to "work things out for the sake of the children".[136] The attitude of South Australian Police—unless a serious or life-threating assault had occurred—was that domestic violence was a woman's issue rather than a genuine police matter. This did little to stop the incidence of cases, often with severe violence, which Women Police journals reveal they were attending on an almost daily basis: equal to or more than the number of cases they dealt with regarding women and American servicemen.

Needless to say, the instance of domestic violence in South Australia did not start and stop with the war, and in many cases wartime circumstances were a contributing factor

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[134] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1942–July 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3. Also see entry 18 March 1943, Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, 18 March 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[135] Margaret Allen, "Marriage and Divorce," in Wilfrid Prest, Kerrie Round, and Carol Fort, eds, *The Wakefield Companion to South Australian History* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2001), 336–8.

[136] See, for example, entries under 10 May 1940, Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, July 1939–April 1941, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3; 16 May 1942, Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1941–January 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3; 23 May 1942, Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1941–January 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3; 11 October 1942, Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1942–July 1942, SRSA, GRG 5/105/3.

rather than a main cause. There are, however, two specific types of domestic violence that emerge from the Women Police journals during the war: husbands who confronted wives who were allegedly spending time with allied servicemen in their absence, and those that have their roots in the husband preventing or attempting to prevent the wife from gaining or keeping wartime work. In both cases, women are punished for failing to maintain acceptable standards of femininity or uphold the feminine role. I will specifically address this latter form of abuse. In some instances, a husband's inability to deal with his wife's wartime employment manifested in violent actions. This was the case with Lorna McHale, aged 30 years, who worked at Cravens Department Store in Adelaide. Her husband came to the store and forced her to leave, and then "struck her until she nearly collapsed".[137] Lorna planned to charge her husband with grievous bodily harm.[138] Another woman was also assaulted by her husband outside her place of work in October 1944.[139] Tensions between 30 year-old Kathleen Skinner, who worked at Holden, and her husband, who worked at another factory, resulted in a violent attack one evening, stemming from an argument over his withholding of her wages.[140]

This situation would now be classed as a form of economic abuse, which can be defined as a form of domestic violence. This type of abuse includes controlling or violent behaviour stemming from tension over household finances, withholding money, or refusing to contribute to household costs or child maintenance.[141] It is likely that economic abuse was far more widespread than the historical record can reveal. Indeed, the greater proportion of women earning their own money for the first time means World War II is an interesting case study for its prevalence. The competing gendered ideologies of women assisting the war effort versus maintaining domestic order is starkly clear in one instance I identified in the Women Police journals. In November 1942, Frederick David Mitchell called the Women Police because his wife, 26 year-old Dorothy Mitchell, had refused to resign from Finsbury munitions factory to stay at home and care for their four children, even after he had

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[137] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, August 1942–March 1944, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[138] *Ibid.*

[139] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal September–December 1944, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[140] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1941–January 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3.

[141] Alana Piper, "Understanding Economic Abuse as Domestic Violence," in Alana Piper and Ana Stevenson, eds, *Gender Violence in Australia: Historical Perspectives* (Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2019), 34-48.

threatened to turn her out of the house. Dorothy said she was afraid of her husband. However, Women Police advised Dorothy that she should resign and stay home with the children, writing that "he [the husband] is earning good money on the wharf, so wife will go to work today and give notice".[142] The fact that Dorothy was losing her economic independence in this instance—and that Finsbury was losing an essential war worker—was not considered an issue by Women Police, who supported the prerogative of the husband and the patriarchal structure of society. The idea that the Women Police were relatively openminded, as Lemar suggests in her study, is entirely irreconcilable with these examples, which, in the Women Police journals, appear alongside the venereal disease cases she discusses. When examining the journals in full, they suggest that protecting the appearance of domestic happiness was more important than protecting women, which was entirely in line with the social conventions of the period. Domestic violence was not unique to the war; however, the experience of total war further encouraged the perpetration of violence, and the home was not immune.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have examined the language that surrounded female sexuality and morality in South Australia during World War II, finding that the antithesis of acceptable femininity was a woman who drank excessively, engaged in non-marital sex with allied servicemen, spread venereal disease, and thus imperilled the war effort. This widespread stereotype, in addition to having damaging social effects for women, also had clear tangible effects on police protocols and government policies. The introduction of the "Liquor Control Orders" and *National Security (Venereal Disease and Contraception) Regulations*, while claiming to be in the best interests of women (and men) did little to protect their safety or dignity; this legislation endorsed negative stereotypes because it framed alcohol consumption and the spread of venereal diseases as distinctly female problems. The lack of censure that American servicemen received in the press also encouraged public mistrust of women's sexuality and behaviour, whose contagious and menacing bodies were inscribed with the public's fear of a venereal disease epidemic. But contracting a venereal disease was just one danger of many for women, who in extreme cases were victims of rape, violent assaults and slander campaigns. Even "respectable"—i.e. married—women were not immune from the effects of

[142] Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, May 1941–January 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3. In another case, after receiving similar complaints from a mother-in-law, the Women Police also advised a worker at Hendon to resign and take care of her children. See Port Adelaide Women Police Journal, 1 November 1943, SRSA, GRG, 5/105/3, 1943-1944.

men's anti-social behaviour; the journals of Women Police reveal that domestic violence was at endemic levels during the war. The social and economic hardships that many families faced produced circumstances even more conducive of marital tensions. Despite these issues, South Australia's birth-rate remained well above the national average, suggesting that, in this state at least, moral alarm about a decline in traditional womanly duties was largely unfounded.

Indeed, for many South Australian women, World War II—at least in their view—was a time of conventional femininity. For the 70 women who married American servicemen, accusations of immorality were prevented by a traditional courtship that ended in marriage, and for many, a baby before war's end. Despite risking the taint of pejorative labels, some women also pursued romantic relationships with American servicemen and successfully avoided social stigma, even though they did not intend these relationships to end in marriage. In oral histories, women emphasised that this contact had not emerged from pleasure, but from patriotic duty and an inherent impulse to fulfil a nurturing, motherly role. Like wartime volunteers, they saw American servicemen as a decent group of men, lonely in the absence of their own family, who needed some form of comfort and entertainment. This created a space in which they could engage in romantic behaviour with American servicemen that many not have been condoned outside the pretext of the war effort. Ultimately, however, the line between acceptable femininity and deviant sexuality remained only too fine. The negative discourse that pervaded community debate on women's behaviour undoubtedly strengthened wartime suspicions about the scale of unchecked female sexuality. The strong link that was perceived between female immorality and working-class women was both persistent and harmful. As the next chapter shows, such prejudices were further enhanced on the basis of ethnicity.

# Chapter Five

## "You're Better Out of the Way": The Experiences of German and Italian Women*

Throughout the previous chapters, analysis has largely focused on the experiences of British-Australian women. In this chapter, I address the intersection of gender and ethnicity by analysing the experiences of South Australian women who were enemy aliens, either by birth or marriage, or had British-Australian nationality but also had the ethnicity of an Axis nation or its affiliates. It focuses on German and Italian women, as they formed South Australia's largest group of female enemy aliens, and considers whether the isolation and discrimination these women faced was reinforced if they were perceived to fall outside the boundaries of acceptable femininity. As such, I examine the discursive construction of German and Italian women and how it may have influenced their treatment by the public and the Commonwealth Investigation Branch, which at the time was Australia's main security, intelligence and law enforcement agency. It asks whether feminine ideology was reinforced to a greater degree in regard to women already perceived as having an increased threat to social order and public morale. At the same time, it reveals how the policies enacted towards such women—based on long-standing xenophobic attitudes towards ethnic minorities in Australia and distinctive wartime anxieties—often prevented their conformity to gender expectations and roles.

Literature exists on the treatment of German and Italian women during World War II, but much of it focuses on wartime internment. As almost all internees were male, the majority of this literature presents the alien experience as primarily masculine.[1] Women, if mentioned at all, often feature as a subsidiary part of their husband's or father's stories.[2]

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[1] Some recent research on the experiences of (male) internees include Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, "Citizenship, Rights and Emergency Powers in Second World War Australia," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 53, no. 2 (2007): 207–22; Christina Twomey, "'In the Front Line?' Internment and Citizenship Entitlements in the Second World War," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 53, no. 2 (2007): 194–206; Kay Saunders, "'The Stranger in our Gates': Internment Policies in the United Kingdom and Australia during Two World Wars, 1914-39," *Immigrants & Minorities* 22, no. 1 (2003): 22–43.

[2] Examples include Margaret Bevege, *Behind Barbed Wire: Internment in Australia during World War II* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1993); Kay Saunders, "A Difficult Reconciliation: Civil Liberties and Internment Policy in Australia during World War II," in Kay Saunders and Roger Daniels, eds, *Alien Justice: Wartime Internment in Australia and North America* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2000), 114–37; Kay Saunders, "'Inspired by Patriotic Hysteria?' Internment Policy Towards Enemy Aliens in Australia during the Second World War," in Panikos Panayi, ed., *Minorities in Wartime: National and Racial Groupings in Europe, North America and Australia during the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), 287–315; Gaetano Rando, "Italo-Australians during the Second World War: Some Perceptions of Internment"

While this lack of focus is mainly because internment affected men more so than women, as opposed to a deliberate effort to exclude women from the historical narrative, it indicates the potential for future research if gender were to be a central category of analysis, rather than a presumed part of the alien experience. Some recent works detail the effect of internment on families and family life, including the edited collections *Under Suspicion: Citizenship and Internment in Australia during the Second World War* and *In the Interest of National Security: Civilian Internment in Australia during World War II.* [3] Given that Japanese citizens faced mandatory internment, academic research on their experiences, including Japanese women and children, is more proliferous.[4] The short- and long-term impact of World War II on the lives of Italian women has been addressed in broader historical studies relating to twentieth-century Italian immigration to Australia, including Desmond O'Connor's *No Need to Be Afraid* and Gianfranco Cressani's *The Italians in Australia*.[5]

Christine Winter has undertaken research on the experiences of the German refugee women from Papua New Guinea discussed in the last section of this chapter. Her chapter in *Germans: Travellers, Settlers and Their Descendants* explores ethnic identity and the religious and political aspects of their arrival in Australia, from the view of the women,

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(Research Paper, Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, 2005), 13-5. Also see Cate Elkner, Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, Gaetano Rando and Anthony Cappello, *Enemy Aliens: The Internment of Italian Migrants in Australia during the Second World War* (Melbourne: Connor Court Publishing, 2005); Bill Bunbury, *Rabbits & Spaghetti: Captives and Comrades: Australians, Italians and the War, 1939-1945* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Press, 1995); Mia Spizzica, eds, *War, Internment and Australia's Italians* (Brisbane: Glasshouse Books, 2018).

[3] Joan Beaumont, Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien and Mathew Trinca, eds, *Under Suspicion: Citizenship and Internment in Australia during the Second World War* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia Press, 2008); Klaus Neumann, *In the Interest of National Security: Civilian Internment in Australia during World War II* (Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 2006).

