Military Manoeuvres
National Service in Australia
1945-1972

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DECLARATION

Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is entirely my own work.

D.A. Hay

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On a personal note, I wish to acknowledge the moral support provided by my parents, Don and Dawn, and my wife, Mayumi.
A study of Australian defence planning between 1945 and 1972 is necessary to the development of an understanding of the Australian people's attitudes towards compulsory military training during those years. This thesis addresses the issues that surround compulsory military training in Australia after the Second World War by examining in detail the National Service training scheme that operated from 1951 to 1960 and the National Service scheme that operated from 1965 to 1972. A study of the two schemes together reveals how the first scheme paved the way for the second, which, in turn, reflects how defence planning progressed steadily and defence planners adapted to changes in Australia's strategic situation throughout the period.

Within the contexts of peacetime and wartime service, between 1945 and 1972 significant changes occurred in the Australian people's attitudes towards compulsory military training. The thesis explores the complex relationship between the armed forces, successive federal governments, and the Australian people, and considers their responses to internal and external security threats. It also assesses the attitudes and influence of politicians, some citizens, and organisations such as the Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia, and institutions including the federal bureaucracy and the press.
From 1945, the public’s ongoing support for universal and selective forms of compulsory military training can be interpreted as an expression of concern about Australia’s changing strategic situation. Changes within Australian society also influenced attitudes towards compulsory military training, and defence, economic, and immigration policy converged in the attempts by the Federal Government to make unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for National Service. The thesis shows that the dynamic and increasing complex domestic and international environments after 1945 produced significant changes in Australian attitudes towards National Service.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Abbreviations</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One National Service and the Post-War Army</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two Defence and the threat of communism</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three From a universal to a selective National Service training scheme</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four An increasingly selective National Service training scheme</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five Defence imperatives and National Service</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six National Service and the Vietnam War</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Seven The liability of unnaturalised non-British migrants for National Service</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AATTV  Australian Army Training Team Vietnam
AIF    Australian Imperial Force
AMF    Australian Military Forces
ANZAM  Australia-New Zealand-Malaysia security pact
ANZUS  Australia-New Zealand-United States security treaty
ARA    Australian Regular Army
BCOF   British Commonwealth Occupation Force
CGS    Chief of the General Staff
CMF    Citizen Military Forces
CPA    Communist Party of Australia
DCGS   Deputy Chief of the General Staff
DGMS   Director General of Medical Services
DMT    Director of Military Training
DPA    Director of Personnel Administration
DSD    Director of Staff Duties
GOC    General Officer Commanding
NSRB   National Security Resources Board
PMF    Permanent Military Forces
RAAF   Royal Australian Air Force
RAN    Royal Australian Navy
RASR   Regular Army Special Reserve
RSL    Returned Services League of Australia
RSSAILA Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia
SEATO  South-East Asia Treaty Organisation
VCGS   Vice Chief of the General Staff
INTRODUCTION

National Service in Australia between 1945 and 1972 is an issue related not only to defence, but also to politics and to society. This thesis will investigate the complex relationship that developed after the Second World War between the armed forces, successive federal governments, and the Australian people. It is contended that public support for universal and selective forms of National Service during the period was a response to Australia’s changing strategic situation. It is argued also that changes within Australian society strongly influenced public support for compulsory military training. These internal and external changes together provide a framework for the development of an understanding of the historical significance of National Service.

Veterans of the two world wars were by far the most outspoken defence critics of the early post-war period and they constituted a formidable public presence. For example, in December 1949, newly elected federal representatives with military experience dominated Robert Menzies’ Liberal-Country Party Coalition Government.¹ Meanwhile, the Returned Sailors’, Soldiers’ and Airmen’s Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA) achieved considerable notoriety for its leading advocacy of compulsory military training and for its concern about the problems of communism and of

immigration. As many returned servicemen were preoccupied with the same issues as most other Australians, their attitudes and activities afford valuable insights into the society as a whole.

A link between the armed forces and the wider Australian community was also forged by the National Service training scheme that operated between 1951 and 1960. This system of compulsory military training involved a short period of full-time service followed by a part-time training obligation spread over several years. The joint administration of the scheme by the Services and the Federal Government was significant because National Service training presented certain problems that demanded regular responses from both protagonists. With too few volunteers and insufficient accommodation, the Army struggled to cope with the demands of the scheme and subsequently sought concessions from the Government to relieve the burden.