[4] See Pam Oliver, "A Matter of Perspective: Two Australian-Japanese Families' Encounters with White Australia, 1888-1946 ," in Michael Ackland and Pam Oliver, eds, *Unexpected Encounters: Neglected Histories Behind the Australia-Japan Relationship* (Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2007), 113–34; Pam Oliver, *Empty North: The Japanese Presence and Australian Reactions, 1860s to 1942* (Darwin: Charles Darwin University Press, 2006); Pam Oliver, "Japanese Relationships with White Australia: The Sydney Experience to 1941," *History Australia* 4, no. 1 (2007): 5–20; Pam Oliver, "Citizens Without Certificates or Enemy Aliens? Japanese Residents Before 1947," in Joan Beaumont, Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien and Mathew Trinca, eds, *Under Suspicion: Citizenship and Internment in Australia during the Second World War* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia Press, 2008), 125–41; Yuriko Nagata, *Unwanted Aliens: Japanese Internment in Australia* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1996); Yuriko Nagata, "Naive Patriotism: The Internment of Moshi Inagaki in Australia during the Second World War," in Joan Beaumont, Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien and Mathew Trinca, eds, *Under Suspicion: Citizenship and Internment in Australia during the Second World War* (Canberra: National Musuem of Australia Press, 2008), 112–24; Yuriko Nagata, "Japanese Internees at Loveday, 1941-46," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 15 (1987): 65–81.

[5] Desmond O'Connor, *No Need to Be Afraid: Italian Settlers in South Australia Between 1839 and the Second World War* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1996); Gianfranco Cresciani, *The Italians in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

government authorities, and the local communities they settled in.[6] I extend this research by paying closer attention to the gendered aspects of their experiences. Winter has also examined wartime constructions of "dangerous internees" in Australia, arguing, in relation to German, Japanese and Italian women, that danger was often aligned with moral suspicion.[7] Emily Turner-Graham's research on National Socialism in the inter-war period particularly focuses on the intersection between ethnicity and gender in the experiences of German-Australian women.[8] Barbara Poniewierski also explores women's role in the spread of National Socialist sentiment within German communities in South Australia during the 1930s; this chapter deepens her inquiry.[9] Maria Glaros's doctoral thesis provides the most detailed account of Australia's treatment of female enemy aliens during World War II, although it is mainly focused on understanding their experiences from a racial perspective. This means it is best classified as a "recovery history" rather than a gendered analysis. Nevertheless, it effectively reveals how "wartime hysteria" generated much of the antagonism experienced by female minorities during this period, its main objective being to rectify the misconception that female enemy aliens, Australian-born women, and naturalised women of German, Italian and Japanese descent, were little affected by *National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations.*[10]

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[6] Christine Winter, "No Man's Land: A Tale of Love and Longing in Wartime," in Peter Monteath ed., *Germans: Travellers, Settlers and Their Descendants in South Australia* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2011), 345–63. Also see Christine Winter, *Looking After One's Own: The Rise of Nationalism and the Politics of the Neuendettelsauer Mission in Australia, New Guinea and Germany, 1921–1933* (Frankfurt: Germanica Pacifica, 2012); Emily Turner-Graham and Christine Winter, eds, *National Socialism in Oceania: A Critical Evaluation of its Effect and Aftermath* (Frankfurt: Germanica Pacifica, 2010).

[7] Christine Winter, "Removing Danger: The Making of 'Dangerous Internees' in Australia," in Mark J. Crowley and Sandra Trudgen Dawson, eds, *Home Fronts: Britain and the Empire at War, 1939–45* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2017), 206–23.

[8] Emily Turner-Graham, *'Never Forget That You Are a German': Die Brücke, 'Deutschtum' and National Socialism in Interwar Australia* (Frankfurt: Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2011); Emily Turner-Graham, "'The German Woman has the Inner Energy to Work for Germanness': Race, Gender and National Socialism in Interwar Australia," *Lilith* 15 (2006): 97–116; David Nichols and Emily Turner-Graham, "Bluey and Sol: Anti-Semitic Humour in a German-Australian Outpost, 1937-1939," *Immigrants and Minorities* 33, no. 3 (2015): 231–49.

[9] Barbara Poniewierski, "National Socialism," in Peter Monteath, ed., *Germans: Travellers, Settlers and Their Descendants in South Australia* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2011), 270–93.

[10] Maria Glaros, "'Sometimes a little injustice must be suffered for the public good': How the *National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations 1939* (Cth) Affected the Lives of German, Italian, Japanese and Australian-born Women Living in Australia During the Second World War," (PhD thesis, University of Western Sydney, 2012).

In this chapter, I also draw on Jill Julius Matthews's concept of the "gender order", which is particularly adaptable to questions of ethnicity. As it related to Australian society during the twentieth century, Matthews defines the gender order as "one of the major ideological forms by which social meaning [was] created … the structure of relations that establish[ed] the meaning of 'women' and 'men'".[11] She terms the feminine ideal that arose from these relations as the "good woman":

> The gender order [was] premised on a specific ideal of the relations between women and men, and that the component parts of that order attempted to shape everybody's lives towards that ideal … the function of the gender order was to transform people into ideal good women and men … operating within the framework of that order [and] measuring themselves and others against their understanding of the ideal standard, of true or good women and men.[12]

Matthews argues that even in the 1970s, female immigrants were expected to conform to a "basic feminine ideal" centred on marriage and motherhood.[13] The notion that the "loyalty" of an alien or migrant woman was reflected in the loyalty she showed towards her family—and by extension, traditional femininity—is central to Matthews's analysis of pre-war and post-war female immigration to South Australia. For women who migrated from Southern Europe (i.e. Italy and Greece) during the pre-war period, she argues that if they found themselves defined outside of a familial context, they would have been likely viewed as threatening to mainstream South Australian society.[14] Indeed, Matthews concludes that those who displayed sexual interest or sexuality outside of marriage were viewed as "incongruous" with the "good woman" ideal.[15] The expectation for female immigrants to assimilate, therefore, arguably consisted of gendered assumptions in addition to broader

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[11] Jill Julius Matthews, "Good and Mad Women: A Study of the Gender-Order in South Australia, 1920-1970" (PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 1979), vii, 4.

[12] Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 23.

[13] *Ibid.,* 40–2.

[14] Jill Julius Matthews, "Good and Mad Women," 222.

[15] *Ibid.,* 240–1.

cultural attitudes and official government policy. Whether the treatment of female aliens in World War II shares parallels with these arguments, which suggest a strong intersection between gendered expectations and attitudes towards nationality and migration, is the focus of this chapter.

**German and Italian Communities in South Australia**

German and Italian women were the largest group of female enemy aliens in South Australia during World War II, accounting for 294 of 323 women classified as such on 30 September 1945.[16] There are very few Commonwealth Investigation Branch (CIB) documents on women of other nationalities. Of the files on women created by the South Australian CIB between 1939 and 1945 that I examined, just five related to those who were not of German and Italian origin. This included Diane Kolker, a Russian-Jewish woman who served in the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) and was a suspected member of the Communist Party and Australian Soviet Friendship League; Hilda Rado, who became an enemy alien through marriage to a Hungarian national in July 1944; Nettie Surgal, a Polish national who was arrested by the CIB in December 1939 for failing to register as an enemy alien; Margaret Burton, an unmarried Australian woman who attracted suspicion by reading German literature in public; and Mary Matsumoto, an Aboriginal woman and mother-of-four who was interned as an enemy alien at Tatura Internment Camp after the capture of her Japanese-born husband in December 1941.[17] While the experiences of these women are worthy of further research, they do not represent an adequate sample size to trace how ethnic and gendered attitudes particularly affected South Australian women with Japanese, Polish, Russian and Hungarian nationality. A study of Japanese women, for example, would be better suited to Western Australia, New South Wales, or Queensland, which had substantially larger Japanese populations.[18] South Australia makes an interesting case study for German and Italian women because it was home to some of the country's largest communities during this period. Indeed, the omnipresence of German culture across the state, the prominence of German individuals at all levels of South Australian society, the

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[16] Noel W. Lamidey, *Aliens Control in Australia, 1939-46* (Sydney: Noel Lamidey, 1974), 69–71.

[17] "Miss Diane Kolker," National Archives of Australia [henceforth NAA], D1915, SA21676; "Mrs Hilda Mary Rado, Application to make declaration under Section 18A of the Nationality Act," NAA, D1915, SA11318; "Mary Matsumoto and Kakio Matsumoto," NAA, D1915, SA21158; "Abram Surgal and wife Nettie Surgal," NAA, D1915, SA6877; "Margaret Douglas Burton," NAA, D1915, SA18464.

[18] See Oliver, "Citizens Without Certificates," 125–8.

continued arrival of German refugees throughout the war, and lack of Japanese enemy aliens to detract CIB attention from the everyday activities of German communities, means South Australia provides a unique opportunity to examine the tensions and complexities of German-Australian relations during World War II.

German settlement in South Australia dates from 1838, a mere two years after the foundation of the colony, with those arriving in the 1830s being the first Germans to settle in Australia as an organised group.[19] The Barossa Valley, particularly the townships of Tanunda and Lobethal, as well as the Adelaide Hills, were still central locations for German communities during World War II, while the suburbs of Klemzig and Glen Osmond also had a sizeable number of German residents. Obtaining the exact number of South Australia's German residents during this period is difficult, primarily because many identifying as German were actually second or third generation Australian-born. The 1933 Census records 2,149 people of German birth (of which 500 had retained German nationality), although an estimated 20,000 ethnic Germans resided in South Australia during the 1940s.[20] It is unknown how many Australian or British-born women were classed as "German" through marriage, although statistical data indicates that South Australia had the highest number of Lutheran marriages out of any state from 1935-45 inclusive.[21] On average, ten of these marriages per year were between German men and South Australian-born women, until 1940, when only two marriages between German men and South Australian-born women took place.[22] This was accompanied by an increase in the yearly average number of Lutheran marriages, presumably between men and women of German descent.

Italian groups are easier to discern. 1,500 Italian-born individuals lived in South Australia by 1942, after an almost 400 per cent increase in Italian immigration to Australia during the 1920s and 1930s.[23] The majority resided in Port Pirie, as well as inner-city Adelaide and the western suburbs, with men primarily engaged as manual labourers, market

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[19] Ian Harmstorf and Michael Cigler, *The Germans in Australia* (Melbourne: AE Press, 1985), 12.

[20] *Census 1933* (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1933), 728–30, 848–9; Lamidey, *Aliens Control*, 90. Germans in Australia defined themselves as being either "ethnic" Germans (*Volksdeutsche*), that is, with German heritage but possessing another nationality (e.g. Australian), or as citizens of the Reich (*Reichdeutsche*). See Poniewierski, "National Socialism in South Australia," 270–93.

[21] See table "Marriages in each Denomination," in *Demography Bulletin,* nos. 53–63 (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1935-45).

[22] *Demography Bulletin 1940* (Canberra: Australian Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1940), 58.

[23] "Italian Communities in Australia," NAA, D1915, SA22082; O'Connor, *No Need to be Afraid*, 2.

gardeners and fruit-growers. In 1933, South Australia's 286 Italian women accounted for just 19 per cent of the state's Italian population.[24] This was likely due to the economic imperative behind Italian migration: men sought first to obtain financial independence, which during the Depression became more difficult, before inviting their families to take up Australian residence with them. By 1947, South Australia's female Italian population had risen to 32 per cent, although arrivals had stalled during the war.[25] The public viewed this large influx of Italian women with both interest and scepticism. According to Desmond O'Connor, they were often portrayed in press coverage as "exotic curiosit[ies] culturally alien to Anglo-Australians".[26] However, in terms of gender, the arrival of these women was conventional rather than unusual. The vast majority were the mothers, wives and daughters of Italian men already residing in South Australia; their migration, and accordingly the roles they took up as new South Australian residents, were "adjunctive, not independent".[27]

The experiences of Italian migrants in pre-war Australia, as those of all non-Anglo ethnic groups, were heavily influenced by how they were perceived by British-Australian society. An "aggressive attachment to whiteness" characterised the period from the 1880s to the 1940s.[28] However, the idea of "whiteness" was not always synonymous with being European (which would have naturally included those with German and Italian heritage), but rather with Britishness, and indeed, the concept of a uniquely Australian citizenship, as opposed to "British citizenship", did not emerge until after World War II.[29] While a degree of fraternalism existed between German and British settlers during the nineteenth century, the onset of World War I diminished this considerably, while a "deeper racist attitude" towards Italians also developed during the inter-war period.[30] The olive "colour" of Southern

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[24] O'Connor, *No Need to be Afraid,* 109.

[25] For a total list of Italian arrivals to, and departures from, South Australia, see *ibid*., 216.

[26] *Ibid.*, 109.

[27] Indeed, after 1925 it was a requirement that non-British "white aliens" would be willing to take responsibility for their social and economic welfare, see Matthews, "Good and Mad Women," 218–9.

[28] Ann Curthoys, "White, British and European: Historicising Identity in Settler Societies," in Jane Carey and Claire McLiskey, eds, *Creating White Australia* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009), 6.

[29] Joan Beaumont, "Australian Citizenship and Two World Wars," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 53, no. 2 (2007): 171–82. Curthoys argues that British settlers aligned themselves as European in a relational context, that is, when comparing their "Europeanness" to non-European ethnic or racial groups, such as Indigenous Australians and Asian migrants, see Curthoys, "White, British and European," 19.

[30] Harmstorf and Cigler, *The Germans in Australia,* 120–1; Cresciani, *The Italians in Australia,* 54–64; Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, "Internments in Australia during World War Two: Life Histories of Citizenship and

Italian migrants became an ongoing source of contention, particularly in relation to the White Australia policy, which included a formal process of assessing European migrants on the colour of their skin.[31] Even in the 1920s, terms such as the "Olive Peril"—similar in tone and substance to the use of 'Yellow Peril' during World War II—were being used to describe Italian labourers in Queensland.[32] The hostilities of World War II, and the change in legal status of German and Italians from "non-British" aliens to "enemy" aliens, intensified these long-standing divisions and the extent to which German and Italian ethnicity could be reconciled with Australia's mainstream understanding of European "whiteness".

**The Outbreak of War**

The outbreak of war in September 1939 had immediate consequences for South Australia's German and Italian communities. The Commonwealth Government had begun monitoring those it suspected of having Nazi or Fascist sympathies from 1934 and 1936 respectively.[33] Mandatory registration of aliens (enemy and non-enemy) started in June 1939 as part of the *Aliens Registration Act 1939.* On 13 September 1939, the *National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations 1939* were enforced. These regulations defined who was classified as an "enemy alien"—i.e. citizens of Germany, Italy, Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Japan, Romania and Thailand—and controlled their rights to movement, residence, possessions, employment and assembly.[34] The regulations also applied to the Australian-born wives of enemy aliens who had not made a declaration under Part IV of the *Nationality Act 1920*, which outlined that the "wife of a British subject shall be deemed to be a British subject, and the wife of an alien shall be deemed an alien".[35] Australian women who had married an alien were allowed to regain British nationality if they made a declaration under the Act, although

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Exclusion," in Elkner, ed., *Enemy Aliens,* 23. Desmond O'Connor notes that in South Australia, xenophobic attitudes towards Italian migrants had been particularly long-standing, the view being in the 1890s that "Italians, Greeks and other cheap labourers were just as objectionable to the colony as coloured races". See O'Connor, *No Need to be Afraid,* 64.

[31] Helen Andreoni, "Olive or White? The Colour of Italians in Australia," *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, no. 77 (2003): 82.

[32] *Ibid.,* 85-6.

[33] O'Connor, *No Need to be Afraid,* 150-2; Poniewierski, "National Socialism in South Australia," 287.

[34] *National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations 1939* (Cth) Parts I–VII; Lamidey, *Aliens Control*, 11.

[35] See *Nationality Act 1920* (Cth) Part IV.

they were not always informed of this provision, and, indeed, some women remained unaware they had lost their British nationality in the first place.[36]

Enemy aliens were also barred from certain employment and business associations; they were restricted from sending overseas communication or post (including to family members residing in enemy countries); they were required to submit their local and national mail to military authorities for censorship; and they were not allowed to own motor vehicles, signalling devices, maps or charts, wireless radios, cameras or recording devices.[37] Some of these restrictions applied to wives who had regained their British nationality.[38] The *Aliens Control Regulations* also included provision for the internment of those deemed a threat to national security and public morale. Germans were included within the regulations from the beginning, while Italians came under its ambit from June 1940. The Commonwealth Government heavily scrutinised the pre-war activities of both German and Italian men: those known to have held Nazi or Fascist connections, or were suspected of having Japanese or communist sympathies, were immediately searched and many were subsequently interned.[39]

The internment of a male family member caused acute emotional distress for German and Italian women. In a letter to her husband in July 1942, Caterina Pasculli, an Italian immigrant and Port Pirie mother-of-three, conveyed the personal difficulties faced by herself and her sister in raising their young children alone:

> There are just us two women with a lot of children and we have to think of everything … as far as the family and I concerned I can't report any amusements, only a lot of sadness. I think that these last two years have aged me and made me nervy and irritable … how we keenly look forward to that longed-for day when we will all be back together again.[40]

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[36] "British Subjects (females) Marrying Aliens," Police Correspondence File, State Records of South Australia [henceforth SRSA], GRG, 5/2/1942/1580.

[37] *National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations 1939* (Cth) Parts VI-VII; Lamidey, *Aliens Control*, 20–5, 35.

[38] Lamidey, *Aliens Control,* 37.

[39] On 31 March 1944, there were 145 German and 170 Italian male enemy aliens interned in South Australia, equating to about 15 per cent of South Australia's enemy alien population. See Lamidey, *Aliens Control,* 52–3.

[40] Letter from Caterina Pasculli to Domenico Pasculli, 22 July 1942, NAA, D1915, SA2625. Translated from original Italian in O'Connor, *No Need to be Afraid,* 184. The State Library of South Australia holds an oral history interview with Caterina Pasculli; however, it was conducted in Italian and has not been translated. See

The recollections of Mrs Jensch, born in South Australia in 1908 to German parents and who became an enemy alien through marriage to a German citizen, indicates that the distress caused by the internment of male family members, and the public suspicion it generated, was a shared experience between German and Italian women:

> I think [one] of the cruel things was the Italians, the way they rounded them up … they'd been here for generations, and all those women were left. And people turned on them. My sister-in-law was just as bad. I couldn't believe it because she went to school with them … overnight they can change like that. And from then on, I could feel, you know, something. I thought, I'd better keep away from her too. You know, they just think you're going to cause them trouble. You're better out of the way.[41]

Women left behind had to manage with the social and economic difficulties of living without a male breadwinner. Finding employment of their own was inconvenient at best, more so if they had children. They were required to obtain a travel permit to leave the police district in which they lived, were barred from travelling in private vehicles, and were required to report to a local police station at least once a week, or more often if they needed to leave their local district.[42] Although the definition of "police district" was extended in August 1942 to include the area within 15 miles (24 kilometres) of the General Post Office in all capital cities and towns, Noel Lamidey, secretary of the Aliens Classification and Advisory Committee during World War II, noted in his report on the *Regulations* that the "effect of refusing an alien permission to travel a few hundred yards, or even to cross the street if [it] was the boundary line of [a] police district, was generally injurious to alien and official alike".[43] Mrs Jensch had to report at her local police station twice each day in order to attend work and collect

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Caterina Pasculli interviewed by Michael Tsounis, 14 April 1984, State Library of South Australia [henceforth SLSA], OH 12/3.

[41] Mrs Jensch interviewed by Anthony Kaukus, October 1983, SLSA, OH 347/4.

[42] Lamidey, *Aliens Control,* 11–9.

[43] *Ibid.,* 9.

her daughter from school, as both these places were outside her local district.[44] She recalled a particular instance in which she risked prosecution for visiting her sick mother, who lived outside her local district, without a police permit.[45]

The difficulty of gaining and keeping paid work is reflected in the employment figures of female aliens. Data collected by the Commonwealth Government in June 1943 reveals that only 20 per cent of female aliens of all backgrounds in South Australia—that is, 142 of 724 women—were gainfully employed outside the home: 18 in public administration, 19 in primary industry, 26 in commerce and finance, and 79 in industrial and factory work.[46] This compares to an overall female average of 26 per cent at the same time.[47] A number of reasons affected the ability of German and Italian women to retain paid work, including suspicion on the part of employers, the restrictions associated with travelling to and from work, and the strain of keeping house in the absence of male family members. Joan Bohlmann, aged 21 years, was dismissed from a government munitions factory after it became known to the South Australian Deputy-Director of Security that her mother, father and brother were interned.[48] A report compiled by South Australian Manpower Authorities in December 1943 concluded that female aliens were unsuitable for employment in essential wartime industries. After interviewing 48 women with German, Italian, Greek, Hungarian, Dutch and Syrian nationality, both single and married, it was determined unlikely "that any great benefit will be derived from this source" as their "age, domestic responsibility, ill health and numerous justifiable reasons precluded many of the[m] from accepting any employment [or] diverting others already in employment to engage in essential work".[49]

For those German and Italian women who were employed, it was usually in lower-paid, traditionally female occupations. Mrs Jensch, for example, eventually found employment as a live-in domestic servant, while 27 year-old mother-of-one Maddalena

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[44] Mrs Jensch, interview.

[45] *Ibid.*

[46] Lamidey, *Aliens Control,* 7.

[47] Table 6 in "South Australia", *Supplementary Civilian Register* (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1943), 16–20.

[48] Deputy-Director of Security S.A to Director-General of Security, Canberra, 7 September 1942, NAA, D1915, SA5734.

[49] Leslie Hunkin, Deputy-Director General of Manpower, to Director-General of Manpower, 12 April 1944, NAA, MP39/1, 1943/403.