In 1951, the Government justified the introduction of universal compulsory military training by warning that Australia needed to prepare for war in three years. The significance of the Government’s decision to base the National Service training scheme upon the principle of universal service became fully apparent in the light of its reluctance to authorise a change to a system of selective military training. However, in 1954, economic imperatives and changes in Australia’s strategic situation necessitated a

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2 In June 1916, a Conference of the Returned Soldiers’ Association formed the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA). In November 1940, the League changed its name to the Returned Sailors’, Soldiers’ and Airmen’s Imperial League of Australia. The League is commonly referred to as the RSL, and in October 1965 formally adopted the abbreviated title and the name Returned Services League of Australia. The League has subsequently undergone two further name changes and is today officially referred to as the Returned & Services League of Australia Limited: ‘About the RSL: how the League evolved’, Returned & Services League, <http://www.rsl.org.au/>

reduction in the scale of the National Service training scheme.

Strong public support for universal compulsory military training, which until that point had been politically advantageous, now presented a serious problem to the Government. The ultimately unavoidable change to selective military training revealed the considerable extent to which public support for the National Service training scheme was based upon social ideals instead of defence needs. Many people credited National Service with the potential to promote social cohesion by integrating youths from all walks of life in a classless environment, by teaching them to uphold the manly ideal of devotion to the duty of protecting the nation, and by instilling in them traditional values such as respect for authority, self-discipline, teamwork, and a selfless spirit of personal sacrifice.

Given the importance of the role assigned to the National Service training scheme, it is not surprising that many people objected vehemently to the fundamental inequity of selective military training. The Government tried to maintain public support for National Service by enforcing more rigidly the selective liability for call-up and by attempting to make unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for National Service training. However, in 1957, a decision was made to discontinue National Service training in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), the Army's annual National Service intake was limited to just 12,000 trainees, and a birthday ballot system was introduced to govern the call-up. These measures rendered the scheme unacceptably selective for a significant proportion of people. During the 1950s, public support for National Service training receded as the dimensions of the scheme were reduced. Disillusion was widespread, therefore, at the
time of the scheme's suspension in 1960.

The National Service training experience of the 1950s suggests that public support depended largely upon the maintenance of the principle of universal service. However, it is evident that a major shift in public opinion subsequently occurred, for in 1964, a majority of Australians accepted the introduction of a highly selective National Service scheme involving two years' full-time service and a liability for overseas service. It is arguable that, despite the disappointments of the 1950s, universal compulsory military training was demonstrated to be inappropriate in the light of Australia's gradual strategic reorientation from the Middle East to South-East Asia that was complete by the early 1960s. This process involved a change in military doctrine from massed conventional warfare to limited counter-insurgency operations and a shift in emphasis from numerical to technological superiority. Since the middle years of the 1950s, the strategic situation had developed to such an extent and in such a way that a National Service scheme of a kind that the public would previously have refused to support was now widely accepted.

The National Service training scheme of the 1950s not only contributed to the Australian people's acceptance of the introduction of a highly selective National Service scheme in the 1960s; it also acquainted the Federal Government with the most effective way to retain public support for a fundamentally inequitable system of compulsory military service. The Government's attempt in 1968 to tighten the provisions of the National Service Act in an effort to ensure the fair and equitable administration of the scheme was, in itself, innocuous enough; but, when considered in the context of the overall experience of National Service administration, it can be interpreted as part of a
deliberate strategy that was designed to prevent a decline in public support for the National Service scheme.

Nevertheless, in the 1960s, public support for the National Service scheme ultimately declined. Two parallels between the administration of the 1950s scheme and the 1960s scheme are revealing. These are the liability of unnaturalised migrants for National Service and the introduction of legislative amendments that were designed to strengthen the National Service Act in order to permit a fairer and more equitable administration that would, in turn, shore up public support. In the 1950s, the Government succeeded in strengthening the punitive provisions of the National Service Act, but failed to make unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for National Service training. In the 1960s, the Government succeeded in making unnaturalised migrants liable for National Service, but its amending legislation was effectively scuppered by unexpected public opposition that can be attributed directly to the Government’s decision to include National Servicemen in Australia’s military commitment to South Vietnam.