Griguol, who arrived in Australia in 1927, worked part-time at the Brazzale mica factory, a well-known employer of Italian women in Adelaide.[50] Of those interviewed by Manpower Authorities in December 1943, five were dressmakers, five worked in markets or retail, three were in clerical positions, two were employed in factories, three were domestic servants, two were waitresses, and one was a hospital nurse.[51] If in charge of a family business, women could be required to take over their husband's work if their partner was interned or stationed away from home. The letters of wives contained in the archival records of men directed to work in the Civil Alien Corps reveal the hardship this generated; one woman described her inability to farm four acres of land without assistance, while another stated that the heavy lifting involved in maintaining her husband's coffee manufacturing business would become untenable once her pregnancy progressed.[52] Coupled with the provision in the *National Security (Land Transfer) Regulations 1940* that barred enemy aliens from buying property or renting a dwelling for more than one year, it was a period of acute economic uncertainty for women classed as enemy aliens in South Australia.[53]

**The "Good" Alien Woman?**

In addition to the isolation and discrimination faced by German and Italian women on ethnic grounds, their low employment figures also reflected the salience of traditional gender norms during this period. Even amongst British-Australian women, the war failed to override the expectation that women's primary place was within the home. The added difficulty of being an alien woman, however, was that a husband's internment meant the dissolution of respectable family life. Nevertheless, the male breadwinner versus female homemaker dichotomy remained apparent in the travel and movement provisions of the *Aliens Control Regulations.* Noel Lamidey wrote in his report on the *Regulations* that the permit system was formulated around the expectation that aliens who were "confined for the most part of the day to the one place, such as a married woman who would normally be mostly in her own home" would be unburdened by most of the requirements, presumably having few

[50] Jensch, interview; "Mrs Maddalena Griguol," NAA, D1915, SA15596. Mica is a mineral used to make thermal and/or electrical insulation.

[51] "Report on Aliens," 18 February 1944, NAA, MP39/1, 1943/403.

[52] See files "Agostino Bonaguro," NAA, MP14/1, NN; "Francesco Chiera," NAA, MP14/1, NN.

[53] Lamidey, *Aliens Control,* 23.

social or economic reasons for needing to travel.[54] This, of course, was rarely the case. But what it reveals is that the *Regulations* not only operated with regards to ethnicity but were also shaped by a prevailing ideology that considered the best way to control a woman who may threaten social order was to ensure her containment within the domestic realm.

The emphasis on women's role as mothers in Australia, and the comparable Fascist interest in women as reproducers, offers some interesting tensions and complexities to explore. Ethnicity, race and whiteness are central to understanding gendered expectations in Australia during the interwar period. Eugenics in particular was critical in shaping attitudes towards women's sexuality and birth control.[55] While most commonly associated with Nazi Germany, eugenics—a pseudo-science that advocated for the improvement of a human population by means of controlled breeding—also became favourable in Australia during the 1920s and 1930s in response to increasing anxiety about the physical and mental fitness of the nation's population and to maintain a white European majority. While Australian eugenicists were especially concerned about the racial "inferiority" of Indigenous Australians and Asian migrants, efforts to promote British immigration and measures to exclude "unfit" white migrants of other nationalities meant comparable attitudes may have been applied to those of German and Italian origin. Indeed, Pavla Miller asserts that the stereotype of Italians as "breeding like rabbits" with no understanding of self-control or the consequences of raising a large family, often in poverty, was used by Anglo-Australians to justify disdain towards Italian communities.[56]

But did German and Italian women in Australia make an effort to seek out and prescribe to Fascist ideals of womanhood? In the German context, Emily Turner-Graham argues that identification with "Germanness" amongst German-Australian communities became increasingly rare after World War I, although a renewed effort was undertaken by local leaders during the 1930s to revive a distinct sense of German-Australian identity

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[54] Lamidey, *Aliens Control*, 11. The *Regulations* also included accommodation provisions that favoured married women. If the husband of a female enemy alien was stationed away from home or engaged in work directly related to the war effort (such as in the Civilian Alien Corps, labour camps or munitions factories), their application for change of abode would receive "sympathetic consideration", especially if two wives applied to reside together to economise on household costs. See Lamidey, *Aliens Control,* 16.

[55] See Lisa Featherstone, *Let's Talk About Sex: Histories of Sexuality in Australian From Federation to the Pill* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 144.

[56] Pavla Miller, "Calculating Babies: Changing Accounts of Fertility Decisions Among Italians in Melbourne, Australia," in Loretta Baldassar and Donna R. Gabaccia, eds, *Intimacy and Italian Migration: Gender and Domestic Lives in a Mobile World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 85.

through the lens of National Socialism.[57] For example, the women's section of *Die Brücke*, a German newspaper launched in Sydney in 1934 and circulated widely among German communities across Australia, launched a "Nazified plea" to German-Australian women that encouraged them to view home and family as "vital vessels" of the German race.[58] Barbara Poniewierski has revealed that prominent female members of the Adelaide Branch of the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) played a central role in organising branch events and distributing German racial propaganda among the state's Nazi sympathisers throughout the 1930s.[59]

These activities received very little attention in the Australian press. However, the activities of women in Nazi Germany were frequently reported, usually in reference to their overt masculine tendencies. An article appearing in the *News* in December 1944 commented on reports that German women were fighting as Nazi soldiers, stating that "sex differences between male and female soldiers [had] already been removed … the women [finding] in military service their natural occupation [having] temporarily discarded those feminine attributes usually connected with the nursery and home".[60] While this coverage aimed to situate German women in opposition to the desirable feminine qualities of Anglo-Australian women, and as further evidence of the decay and immorality of German society, the fact remained that the Nazi ideal of womanhood shared overwhelming similarities with Australia's version of the "good woman".[61]

From an Italian perspective, the Fascist model of femininity likewise advocated that the "bearing of children and selfless devotion to family and home [were] the highest political

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[57] Turner-Graham, "The German Woman has the Inner Energy to Work for Germanness," 98–9.

[58] *Ibid*., 100.

[59] Barbara Poniewierski, "National Socialism in South Australia," 269–303.

[60] "Nazi Women to Fight as Soldiers," *News,* 13 December 1944, 1.

[61] For more on the feminine ideal in Nazi Germany, see Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (London: Routledge, 2013); Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2013); Barbara McCloskey, "Marking Time: Women and Nazi Propaganda Art during World War II," *Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture,* no. 2 (2012): 1–17; Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Nancy Ruth Reagin, *Sweeping the German Nation: Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Elizabeth Heinemann, *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Post-war Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

service a woman could perform".[62] The ideal gender role of Italian Fascist women rested on their mothering abilities, both in terms of producing children and providing maternal care to fathers and husbands serving in the Italian military.[63] The extent to which this belief was held amongst Italian-Australian women is difficult to discern given the majority of research on Fascism in Australia focuses on male political activities.[64] In Port Pirie, some Fascist women formed a group which focused on the "especial nurturance" of its members' children, who were viewed as the "most treasured of the whole Fascist organisation" and were expected to become the "perfect Fascists of tomorrow".[65] However, membership numbers of the Fascist Party, particularly in South Australia, remained small in comparison to the Italian population.[66] Desmond O'Connor's and Pavla Miller's research concludes that the difficulty of securing stable employment in Australia meant the average Italian migrant family paid minimal attention to political developments in Italy, and did not place emphasis on fulfilling social expectations regarding domesticity and family life.[67] Ultimately, however, the ideal that women should act as "mothers of the race"—homemakers whose primary duty was to raise strong men of the next generation—was consistent across Australia, Germany and Italy during this period. This means any representation of German and Italian women being contrary to such feminine ideals, especially during World War II, required Anglo-Australians to disregard an inherent contradiction.

It was with these gendered expectations in mind that I examined 48 Commonwealth Investigation Branch (CIB) case files on German and Italian women in South Australia. These consist of 11 files on German women, 11 files of Italian women, and 26 files of the 30 German refugee women who arrived in South Australia from Papua New Guinea in December 1941. Now held in the Adelaide branch of the National Archives of Australia,

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[62] Robin Pickering-Iazzi, "Introduction: Inventions of Women's Making in History and Critical Thought," in Robin Pickering-Iazzi, ed., *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), x–xi.

[63] *Ibid.*

[64] See, for example, Gianfranco Cresciani, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Italians in Australia, 1922-1945* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980); Gianfranco Cresciani, "Fascism and Anti-Fascism 1922-1940," in *The Italians in Australia,* 73–96.

[65] O'Connor, *No Need to be Afraid,* 147–8.

[66] *Ibid.,* 146; Cresciani, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Italians in Australia,* 97–116.

[67] See Pavla Miller, "Calculating Babies," 85; O'Connor, *No Need to Be Afraid,* 146.

these files come from a much larger corpus of approximately 5,000 national security documents created by the CIB in South Australia (also known as the Commonwealth Police Force, Commonwealth Investigation Service, and Australian Security Intelligence Organisation) between 1917 and 1969.[68] I selected these particular files as they contain substantial documentation on the activities of these women during 1939-45, giving an unparalleled insight into how German and Italian women were monitored by intelligence authorities and the public, and hence their construction as "dangerous" citizens and "dangerous" women. One of the main issues with using archival evidence produced by police or intelligence agencies is that the information provided therein is only available to the historian through the lens of the agency itself, which by its nature is heavily biased, male-centric, and intrinsically shaped by political interests and its institutional context. While this makes it difficult to ascertain whether the CIB truly regarded the women who came under its ambit as a threat to national security, it is nevertheless useful to examine how it positioned German and Italian women as antithetical to public morale and feminine norms.[69]

The following eight case studies are drawn from this sample, which have been chosen as representative of this larger corpus. They reveal that single and married German and Italian women of all ages, enemy and non-enemy, located across South Australia, were potential targets of wartime hysteria. Indeed, some of the women's files were opened after a member of the public had raised concerns about their behaviour. In addition to public statements, each file generally contains internal CIB correspondence, employment and personal history cards, transcripts of police searches and interviews, women's correspondence with the Branch, and intercepted letters written by the women to family members and friends. If being investigated alongside their husband, the CIB documents relating to the women form part of the husband's file, which is usually the case for those who contacted the CIB to make a declaration under the *Nationality Act* or *National Security (Land Transfer) Regulations.* For those who were interned, files also contain police warrants and reports from internment camp officials.

Arguably, a local case study approach provides a more consistent comparison of the CIB's treatment of German and Italian women than a national study, as many of the cases

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[68] For entire list of case files, see series details of NAA, D1915.

[69] For more on the political context of the CIB during World War II see Frank McCain, *The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1983). For information on the issues of using police/intelligence documents as historical evidence see Moritz Follmer, "Surveillance Reports," in Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann, eds, *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century History* (London: Routledge, 2008), 74–89.

here were undertaken by the same police and intelligence officers. In addition, this approach yields a closer examination of how women were regarded within their local communities.[70] The files reveal that even the most commonplace activities could arouse public suspicion, and from this, a discernible trend appears: the apparent risk these women posed to national security and public morale was often linked to whether they complied with an ideal femininity, typically based around domesticity and unpaid work. When a woman's domestic arrangements appeared to challenge this ideal, the CIB's response became increasingly unsympathetic. As the *National Security Regulations* were primarily aimed at restricting contact within German and Italian communities, they also affected the extent to which these women could successfully keep house. This inevitably placed them even further away from the ideals expected of them.

The CIB files show that the ability of a German or Italian woman to keep house without raising suspicion was a concern for both authorities and the public alike. For example, Maria Candida, a Port Wakefield mother-of-eight, came under the scope of the *Aliens Control Regulations* because her husband had been a member of the Fascist Party in the 1930s.[71] Despite no evidence of disloyalty to Australia, police also received reports from Port Wakefield residents concerning her behaviour. A local man accused Maria of having too much financial independence, which had supposedly enabled her to purchase expensive household items, a property, and an adjoining shop.[72] Another public statement criticised her lack of interest in patriotic functions and failure to donate money to wartime causes.[73] She was described as a "shrewd … cunning woman [of] poor reputation, and not to be trusted".[74]

Maria had defended her situation in the *Mail* newspaper in August 1939. Frustrated that her poor relief applications were going unanswered by the Commonwealth Government, she had asserted that she was "still a young woman and could rear another six children, but

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[70] Follmer likewise argues an analysis of surveillance documents is best suited to a local/ regional study. See *ibid.,* 79.

[71] Memorandum from Acting Director, Commonwealth Investigation Branch, 17 December 1946, NAA, D1915, SA13434.

[72] Letter from Mr V.C Slee of Port Wakefield, 29 December 1941, NAA, D1915, SA13434.

[73] Police Report, Port Wakefield, 17 December 1941, NAA, D1915, SA13434.

[74] Letter from Mr V.C. Slee of Port Wakefield, NAA, D1915, SA13434.

not at the state of present affairs".[75] Aside from revealing her economic struggles, what makes Maria's statement particularly noteworthy is its defence of her femininity. Although written before the outbreak of war, it is nevertheless significant that she does not mention her nationality. She focused instead on what she believed to be a situation that stifled her maternal potential. However, it was Maria's domestic capabilities that eventually gave the Candidas opportunity to purchase property in 1946. *National Security (Land Transfer) Regulations* stipulated that aliens needed CIB assessment before the acquisition of property. The family's report was favourable, it being observed that Maria "control[led] and care[d] for her large family in a manner that reflect[ed] credit on her".[76] The fact that judgement of Maria's domesticity was central to her experience with the CIB between 1939 and 1946, and that her husband did not receive comparable commentary, suggests an intersection between gender norms and treatment of Italian women.

The cases of Elena Rubeo and Claudia Meier reveal that unmarried women were subjected to the same suspicions. Despite obtaining British nationality in 1911, 40 year-old Elena Rubeo came under the CIB's notice in May 1940 after an allegation made by a member of the public led to suspicion that she was acting as an Italian agent. Further complaints surfaced in November 1940, when she was accused by a close acquaintance, Margaret Taylor, of teaching pro-Fascist sentiment to school children, and in September 1943, when she was accused by another female acquaintance, Philippine Stossinger, of hoarding household commodities in an apparent act of pro-Nazi contempt for Jewish refugees arriving from Europe.[77] Comparable accusations were levelled against 26 year-old Claudia Meier, the Australian-born daughter of the well-known Lutheran Pastor Julius Meier of Loxton. When employed as a live-in children's nurse at a home in Mount Lofty, a female friend of Claudia's employer accused her of influencing a 16 year-old boy with pro-German sentiment in an act of bitterness against the internment of Claudia's brother and father, the latter whom had recently died.[78]

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[75] "Mother of Six: Port Wakefield," *Mail,* 26 August 1939, 4, contained within "Maria Louise Candida: land transfer," NAA, D1915, SA13434.

[76] "South Australian Police Report, Port Wakefield Police Station," 9 December 1946, NAA, D1915, SA13434.

[77] Statement obtained from Miss Margaret Lilian Taylor, 6 November 1940, NAA, D1915, SA14581; Statement obtained from Miss Philippine Stossinger, 9 September 1943, NAA, D1915, SA14581. Philippine was an alien of Czechoslovakian origin.

[78] Report, Security Service Adelaide, 8 December 1943, NAA, D1915, SA19922.

While the CIB did not uphold any of these complaints, what makes them noteworthy is that they were made by women, and in two instances focus on the subversion of the maternal role by the alleged "brainwashing" of children—without the supervision of a husband, even other women rendered Elena and Claudia as highly suspect. However, the domestic context of these accusations decreased the CIB's suspicions. For example, while Philippine Stossinger's allegation was investigated by the CIB, they largely dismissed the bulk of her report as the complaints of a woman who had "an axe to grind" over a friendship turned embittered.[79] The CIB also attempted to reconcile the women's threat to public morale by describing them in terms associated with traditional femininity. Claudia was typecast as a dutiful, albeit naïve, daughter—a "typical country girl, unsophisticated and unworldly, having no opinions of her own other than a superficial knowledge of world politics".[80] Elena's report portrayed her as a former society woman who cared for her elderly mother and devoted time to housework, but noted that she "[was] a woman of high intelligence and well-read in regard to public matters".[81] But this did not stop Elena from eventually breaking gender boundaries. The economic assistance she provided to Adelaide's Italian community during the war led to her appointment as South Australia's consular agent for the Italian Government in 1952, being the first woman to fill the position.[82] These examples also show that the suspicion that German and Italian women faced was so strong that they could struggle to form social connections or friendships even among their own ethnic groups; this is a distinctively different experience to many British-Australian women, whose sorority was strengthened through their involvement in volunteering and paid war work.

The CIB's response to divorced or separated women was less sympathetic. Margaret Schmidt presents an interesting case study for examining how enemy alien women were "constructed" by the CIB given her British ethnicity. Margaret was born in Lancashire, England, in 1902 and first arrived in Adelaide with her three children in 1931. Her husband, a German national, deserted her in 1935 and was later imprisoned and interned in Victoria. Left without means of financial support, Margaret returned to Adelaide in January 1940 and

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[79] O.P. Strauss, Commonwealth Investigation Branch, to Sergeant Trezona, Adelaide Police, 9 September 1943, NAA, D1915, SA14581.

[80] Police Report, Commonwealth Investigation Branch, 30 June 1943, NAA, D1915, SA19922.

[81] Police Report, North Adelaide Police Station, 28 May 1940, NAA, D1915, SA14581.

[82] "Thrilled Over Appointment," *Mail,* 23 February 1952, 4.

was registered as an enemy alien, previously unaware she had renounced her British citizenship upon marriage.[83] Unable to find suitable lodgings for herself and her children, she was required to place them in Morialta Children's Home until she found employment as a housekeeper for a widower of German origin who lived in Woodville Gardens. In July 1942, she was convicted and fined for having breached *Aliens Control Regulations* when she travelled ten kilometres from Cheltenham to Adelaide in December 1941, without a permit, to inquire about bringing her children home for Christmas. This prompted a letter to South Australian Governor Sir Malcolm Barclay-Harvey, in which she outlined her situation:

> I am at my wits end what to do. According to law I am an alien, but I am getting summoned and hounded for such small offences … myself and my three children are alone out here. I have written to the Minister of the Interior to try and get back my lost nationality. [I] am like a prisoner here, and my three children have to suffer with me. I can't even take them to the zoo or gardens … I can't sleep at night through worrying over my position.[84]

Margaret eventually regained her British nationality in January 1943, although it is unknown whether she eventually divorced her husband. The final police report in Margaret's file, dated April 1945, indicates she had planned to return to England with her children.[85]

While the CIB conceded that Margaret was not a security threat and rather a "victim of circumstance"[86]—that is, subject to the criminality and abuse of her husband—her activities were nevertheless extensively investigated, with the resulting CIB reports referring to personal characteristics that were perceived at odds with acceptable femininity. It was recorded in her Special Branch file, for example, that she had a "large-mouth" and was not

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[83] "Mrs Margaret Gertrude Schmidt, Declaration under Section 18A of the Nationality Act," NAA, D1915, SA7479.

[84] Margaret Gertrude Schmidt to Sir Malcolm Barclay-Harvey, July 1942, NAA, D1915, SA7479. In total, between 1940 and 1942, Margaret was charged on three separate occasions for violating the travel provisions of the *National Security Regulations,* see Police Report, Police Constable R.M. Harvey, 3 November 1942, NAA, D1915, SA7479.

[85] Statutory Declaration, Mrs Margaret Gertrude Schmidt, 15 April 1945, NAA, D1915, SA7479.

[86] Memorandum to Director-General of Security, Canberra, 3 November 1942, NAA, D1915, SA7479.

a "desirable type of person".[87] She was similarly described by a local policeman as a "quick-tempered [and] impetuous woman".[88] The consequences of Margaret's behaviour culminated in June 1942, when she was fined £1 with 10/ costs for unlawfully using insulting words after calling an Adelaide Police Officer a "pimp".[89] Both trials were covered extensively in Adelaide's daily newspapers, which emphasised the novelty aspect of her situation almost to the point of caricature.[90] The sexual connotation associated with the term "pimp"—which Margaret claimed was used in the context of its slang meaning as "informer"—would have further reinforced her transgression from the "good" woman ideal. Indeed, the peculiarity of her situation—being a British-born single mother who possessed the enemy nationality of a husband whom she wished to divorce—would have placed her well outside any current definition of womanhood.

## Internment

According to the CIB, the danger posed by some women could only be contained by internment. Although the Department of Army held that "women [were] not generally so involved in organising activities inimical to the Empire as men of enemy nationality", the Commonwealth Government nevertheless resolved that a limited number should be detained.[91] The fear of internment is evident in the CIB records of both German and Italian women. Maddalena Griguol's report stated she was "worried, noticeably ill and afraid of internment" when accused by the CIB of "communicating with the enemy" after attempting to contact her mother in Italy.[92] However, internment policy was not applied uniformly. Pauline Starke, for example, was relocated to Tanunda from Adelaide rather than interned, even though the 60 year-old was leader of the Women's Branch of the Nazi Party in South

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[87] Special Branch Station Report, 24 May 1941, NAA, D1915, SA7479.

[88] Police Report, Police Constable R.M. Harvey, 3 November 1942, NAA, D1915, SA7479.

[89] Extract from *News,* 18 June 1942, in NAA, D1915, SA7479.

[90] See "A Lass from Lancashire Fined: Husband is a German," *Advertiser,* 6 June 1941, 6; "Policeman Called 'Pimp': Alien Woman Fined £1," *News,* 18 June 1942, 7; "Called Constable a Pimp: Enemy Alien Through Marrying a German," *Advertiser,* 19 June 1942, 10; "Pt. Adelaide Police, Delay in Hearing Charges Against Aliens," *Advertiser,* 9 July 1942, 6.

[91] Supplement No. 4 to Agendum No. 157/1940: Internment of Enemy Women, NAA, A5954, 675/2.

[92] Police Report, O.P. Strauss, circa July 1943, NAA, D1915, SA15596.

Australia.[93] The decision not to intern Caterina Pasculli, head of the Women's Section of the Fascist Party in South Australia and principal instructor of an Italian School in Port Pirie, rested on the fact she was expecting her third child.[94] But at least three German-Australian women were interned, alongside the wives of 30 German missionaries evacuated to South Australia in 1941.