It is apparent that in the late 1960s, the Coalition Government failed to understand, or refused to recognise, that growing public anxiety about the escalating war in Vietnam had made advisable the introduction of more liberal provisions for conscientious objection to National Service and provisions for conscientious objection to the war itself. Thus committed to an uncompromising ideology, the Government tried to consolidate its existing base of public support. The Government’s acceptance and subsequent rejection in 1971 of the need for a civilian alternative to National Service indicates that, in administering the scheme, inflexibility was equated with fairness.
Meanwhile, the Labor Party attempted to gain the political ascendancy by tapping into an emergent broad-based protest movement that challenged Australia's traditional social conservatism.

This thesis draws upon a wide range of primary sources. The National Archives of Australia collection includes the files of the Prime Minister's Department and the Secretary to Cabinet, which contain the decisions taken by the federal governments of the period. The records of the Department of Defence, including those compiled by its long-serving Secretary, Sir Frederick Shedden, and those of the Navy, Army, and Air Force, reveal much about the National Service planning process and the operation of schemes. Information pertaining to the ongoing administration of the schemes is contained in files generated by the Department of Labour and National Service. The files of the Department of External Affairs give insights to Australia's foreign relations and the changing strategic situation. The liability for National Service of unnaturalised non-British migrants and the exclusion of Aborigines are issues addressed within the files of the Department of Immigration and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs.

The National Library of Australia Manuscript Section is the custodian of the RSL and Sir Robert Menzies collections, which reveal the internal dynamics of the League and the Liberal-Country Party Coalition during the period under investigation. Newspapers and magazines from the period have been used to present a range of views on the issues addressed by the thesis. The major metropolitan daily newspapers, the Melbourne Age and the Sydney Morning Herald, proved particularly useful for their editorial commentary. Reveille, the official monthly publication of the New South Wales State branch of the RSSAILA, and its Victorian equivalent, Mufti, provide access
to the views of the League leadership and rank-and-file members. The *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates* were another important source, together with information published online by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Australian Electoral Commission, the federal Department of the Parliamentary Library, the Australian War Memorial, and John Curtin University.

Four main groups of secondary works are relevant to this thesis. The first has as its focus the issue of conscription in Australia. Among the most important is Leslie Jauncey’s 1935 investigation of the First World War conscription plebiscites, entitled *The Story of Conscription in Australia*. Works published during Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War include an economic critique by Darcy McGaurr, *Conscription and Australian Military Capability*, and Glenn Withers’ *Conscription: Necessity and Justice*, which presents the argument that conscription is socially unjust. Other works from the same period include Roy Forward and Bob Reece’s edited *Conscription in Australia*, and J.M. Main’s documentary study, *Conscription: The Australian Debate, 1901-1970*; Main discusses side by side the two National Service schemes of the post-war era and the Vietnam War. Later studies of the earliest system of compulsory military training include John Barrett’s *Falling In: Australians and ‘boy

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"conscription' 1911-1915 and Thomas W. Tanner’s *Compulsory Citizen Soldiers.*

The second category of scholarship contains the works of Australian military historians who follow in the footsteps of prolific defence studies pioneer, T.B. Millar. Peter Edwards’ *Crises and Commitments* is the official history of Australia’s involvement in several conflicts after the Second World War. Its companion work, *A Nation at War,* addresses Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War and includes an exhaustive history of the National Service scheme of the period. The most recent contribution to the same field is *Australia’s Vietnam War* by Jeff Doyle, Jeffrey Grey and Peter Pierce, which complements the trio’s earlier edited work, *Vietnam Days,* as well as *Vietnam: war, myth and memory.* Jeffrey Grey evaluates the National Service schemes from the perspective of the Australian Regular Army (ARA) in his comprehensive book, *A Military History of Australia.* Albert Palazzo, in *The Australian Army,* argues that the first scheme was both an unnecessary burden on the

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Regular Army and an unsustainable boon for the Citizen Military Forces (CMF), whilst the opposite situation applied under the second scheme.\textsuperscript{13}

Dayton McCarthy has recently added an important new dimension to the historiography with his comprehensive history of the CMF, \textit{The Once and Future Army}, in which he considers the role of National Service in the decline of that organisation from the early 1960s.\textsuperscript{14} This work fits neatly with John Blaxland’s earlier investigation of the Regular Army ascendancy that occurred at the same time, in \textit{Organising an Army}.\textsuperscript{15} M.M. van Gelder has explained the usefulness of the National Service scheme 1965-72 within a general discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of selective and universal National Service schemes.\textsuperscript{16} Keith Howard’s thesis, ‘Political Benefit, Defence Burden: The Australian National Service Training Scheme of 1950-1960’, is the only work dedicated exclusively to a scheme, the significance of which most historians equate with its utility.\textsuperscript{17}

The third category of secondary works addresses the political, social, and economic aspects of post-1945 Australian defence planning. Foremost among the authors who have contributed to this field of scholarship is David Lowe, who has investigated Australian responses to the onset of the Cold War in his book, \textit{Menzies and
the ‘great world struggle’.18 This study complements David Lee’s earlier contribution, Search for Security: the political economy of Australia’s postwar foreign and defence policy, which, in turn, develops Bruce McFarlane’s survey of early Australian post-war economic policy.19 John Murphy deals with the Australian social setting in the 1950s in Imagining the Fifties, while Ann-Mari Jordens provides a comprehensive account of post-war immigration policy and explains its importance to Australia in the first three decades after 1945 in Alien to Citizen.20

The fourth category comprises biographies and memoirs of the historical actors of the period. Important biographies include Allan Martin’s Robert Menzies, David Day’s Chifley, Ian Hancock’s John Gorton, and David Horner’s biography of Shedden, Defence Supremo.21 Of the memoirs, Full Circle by Sydney Rowell, and Paul Hasluck’s The Chance of Politics, which gives one man’s insight on many of the politicians and senior public servants of the period, deserve particular mention.22 Accounts of the Australian anti-war, anti-conscription movement of the 1960s and 1970s by Ann-Mari Jordens and Ann Curthoys provide an excellent backdrop to Val Noone’s Disturbing the War and Greg Langley’s A decade of dissent, which are two examples of books that

Defence planning is determined by strategic and diplomatic considerations on the international level, while domestically, political, social, and economic factors are involved. Hence, the history of National Service from 1945 provides insights on both Australia’s adaptation to a changing strategic environment and the development of Australian society during the 30 years after the Second World War. Hugh Smith has observed that: ‘In planning for defence it may be difficult even to discern possible contingencies, let alone assess their probability. Defence policy, it seems, must plan for the unplannable’. After 1945, planning for defence in peacetime Australia was similarly problematic, given the initially uncertain economic outlook, the implementation and maintenance of an extremely ambitious immigration programme, and the onset of the Cold War that once again raised the spectre of imminent global conflict.

This thesis comprises seven chapters, the first of which will show that from 1945, the competing tensions of the Australian people’s demand for rapid demobilisation and their support for universal compulsory military training created a complex domestic situation. The reorganisation of the armed forces led to the introduction of a Post-War Army Plan in 1947. The personnel strength targets that were set for the Regular Army

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and the CMF subsequently revealed a recruiting problem that demanded a relaxation of selection standards. Meanwhile, the onset of the Cold War increased public concerns about the threat posed by communism both at home and abroad.

Chapter Two will consider the emergence of communism and defence as political issues of equal import and will present the 1949 federal election result as an expression of the Australian people's anxieties about Australia's internal and external security situations. The course of planning for National Service will be traced within the context of a rapidly deteriorating strategic environment that culminated in the outbreak of war in Korea. That war again exposed the Army's ongoing recruiting problem and prompted the expansion of the proposal for National Service which accompanied the Federal Government's warning that Australia must prepare for the possibility of war in three years.

The third and fourth chapters will deal with the National Service training scheme of the 1950s. Chapter Three will examine the scheme's commencement, the reasons behind the change to selective military training in 1954, and reactions to that change. Also considered are some curious bureaucratic decisions that supported the Government's endeavour to ensure the fair and equitable administration of the scheme through the maintenance of the principle of universal service. Chapter Four will follow the progress of the selective National Service training scheme, through the introduction of several more selective provisions in 1957, to its suspension in 1960. Both these chapters will consider the effects of National Service training on the Army organisation and will examine the pattern of public support for National Service that emerged during the 1950s.
Chapter Five will begin to establish the connection between the two National Service schemes by analysing public support for compulsory military training in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Although universal military training retained significant support, it was in the early 1960s that selective military training came to be broadly accepted. It is argued that this change is attributable to the experience of National Service training in the 1950s, which demonstrated the inappropriateness of universal military training to the development of the kind of Army that was needed to meet the challenges of Australia's strategic reorientation from the Middle East to South-East Asia. As the decade progressed, the strategic environment deteriorated, providing a catalyst to the rise of the Regular Army and the decline of the CMF, and confirming the efficacy of a selective National Service scheme that was needed to help sustain Australia's military commitment to South Vietnam.