The CIB file of long-term South Australian resident Hilda Bittner, who was living in Sydney upon her internment in March 1942, reveals the gendered nature of public allegations. German-born Hilda was interned in March 1942, aged 31 years, on the grounds of her involvement in the Nazi Women's Organisation, through which she organised public meetings and espoused anti-British sentiment.[95] But her private actions received equal scrutiny. After her husband's internment in 1939, the CIB received an allegation from an anonymous female source that Hilda was working as a "superior type of prostitute".[96] During her own internment she was accused by her husband of committing adultery with another internee.[97] Both accusations affected the timing and length of her detention. In an assessment of her internment by Tatura Camp authorities in January 1944, these accusations, as well as her relationship with her seven year-old daughter, were primary considerations.[98] Facing the prospect of being a divorced single mother upon her release in 1945—an anomalous position well outside the realm of acceptable femininity—it is not surprising that officials dictated that she return to her parents' home in the isolated South Australian township of Two Wells, which also ensured that she would be "restricted from any contact with enemy aliens".[99]

Manda Thiele was likewise detained in March 1942 for expressing pro-German and pro-Japanese sentiment. The 32 year-old was also part of a local Loxton group called "Social

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[93] CIB information on Pauline Starke is located within these files: "Ernst Emil Robert Starke," NAA, D1915, SA15103; "Ludwig and Mattilda Heinle," NAA, D1915, SA15128.

[94] Caterina was the only Italian woman in South Australia threatened with internment. See Report of the National Security Advisory Committee Concerning Domenico Pasculli, NAA, D1915, SA2625.

[95] Proceedings of Aliens Tribunal, No. 4 Victoria: Hilda Bittner, NAA, D1915, SA16486.

[96] Annexure 3, Mrs Bittner, NAA, D1915, SA16486.

[97] Dossier of NF1462, Hilda Bittner, NAA, D1915, SA16486.

[98] Report of interview by Lieut. Bateman and Mr. R.E. Armstrong of Security Service and Lieut. Horwood, I.O at Tatura Internment Camp, 19 January 1944, NAA, D1915, SA16486.

[99] *Ibid.*

Credit" which advocated for the dismantling of the "Jewish financial system" and strongly supported the dissemination of Nazi propaganda.[100] The supposed fervour of her support for the Axis powers was outlined in a CIB dossier in January 1942:

> It is not necessary to quote further equally disloyal statements by this person, as her extremely pro-German sentiments are shown. She is extremely and frankly anti-British, and her disloyalty is so great that she not only favours Germany, but also upholds Japanese ideals. It is plainly seen that she has influenced her brothers greatly, and if all truth were known, probably many more. This is an outstanding case of pro-Nazism and Manda Thiele, although of third-generation Australian born, probably could not be bettered by Hitler's right-hand man in her faith in 'the Fuehrer'.[101]

This seems an extraordinary claim to make about a woman who still lived and worked for her parents and had never travelled overseas. According to the CIB, however, her pro-Japanese sentiments made her not only a legitimate danger to national security, but also to public morale. Indeed, a CIB Intelligence officer noted that her pro-Japanese stance "would no doubt cause considerable unrest among the populace if heard".[102] However, an analysis of her CIB file reveals it was just as much Manda's "intelligent [and] determined" character that made her a security risk: she usurped the gender order within her parent's home by being a "dominating influence" over her mother and father, as well as her two younger brothers, whose refusal to engage in military service, apparently at Manda's urging, was also a key factor in her internment.[103]

Mother-of-two Ilma Bohlmann, Australian-born of German heritage, interned for five years alongside her husband for allegedly communicating with Nazi Party members in

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[100] Connections with Social Credit and Security Record, Report, Manda Gertrude Thiele, NAA, D1915, SA12900.

[101] Police Report Dossier 1614, NAA, D1915, SA12900.

[102] Report of K. Horwood, Intelligence Officer, Tatura Group Internment Camps, 8 January 1944, NAA, D1915, SA12900.

[103] Recommendation for Ministerial Warrant for Restriction or Detention Order under Regulations 25 and 26 of National Security (General) Regulations in the matter of Manda Thiele, 7 March 1942, and Connections with Social Credit and Security Record, Report, Manda Gertrude Thiele, 16 January 1944, in NAA, D1915, SA12900.

Germany, smuggling and disseminating Nazi propaganda, and organising local gatherings for Nazi sympathisers, was likewise described as the "dominant character" within the Bohlmann household.[104] In fact, the way that 53 year-old Ilma ran her home was a key consideration in the ministerial warrant directing her internment. It stated that people would not enter such an "unattractive and uninviting home" if not for ulterior reasons, citing her domestic conduct and entertainment of visiting Germans in an "expensive and sometimes lavish manner" as evidence of her threat.[105] A police report from November 1939 similarly judged Ilma's domestic performance as a measure of her impropriety. Although no subversive material was located on the visit, Detective Trezona of the Adelaide Police wrote as evidence "his surprise to see the state of the kitchen" which had evidently not been cleaned since the last meal.[106] While there is no doubt that the Bohlmanns actively promulgated their German loyalty, the way Ilma's transgression was linked to her apparent lack of interest in behaving like a "good woman" demonstrates how *Aliens Control Regulations* operated on both gendered and ethnic grounds, as well as allowing individual officers to exhibit their own societal prejudices.

Against expectation, some women welcomed internment: the 30 wives of German missionaries evacuated to South Australia in December 1941 before the invasion of Papua New Guinea by Japanese forces. With Commonwealth Government assistance, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (UELCA) billeted these women and their 55 children across regional South Australia, while their husbands were sent directly to Tatura.[107] The Commonwealth Government provided the women with relief payments, which, depending on the number of children and infants, ranged from £10 to £32 across a three-month period.[108] Although an effort was made to billet the women with families in isolated

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[104] Recommendation for Ministerial Warrant for Restriction or Detention Order under Regulations 26 of the National Security (General) Regulations in the matter of Ilma Carola Amalia Bohlmann, NAA, D1915, SA5734. For more on the activities of the Bohlmann family during World War II, see Poniewierski, "National Socialism in South Australia," 278–82.

[105] Deputy-Director of Security, S.A to Director-General of Security, Canberra, 8 January 1942, NAA, D1915, SA5734; Recommendation for Ministerial Warrant, NAA, D1915, SA5734.

[106] Report by Detective Charles Percival Richmond Trezona, 16 November 1939, NAA, D1915, SA5734.

[107] A small number of women were also billeted in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, see Commonwealth Investigation Branch Report, German Women and Children Evacuees from New Guinea, 2 January 1942, NAA, A518, ED16/2/1.

[108] Report, Prime Minister's Department to Inspector-in-Charge, Investigation Branch, Adelaide, 3 February 1943, NAA, D1915, SA7955.

locations with a high ratio of German-Australian residents—Tanunda, Kilkerran, Nuriootpa, Lights Pass and Appila—to minimise possible disaffection amongst the South Australian public, the women nevertheless generated significant consternation among local residents, including those within the Lutheran Church. The CIB précis of each woman records that "strong resentment was expressed by locals of [these] arrant Nazis in their midst, because they are fanatical [and] arrogant and bitter against anything British. They Heil Hitler, [sing] 'Deutschland uber Alles' and also give the Nazi salute".[109] By August 1942, Pastor J. J. Stolz, President of the UELCA in Adelaide, who had organised the evacuation and billeting of the women, had written to various authorities in an attempt to persuade the women to "adopt a more reasonable attitude".[110] Pastor R. B. Reuther of Lights Pass went further in voicing disapproval, stating in a police interview that he and members of his congregation hosting the women were "disgusted" at their "pronounced Nazi tendencies" and would welcome their internment.[111]

In December 1942, the CIB, South Australia, and Security Service, Canberra, issued orders to detain 20 of the women, who were transferred to Tatura to be with their husbands. In March 1943, the remainder joined them after writing to the Prime Minister requesting detention. As part of the internment process, the women were required to declare themselves Nazi sympathisers and followers of Hitler, who wanted Germany to win, and who wished to return to Germany after the war.[112] While this proved their national security threat in official terms and clearly established them as Hitler supporters—indeed, some of them were deported back to Germany because they were deemed to be incorrigible Nazis even after 8 May 1945—the reality of the situation was more complex. In a letter to South Australian military authorities in January 1943, four of the women outlined their perspective:

> We have no home and are nearly three and a half years separated from our husbands. We have lost everything in New Guinea and [depend] on the Welfare Department and the people with whom we are living … please understand our position which is that of a

[109] See the history sheets of all women contained in the series NAA, D1915, SA19659 – SA19712.

[110] Security Service Report, 20 August 1942, NAA, D1915, SA19568.

[111] Report on Enemy Alien German Female Refugees, NAA, D1915, SA19704.

[112] See the detention orders in the files of all women contained in the series NAA, D1915, SA19659–SA19712.

> homeless people in a foreign country. We want no more [than to] join our dear ones in the family camp.[113]

For those with children, the issue of schooling was central to their request for internment. In an attempt to assimilate the families into South Australian society, and to decrease the fostering of strong German sentiment, the women were barred from undertaking private tuition or sending their children to Lutheran institutions. The women believed it was unjust to force their children to attend state schools, where they would have to practice British customs. German schooling, however, was offered to children at Tatura. This prompted four of the remaining non-interned women to petition the Prime Minister in January 1943:

> Our children of school age have now been without school for a whole year. Public and private persons denied them the right to go to school … [our children] are neglected without a father and without school. The family camp in this country is the only place to make school possible for our children. We therefore request [the] competent authority to intern us.[114]

While the education of German children on Nazism within Australia would have raised CIB concern regardless of gendered considerations, this statement nevertheless indicates that the women's declaration of allegiance to Hitler can be viewed through a feminine lens. It was not just German loyalty that had compelled them to seek internment. They had also acted as mothers trying to obtain what they believed to be in the best interests of their children: schooling and life within a family unit. As this was precisely the sentiment central to being a "good" woman, it may have influenced the eventual decision of the CIB to recommend their internment on both "humane" and security grounds.[115] At any rate, gendered attitudes were certainly present in accusations levelled at the women prior to their internment. The treatment of Marie Strauss, the only unmarried woman among the evacuees, is particularly emblematic. Such was the intensity of her Nazism, it was allegedly discernible in her

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[113] Elfriede Strauss, Frida Horrolt, Helene Holzknecht and Wilhemine Strauss to Military Authorities, Keswick, 3 January 1943, NAA, D1915, SA19707.

[114] Irene Stuerzenhofecker, Maria Bergmann, Ruth Munzel and Karoline Gotzelmann to Prime Minister Curtin, 14 January 1943, NAA, D1915, SA19704.

[115] See the ministerial warrants for arrest in the files of all 30 women, NAA, D1915, SA19659–SA19712.

"appearance and demeanour" alone.[116] Military Intelligence Officers, based on the public statements they had received, suspected Marie of being a man masquerading as a woman.[117] This example decisively reveals that women's physical appearance was used as a marker of women's morality and adherence to feminine norms; when this intersected along ethnic lines, suspicion was increased to an alarming level. Marie's position as an unmarried enemy alien who actively defended Nazi ideals was perceived not just outside the realm of acceptable femininity, but as incompatible with womanhood itself.

**Conclusion**

It is clear then, that the experiences of German and Italian women in South Australia during World War II reveal instances of discrimination and isolation centred on both ethnicity and gender. While the *National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations 1939* primarily focused on restricting alien individuals of both genders to ensure the efficient prosecution of the war, the notion that the danger female enemy aliens posed could be mitigated by their adherence to traditional femininity was evident throughout its implementation. The regularity with which statements regarding the behaviour and appearance of German and Italian women (as opposed to their political activities) appear in the files compiled on them by the Commonwealth Investigation Branch suggests, as Jill Julius Matthews argues, that the supposed loyalty of female non-British subjects was also contingent on their ability to fulfil expected domestic and maternal functions as "good women" should. While the political disloyalty of these women is indisputable, the criticism of their private lives—from failure to undertake household chores to supposedly engaging in prostitution—suggests an ideological correlation between ethnicity and gender. Ultimately, the gendered discourses that surrounded German and Italian women in South Australia made them at risk of being conceived as unfeminine, brash and loudmouthed figures who usurped the gender order by neglecting domestic duties, influencing the decisions of male family members, and challenging the authority of police and military officials.