The process whereby Australia was drawn increasingly into the Vietnam War, which necessitated the indefinite continuation of National Service, will be investigated in Chapter Six. After high levels of public support for the war and for National Service began to recede in 1967, the Federal Government resorted to its earlier tactic of tightening the provisions of the *National Service Act* in a bid to retain public support by ensuring the fair and equitable administration of a selective scheme. By now, however, the National Service scheme had come to be closely identified with the increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam. The Government's vain efforts to prevent the fusion of these two issues made it reluctant to introduce amendments to the scheme that might have relieved the mounting political and social pressure exerted by the Labor Party and a broad-based protest movement. The reasons behind the continued exclusion of
Aborigines from the National Service scheme, coupled with the Government's brief acceptance of a civilian alternative to National Service, support this assertion.

Chapter Seven will detail the attempts of the Federal Government to make unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for National Service in the 1950s and 1960s. The investigation of this issue will confirm the extent to which the two National Service schemes of the post-Second World War period were connected. That an unsuccessful attempt in the 1950s was followed by an ultimately successful attempt in the 1960s highlights the Government's recognition of the need to ensure the fair administration of National Service, notwithstanding the relatively small numbers of migrants involved, and reveals the relative importance that was attached to immigration during those two decades.

This thesis will demonstrate how the first National Service scheme paved the way for the second, and will expose the steady course of defence planning during a period of significant change in Australia's strategic situation. The establishment of close links between the National Service schemes constructs a historical continuum that will help to overcome the disjuncture that has resulted from the two schemes usually being considered separately. A study of the two together confirms the historical significance of National Service by revealing the complexity of the relationship between the armed forces, successive federal governments, and the Australian people.
CHAPTER ONE

National Service and the Post-War Army

Twice in the last 30 years it has been proved that a lasting peace does not come from good wishes and promises made at a round table conference. The R.S.L. urges the Government to take the necessary steps to reintroduce compulsory military training so that never again will this country be unprepared to meet an aggressor.

Reveille, May 1947.

This chapter spans the years 1945 to 1949 and will investigate the competing pressures that began to engulf J.B. (Ben) Chifley’s Federal Labor Government immediately after the Second World War. From the outset, concerns were raised publicly about the size of the Australian Military Forces (AMF) while demands were made for accelerated general demobilisation. The chapter will introduce the RSSAILA and outline its activities and growing political influence. The post-war reorganisation of the armed forces will be examined, including a proposal by the nation’s military leaders to include a system of compulsory military training in their plan for a Post-War Army. The Army, however, was ultimately forced to rely exclusively upon the system of voluntary enlistment; its failure to attract recruits in sufficient numbers drew public criticism of the Government’s decision to proscribe compulsory military training. The disappointing standard of men offering for military service eventually prompted the Army to
reconsider its entry requirements in relation to the minimum height and the racial origin of prospective recruits.

After 1945, the Chifley Government came under mounting pressure as both the Army's inability to meet recruiting targets and the onset of the Cold War encouraged the RSSAILA to become increasingly vocal in its advocacy of compulsory military training. Later, world events such as the Soviet blockade of West Berlin from late 1948, and in 1949, the communist ascendancy in China and the development of an atomic weapons capability by the Soviet Union, presented an immediate danger to the Western democracies. Meanwhile, the extent of the problem posed by communism in Australia is reflected by the Federal Government's decision to use the Army to break a communist-backed coal strike in the approach to the federal election of December 1949. The Australian public's growing anxiety about communism and their concerns about the state of the nation's defence combined to produce highly favourable conditions for Menzies' conservative Liberal-Country Party Coalition.

On 30 June 1945, the total strength of the AMF numbered 558,174 personnel, after having been gradually reduced from a maximum strength of 633,372 troops in August 1943.\(^1\) In July 1945, Melbourne's *Sun News-Pictorial* alleged that some 1,500 men employed by the Army as professionals, including accountants, lawyers, and journalists, had been granted commissions to enable politicians to quote inflated statistics and thereby exaggerate the operational capacity of the armed forces.\(^2\) The Minister for the Army, Francis Forde, replied that, on the contrary, there had always

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been a deficiency of officers in the AMF, and that the Army was about 3,700 officers below its approved personnel establishment. The Adjutant-General of the Army subsequently confirmed the shortfall of 3,700 officers in correspondence with the Secretary of the Department of the Army, Frank Sinclair. The Adjutant-General observed that a number of positions had deliberately been left vacant in anticipation of general demobilisation, while some technical appointments could not be filled because no suitably qualified men were available.

In that same month, Mufti, the official organ of the Victorian State Branch of the RSSAILA, complained that bureaucrats who had not served in the armed forces were to administer the post-war re-establishment of returned servicemen. Mufti doubted the ability of people who had not served to deal effectively with returned servicemen. According to some members of the League, the federal bureaucracy was likely to prove incapable of co-ordinating the nation's transition from wartime to peacetime. The 'feverish activity' of the Department of Post-War Reconstruction was rather unkindly interpreted as an indication that the Federal Government was unprepared for the many challenges that could be expected during the post-war re-establishment. Mufti demanded details of the assistance in repatriation that the Government had promised to make available to returned servicemen and warned that the League leadership could not guarantee that it would continue to work towards keeping 'the men of the Fighting Forces level headed'.

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5 *Age*, 10 July 1945.
4 NAA: MP742/1, 251/5/924, Minute, Adjutant-General to the Secretary of the Department of the Army, F.R. Sinclair, 23 July 1945.
5 *Mufti*, July 1945.
Gerald Kristianson has noted that after its ranks were swelled with Second World War veterans, the League recorded a peak of 373,947 members in 1946.\(^7\) It is arguable that, during the first few years after 1945, this inspired a confidence in the RSSAILA that promoted a greater involvement in Australian political life than might otherwise have occurred. Although its membership increased markedly after 1945, the League could easily have accepted even more men into its ranks. At the 1946 RSSAILA Annual Conference, a proposal was made to qualify for membership all Australian service personnel who had volunteered for, but had not rendered, overseas service during the Second World War. However, this was rejected. The subject of a protracted and bitter dispute that originated in 1943, the attempt to extend the eligibility for League membership to men who had not served overseas was finally defeated after what the Melbourne Age reported as ‘lengthy and sometimes excited discussion’\(^8\).

If League members recognised that their preference for exclusivity potentially denied them greater political influence, most were evidently unconcerned.\(^9\) Whilst the RSSAILA remained resolutely exclusive, it shared with the wider Australian community concerns about a range of issues that contained implications for national security. One such issue was Australia’s large-scale post-war immigration programme, the implications of which raised as much concern as the threat posed by communism. The League, as a trenchant critic of the Chifley Government, commanded the attention

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\(^{8}\) *Age*, 25 July 1946.

\(^{9}\) RSSAILA membership was in 1945 – 270,719; in 1946 – 373,947; in 1947 – 323,036; and in 1948 – 298,376: National Library of Australia (NLA) Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 202, Folder 3116c, Part 2, RSSAILA 33rd Annual Report and Balance Sheet 1948. In 1949, the membership was 287,507: NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 212, Folder 3303c, Parts 1 and 2, RSSAILA 34th Annual Report and Balance Sheet 1949.
of the press; the regular reporting of its policies by the press helped the League to influence public opinion. Peter Sekuless and Jacqueline Rees have argued that: ‘The twin pillars of the League – mateship and nationalism – do not stand entirely separately’. 10 If mateship can be defined as a common bond of kinship that is developed through shared experiences, it follows that the conservatism of the League was facilitated largely by its exclusivity.

In the same month that the war ended, almost 75 per cent of respondents to a Gallup poll expressed support for the introduction of a system of universal compulsory military training. 11 By the beginning of 1946, the majority of Australians in favour of compulsory military training had increased to almost 80 per cent. 12 Although the people wanted demobilisation to occur as quickly as possible, they held some very firm views about national security. A substantial majority was convinced that the implementation of a system of compulsory military training was necessary to increase Australia’s defence capacity. The consensus that the nation’s youth should be made to participate in the defence programme matched the hope that, in so doing, a number of defence aims and social benefits would be realised. Soon after the war, Australians generally did not see much value in the concept of a small, full-time professional force consisting solely of volunteers. Most people seemed to believe that building up the armed forces to the point that it would be capable of dealing with all foreseeable threats was a relatively straightforward business.