[116] Police Report, re. Pastor Fulbaum, Mrs Horrolt, Miss Strauss and S.A. Felberg of Appila, attached correspondence (and attached report dated 11 August 1942), 17 August 1942, NAA, D1915, SA19660.

[117] *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

Women vividly recall the scenes of celebration in Adelaide on 15 August 1945 when Victory in the Pacific was declared. Anna Morrison took her two young children into the city, who walked along Rundle Street, decorated with tickertape and balloons, and stood on the edge of the milling crowd which danced for hours.[1] Betty Gransbury, who was a science student at the University of Adelaide, stopped mid-experiment and joined the crowds while still wearing her lab coat.[2] Gwen Booker, also in Rundle Street with her church friends, had never seen such a large crowd and laughed at the memory of nearly being "squashed".[3] Then-teenager Lilian Harding's lasting impressions of the day were of the flags that people waved high above their heads, the long conga-lines of people that weaved in and out of the crowds, and the bands that played from city building balconies and on the back of lorries as they drove around the streets. She recalled that Adelaide women left their mark that day with lipstick: not only did it smother servicemen's faces, but many women also scrawled their names in various shades of red and pink on the sides of police horses.[4]

Following these celebrations, the reality of domestic life soon returned. For those who were older, there were war-weary husbands to care for and children to raise. For the wives of servicemen, long-term separation during the war put significant strain on both parties, which did not always disperse upon the husbands' return home. In the most severe cases, the trauma experienced by servicemen was internalised by their wives as they grappled to deal with their husbands' changed personality, volatility and mood swings.[5] This, of course, is to say nothing of the grief of the thousands of South Australian women left widowed; although supplied with a pension, they received little institutional support to make sense of their tragedy and sadness. Other domestic privations were more widespread. Rationing of household products, exacerbated by the fact that the majority of domestic appliance manufacturers in Australia had turned to munitions production during the war, meant that many women did without refrigerators, washing machines, and other necessities

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[1] Anna Morrison interviewed by Rachel Harris, 10 July 2016, State Library of South Australia [henceforth SLSA], OH 1117/3.

[2] Betty Gransbury interviewed by Rachel Harris, 5 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/6.

[3] Gwen Booker interviewed by Rachel Harris, 25 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/13.

[4] Lillian Harding, *Just a Little Street: An Account of Life in Vinrace Street, inner Adelaide* (Adelaide: Seaview Press, 1996), 56.

[5] Joy Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 110–38.

for years after the conflict. The majority of the National Health and Medical Research Council's recommendations in their 1944 interim report on the decline in the birth rate, such as an increase in childcare schemes and kindergartens, domestic help for women in the home, better shopping facilities for mothers, increased support for pregnant women, a scheme to train more students in mothercraft and midwifery, and government subsidies for food, clothing, education and medical services, were not introduced.[6] Nevertheless, for many of the women I interviewed for this thesis, the years immediately after the war were a time of happiness and romance, as they met their future husbands, planned weddings, and looked forward to a promising future. Indeed, compared to the long hours and exhausting conditions in wartime industries, many women welcomed a return to domesticity, either temporarily or permanently. Mary Miller, who worked at Salisbury Explosives Factory, recalled among the factory's female staff that there was "a lot of weary women who were just too delighted to go back to the home".[7]

**Demobilisation and Post-War Prospects**

Employment in civilian wartime industries did not generate lasting economic change for South Australian women. First, women's demobilisation from munitions production and the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA) was rapid and began well before the war ended. Some munitions factories ceased to recruit women as early as 1944. Between April 1943 and June 1945 there was a 63.8 per cent decrease in the number of workers employed in South Australian munitions factories, with 2,351 women leaving factory work in 1945 alone.[8] Women were expected to vacate non-traditional roles to make way for returned servicemen. In South Australia, this practice was enshrined in the *War Service Preference in Employment Act 1943*, which stipulated returned soldiers who applied for government positions, such as those in factories, should be given priority. The government and employers did not mount an overt campaign to persuade women to leave their wartime jobs, but archival documents reveal that little effort was made to accommodate the needs of women which might have encouraged them to stay. The personnel records of Islington Railway Workshop

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[6] National Health and Medical Research Council Report on the Declining Birth Rate, Appendix 1, 18th Session, Canberra, 22–24 November 1944.

[7] Mary Miller interviewed by Margaret Allen, 23 January 1984 and 5 and 18 June 1986, SLSA, OH 78/1.

[8] "Tempo Slackens in Industry," *Advertiser*, 1 February 1946, 2; S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin, *War Economy, 1942–1945,* Series 4, vol. 4 of *Australia in the War of 1939–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1997), 421.

provide evidence that women were discouraged or removed from the workforce when they arguably sought to remain there. The majority of female resignations at the Workshops occurred between January and August 1945, with a variety of reasons given—primarily related to health issues, upcoming marriage or domestic workload—but some of the women resigned after reasonable requests for leave or the modification of their conditions of employment were denied. These include women who had applied for special leave to coincide with their husbands' departure for, or return from, overseas service and were then "terminated as surplus to requirements".[9] The exodus of women from all workplaces was so rapid and on such a scale that in January 1946, Leslie Hunkin, Deputy Director-General of Manpower, declared South Australia had a female labour shortage. By January 1947, 2,000 jobs were going "begging" as South Australia had an acute shortage of female nurses, office workers, shop assistants, clothing machinists and general domestics.[10] The situation remained the same for the rest of the year; the Commonwealth Employment Service monthly report for December 1947 indicates that it had placed 67 women in work, but had disengaged 98 and had 4,049 positions remaining unfilled.[11]

This thesis has surmised that women were not enticed to stay in factory employment after the war because of their unpleasant experiences of such employment during wartime, and because the pay on offer reduced substantially after the war's end. There was no longer the opportunity to earn anywhere near 90 per cent of the average male wage. In the first year after the war's conclusion, 1945–46, female factory workers in South Australia earned just 58.9 per cent of the average hourly male wage for manufacturing employment.[12] This increased over the following decade to 72.7 per cent of the average hourly wage of male factory employees.[13] As a greater proportion of women than men were employed in factories on a part-time basis, and experienced higher rates of absenteeism, they fared much worse in terms of annual take-home pay, which in 1954–55 was 54 per cent of the sum received by

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[9] "Resignations, A–Z," National Archives of Australia [henceforth NAA], D1742/18, 1942/3774 PARTS 1–8.

[10] "2,000 Jobs Await S.A. Women," *News,* 2 January 1947, 5.

[11] Monthly Summary of Employment Trends, Etc. Coupled from Report by District Officers, December 1947, NAA, MP574/1, 700/13/8.

[12] *Labour Report No. 35, 1945–46* (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1947), 65–6.

[13] *Labour Report No. 44, 1955–56* (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1958), 44–5.

male workers (£477 compared to £883).[14] It was not until the mid-1960s that equal pay legislation was introduced in South Australia, although it took some years for it to be applied to non-government employment and thus its benefits were not widespread.[15]

While the war might have made industrial employers relatively more accustomed to employing female workers (and the cheaper post-war wage rates made female workers more attractive for them), the majority of women also did not avail themselves of the opportunities in post-war manufacturing that became available. The majority of Adelaide munitions factories were taken over by major firms such as Philips Electrical, Simpson and Kelvinator in the post-war period. However, in 1954 only 700 women were employed in the manufacture of "domestic machinery" compared to nearly 3,900 men.[16] The growth in the number of women employed in factory work in the two decades after the war was also very modest, rising from a peak of 19,958 in 1942–3 to just 22,488 by 1967–8.[17] By comparison, during this period over 46,000 *new* factory jobs were created for men, constituting an 87.3 per cent increase in male factory employment.[18] More broadly, women as a percentage of the total South Australian workforce changed only marginally across a similar period; they constituted 21 per cent in 1947 (less than 0.3 per cent higher than in 1933), rising to just 21.2 per cent in 1954 and 23.6 per cent in 1961.[19] These statistics clearly demonstrate that in South Australia the retention of women in the post-war workforce was not as extensive as other academic or popular histories have suggested. Indeed, of the munitions workers whose oral histories appear in this thesis, only Doris Crowley, who transferred from Holden to John Frith Boot Factory, and Mary Miller, who continued for a short time as a union official before training to be a primary school teacher in the mid–1950s, remained in factory work

[14] *South Australian Statistical Register, 1954–55* (Adelaide: South Australian Government Printer, 1957), 69.

[15] Edna Ryan and Anne Conlon, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work, 1788–1974* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1975), 146–51.

[16] "South Australia," in *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia 1954* (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1955), 68; *Year Book Australia 1956* (Canberra: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1956), 328.

[17] Wray Vamplew, Eric Richards, Dean Jaensch and Joan Hancock, *South Australian Historical Statistics* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1987), 66–7.

[18] *South Australian Year Book 1970* (Adelaide: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1970), 66.

[19] See *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia* for 1933, 1947, 1954 and 1961.

after the war.[20] The other women to continue in any other form of employment was Lilian Johnston, who worked as an adoptions officer for the State Government; Barbara Pitt, who from 1950 was superintendent of the women's welfare department of the Methodist Church; and June Hanley, who left munitions work before war's end to train as a high school teacher.[21] The remaining women left the workforce because they were married during the war or in its aftermath, reflective of the fact that the pre-war condition of marriage and maternity continued to be the norm, which generally entailed giving up paid employment whether by choice or compulsion, at least until the mid-1960s.

Turning attention to rural areas, it is clear that AWLA members, who were disbanded in December 1945, had limited opportunities after the war to use the farming skills they had gained. According to official labour statistics, the number of women engaged in rural work or primary production in South Australia, both in a paid and unpaid capacity, steadily declined during the post-war period. In 1945, there was a total of 6,212 rural female workers (3,545 share farmers, 1,662 relatives not receiving wages, and 1,005 paid workers).[22] By 1965, this had shrunk to 1,332 female workers, just 456 of whom were receiving wages.[23] Metropolitan women who joined the AWLA were not invited to stay on the land and did not receive access to post-war training or deferred pay, unlike those in the women's auxiliary services.[24] This proved a significant setback to members who had joined the organisation under 18 years of age, as they entered post-war life in their twenties with minimal savings and a lack of transferable qualifications, resulting in difficulty in securing skilled employment. Kath Vivian had joined the "unofficial" Land Army aged 16 in 1941 and remained in the AWLA until November 1945. Upon returning home, the only paid employment she could obtain was as a rabbit trapper on a neighbouring property, where she

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[20] Doris Crowley interviewed by Elizabeth Harris, 9 February 1988, Adelaide City Council Archives [henceforth ACA], OH 50; Miller, interview.

[21] Lilian Johnston interviewed by Anne Geddes, July 1983, SLSA, PRG, 727/2/2; Barbara Jean Pitt interviewed by Mary Hutchinson, 15 October 1982, SLSA, OH 891/37; June Hanley interviewed by Rachel Harris, 16 August 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/11.

[22] *South Australian Statistical Register 1945–46* (Adelaide: Government Printer, 1948), 4.

[23] *South Australian Statistical Register 1965–66* (Adelaide: Government Printer, 1968), 4.

[24] Heather Gartshore, "Called to Serve, Shunned as Citizens: How the Australian Women's Land Army was Recruited and Abandoned by the Labor Government," *Labour History* 117 (2019): 135–58.

worked until she was married in 1946.[25] Jean Schollar recalled the difficulty of resuming her pre-war occupation as a shorthand typist for an insurance agency: the five-year break during the war meant her typing skills were out of practice, and without refresher training she only lasted in the position for three months.[26] Jean Bennier noted that she would have liked to train in an outdoor occupation, but the opportunity was not available to her:

> If there had been some suggestion that you could do something, some sort of rehabilitation, I would have jumped at the chance. But there wasn't very much choice … looking back now, I think I certainly would have taken on study of some sort … but there wasn't the opportunity. There was no opportunity whatsoever.[27]

Of the 21 AWLA members whose oral histories feature in my thesis, five eventually found civilian employment after the end of the war as nurses, receptionists and an insurance agent; however, they did not find these placements until 1947. The remaining women asserted that marriage had seemed the most logical option, with some noting that they did not know what they would have done had they not met their husbands when they did.[28]

**The Power of Wartime Gender Discourse**

As this thesis has established, employment statistics and pay rates are an important marker of the effect of the war on women's status, but they do not reveal the whole picture; they are entry ways into understanding the profound effect that constructions of gender had on the social and economic experiences of women during World War II. The wages and working conditions that women encountered in munitions factories and the AWLA—South Australia's main civilian wartime industries open to women—were two material outcomes of the ubiquity of traditional gender norms on the South Australian home front between 1939–45, which shaped civilian women's experiences in the workplace and beyond. Through examining women's working experiences in the paid and voluntary sector,

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[25] Kath Vivian interviewed by Rachel Harris, 21 November 2016, SLSA, OH 1117/23.

[26] Jean Schollar interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 11 April 1985, Australian War Memorial [henceforth AWM], S02704.

[27] Jean Bennier interviewed by Sue Maslin, 21 March 1985, AWM, S02695.

[28] See, for example, Madge Hastings interviewed by Sue Maslin, 22 March 1985, AWM, S02696; Eileen Spencer interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 2 April 1985, AWM, S02702; Jean Price interviewed by Sue Hardisty, 16 April 1985, AWM, S02708.

regulation of female sexuality, dynamics of women's domestic relations, and the treatment of women deemed to be enemy aliens, this thesis has revealed the feminine discourses that were consistently enforced by the press, government, and employers in South Australia and how these shaped women's lives across class, age and ethnic lines. The topics covered in my thesis, which at first may have appeared discreet, have been revealed to be intimately connected by gender on multiple levels. Take, for example, the links between paid and unpaid work. They had a material connection through the Women's Voluntary National Register and the undertaking of voluntary activities in wartime workplaces. But I have also shown they were connected on an ideological level. Docile sexuality and feminine glamour were emphasised to young women who volunteered to provide wartime comforts to servicemen or partook in pin-up competitions and beauty pageants. The same mode of femininity—centred on women's physical appearance—was propounded to women in munitions factories through staff publications and workplace activities, which likewise accentuated the sex appeal of young female workers and emphasised women's bodies as a site of patriotism. Indeed, attention on women's maintenance of a feminine appearance was all-encompassing during the war, being regarded in discourse as a visible commitment that women could make to the gender system.

However, the line between feminine desirability as an appropriate form of wartime patriotism and unacceptable or "deviant" female behaviour was often unstable and unclear. The "transgressive" women I examine in the last two chapters of my thesis only make sense when their construction is compared to the desirable modes of femininity I discuss in the first three chapters. I conclude that civilian women in South Australia during World War II fell somewhere on the continuum between these two extremes, depending on how feminine discourses could be used to reconcile their temporary departure from pre-war norms. For example, while women were strongly encouraged to interact with allied servicemen through voluntary organisations, women who romanced American servicemen outside of a voluntary context were frequently depicted as immoral and sexually suspicious; the "motherly" or "sisterly" modes of femininity that could be implemented to mitigate ambiguity regarding the appropriateness of women's conduct did not apply in these circumstances. Working-class women were especially prone to accusations of excessive drinking and spread of venereal diseases. German and Italian women, in addition to being constructed as a threat to social order and public morale, were also cast as "dangerous" women who tested the boundaries of sexuality and acceptable womanhood. But in many cases, the behaviour and activities of women regardless of their class, age and ethnicity, did not fundamentally differ: they all kept house, went to work, danced with servicemen, and volunteered in support of

the war effort. The distinctions between them instead emerged in gendered discourse, which praised certain women and applied pejorative labels to others. In both cases, the endemic issues that affected many women regardless of social and economic background—domestic violence, sexual victimisation, and inadequate housing—were overlooked in favour of protecting the impression that traditional femininity was successfully weathering the changes and privations of the home front.

How these discourses shaped women's lived experiences of the war is the second focus of my thesis. What clearly emerges from the gendered discourses I have examined is that the expectations placed on civilian women during wartime were often and inherently contradictory. Women in munitions were expected to carry out domestic duties but were given minimal help with childcare and were required to work non-flexible hours that made it difficult to get to the shops. Women were encouraged to use their body and sexuality to aid the war effort but were also told not to engage in sexual relations outside marriage. Women in the AWLA were told to maintain a feminine appearance but were also exploited by employers to undertake the heavy manual labour barred by the Manpower Directorate. Married women were expected to have more babies, but nothing was done by Women Police to mitigate systemic domestic violence. In demonstrating such cases, I have made sure not to subsume women's individual agency in my analysis. Many women negotiated this gendered power structure to make their own social, economic and personal gains. The three women who dated or were acquainted with American servicemen particularly exemplify this in using a nurturing, patriotic discourse in their oral histories to justify their relationships, not dissimilar to the mode of femininity encouraged by voluntary organisations. Some women also took advantage of the social opportunities that voluntary work offered, viewing it as a means of obtaining workplace experience. In the post-war period, women were able to capitalise upon the expansion of social and welfare work, carving out long and successful careers which had their basis in their enjoyment of wartime volunteering. While other gains were only for the war's duration, they nevertheless held personal significance. Those in the AWLA found that their substandard wages and working conditions were mitigated through the camaraderie of its all-female service. For many, joining the AWLA was an act of independence, as well as defiance, against the campaign to get more women into the state's munitions factories.

The conclusions I have drawn in this thesis are significant in a number of ways. I have demonstrated that studying the experiences of civilian women is fruitful and important. While other studies have marginalised, or at least compared, civilian women and servicewomen, I have placed civilian women at the centre of my inquiry. This has revealed

that the supposed emancipatory effect of World War II on the social and economic status of women—which, until now, has been bound up in the discussion of the women's auxiliary services—was less widespread than commonly assumed. Moreover, I have shown that assessment of the war's short and long-term consequences for women's lives, while needing to address the material changes the war engendered, also needs to make a connection between women's wartime work and the wider social conditions in which women lived if it is to successfully convey the complex and multi-faceted effect that the war had on expectations and understandings of women's place in society. The wage rates and working conditions of civilian industries were not set in a vacuum; they were influenced by, and interacted with, the same gender norms and discourses of femininity that shaped the lives of all civilian women in South Australia between 1939–45. Indeed, throughout this thesis, I have highlighted that women munition workers and AWLA members were also wartime voluntary workers, girlfriends of allied servicemen, wartime brides, abused wives, mothers to small children, the daughters of enemy aliens, venereal disease sufferers, and trade union members, to name but a few. But in these various wartime incarnations, women were united through a construction of femininity, expounded in popular and political discourse, which espoused that an ideal wartime woman was one whose efforts, whether undertaken inside or outside the home, were focused on preserving domesticity above all else. The tendency of many previous Australian home front studies to categorise women according to their wartime occupation alone means they have not interrogated the underlying gendered ideologies that informed civilian women's lives during World War II. It is in this argument that my thesis challenges and most expands upon existing research.

My thesis has also proven the benefits of a South Australian case study. For the first time, existing oral history and archival holdings that pertain to women on the South Australian home front during World War II have been collected and presented together. It is hoped this thesis will become a reference guide for future researchers of the topic. I have shown the wealth of pertinent research hitherto overlooked by scholars of national home front studies that have cast South Australia as unimportant to the national picture. This thesis proves the opposite; its findings on South Australia have distinct broader ramifications for our national understanding of women at war. Through a South Australian case study, it has been discovered the wide range of voluntary efforts that were undertaken in wartime workplaces, that women were having their employment in munitions factories terminated long before the war's end, and that economic abuse and gender violence was rife among civilian families and started well before traumatised servicemen came home in 1945. Such circumstances likely existed elsewhere in Australia, however, either the historical record of

other states is not as rich as that of South Australia, or, given that Australian scholarship on women in World War II peaked some two decades ago, interstate historians have not yet re-examined the topic with consideration of the latest historiographical trends in both war and gender history. A South Australian case study is thus useful because it points to the myriad of possible research options that are still available for the study of women and war in Australia. I have also established that South Australia had some unique social and economic conditions that make it especially worthy of scholarly attention in and of itself; including its high marriage and birth rates, large German communities, and immense wartime manufacturing industry significantly out of proportion to its population, which meant there was limited scope for women to work in wartime occupations outside of munitions production. In this thesis, I have proven these distinctive circumstances amplified concerns about women's place in society and the extent to which gendered discourses were reinforced at the time and how visible they are to the present-day historian. South Australia has presented the ideal canvas to paint afresh a well-worn topic and to bring it in line with current international World War II historiography.

As 2019 marked the 80th anniversary of the start of World War II, a reappraisal of civilian women's lives on the home front is long overdue. This thesis represents a starting point for more research that re-reads archival sources and women's oral histories of World War II with an eye to revealing the extent and importance of gendered discourses. Such research is timely with the current prominence of the male-centric ANZAC legend, which, as this thesis has established, has begun to shape women's recollections, evinced by the frequency with which women now downplay their wartime contributions in comparison to those interviewed in decades previous. Historians have long debated the effects of World War II on women's social and economic status, arguing at the very least that women's departure from domestic life during the war contributed in part to the long-term changes in their status that became evident from the 1960s onwards. However, women who entered wartime industries did not truly leave domesticity behind; it was brought into the workplace through staff publications that emphasised home life and marriage, in the knitting they did during their lunchbreaks, and in newspaper articles that told them assembling a bomb was like baking a cake. These discourses of domesticity, coupled with the reluctance of employers and politicians in South Australia to cater for female needs between 1939–45, mean World War II did not hurtle women towards modernity. Indeed, as the *Hendon Howl* claimed in June 1943, "about the only line the modern girl draws is with her lipstick".[29]

[29] Hendon Social Club, *Hendon Howl,* vol. 8, June 1943, 5, AWM.

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