11 Australian Gallup Polls / Australian Public Opinion Polls (AGP/APOP), nos 284 – 293, August 1945.
Of course, Australia’s military responsibilities did not end with Japan’s unconditional surrender in August 1945. In the Japanese-occupied territories, thousands of enemy troops had to be disarmed and repatriated and civilian governance needed to be restored. To this end, the Australian Army was responsible for maintaining a garrison in the islands of the Indonesian archipelago; it also had to provide troops for the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in Japan from February 1946. Australia could not shirk these tasks if it was to impress upon its senior allies, Great Britain and the United States, its credentials as a responsible power capable of exerting influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

On 1 October 1945 – the first day of general demobilisation – few Australians would have given much thought to the implications of the numerical strength of the AMF. Doubtless, for many men in uniform, their return to civilian life could not come quickly enough. The Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction endeavoured to keep all personnel informed through the publication of a fortnightly bulletin, *The Progress of Demobilisation and Re-establishment*. This revealed that an initial target of 200,000 discharges by 31 January 1946 was due to be exceeded by about 48,000 and that a further 200,000 discharges was planned for the period from 1 February to 30 June 1946, leaving a total of approximately 130,000 personnel in the three Services.

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15 *The Progress of Demobilisation and Re-establishment*, Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction, Bulletin no. 1, 1 February 1946: NLA Call # Nq355.1150994 PRO.
The Federal Government could not ignore the public's demand for rapid demobilisation. David Day has commented that it was fortunate that limited shipping was available to bring the troops back to Australia because it helped to avoid a sudden saturation of the domestic labour market during the transition of the national economy from a wartime to a peacetime footing. It is also possible that the public's mood influenced the decisions of some men who might otherwise have volunteered to continue to serve. By the beginning of 1946, a serious military manpower shortage threatened to prevent the AMF from carrying out the occupation duties that had been assigned to it. Simultaneously, the Army was expected to demobilise and reorganise, but it was difficult for the Service chiefs to devise and implement a regulatory plan because the post-war situation was not sufficiently clear to ascertain the requirements of the Post-War Army.

On 11 January 1946, the *Age* reported that the accelerated rate of demobilisation was creating serious problems for the Army. As demobilisation gathered pace, military planners were unable to forecast accurately the number of recruits that were needed to maintain the Army at an acceptable operational level. At the same time as the strength of the AMF was being steadily drained by the demobilisation programme, preparations were being made to arrest this trend through a new recruiting campaign. The three Services aimed to avoid the cost of training new recruits by encouraging men who were still serving re-engage and demobilised men to re-enlist. Monthly, the Army was authorised to recruit 1,500 men without any previous military service and to accept all

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17 *Age*, 11 January 1946.
suitable ex-servicemen. Of the 1,530 men who were expected to enlist in the Army by 9 March 1946, approximately one-third were ex-servicemen and almost all had volunteered to serve with the BCOF. 18

Increasingly, the reorganisation of the armed forces was brought to the notice of the public. The Pacific War experience had taught the Australian people what the editor of the Age described as ‘two great lessons’. 19 The first lesson was that Australia’s geographical isolation provided neither a deterrent to – nor a defence against – a determined foreign aggressor. The second lesson was that Australia’s relatively small population was able to mobilise armed forces that could at least halt – if not repel – a numerically superior enemy. Although Australia’s vulnerability to attack had been confirmed, so too had the nation’s ability to defend itself. Therefore, no one, the Age claimed, would dare to question the financial expenditure needed to establish and maintain a viable defence force, ‘provided the best possible use is made of the human and practical material’. 20

The Age urged the Federal Government to allow the nation’s military leaders to perform the task of post-war defence planning free of any kind of political interference. For its part, the newspaper outlined its vision of a highly trained, well-equipped, permanent defence nucleus, and explained how the rapid expansion of that nucleus in a defence emergency could occur with the aid of a system of universal compulsory military training. Conscious of the Labor Party’s traditional dislike of military

18 NAA: MP742/1, 275/1/320, Resumption of Recruiting, AMF recruiting returns, March 1946.
19 Age, editorial, 8 February 1946.
20 Ibid.
compulsion, the *Age* conceded that a plan to introduce universal military training would inevitably attract a great deal of resistance. However, following the experience of the Second World War, for the Australian people, 'the time has surely come to view the question in its widest aspects, free from inhibitions outdated by events'.

The *Age* described its plan for Australia’s defence as a ‘national insurance policy’ that would provide national security and at the same time deliver the numerous social benefits that were thought to be inherent in universal military training. Physical training would improve the fitness of trainees, and thereby fortify Australia’s defence, and the fraternisation of youths from all sections of society during their military training would give rise to a common understanding of the Australian nation uncoloured by class-consciousness and undivided by social boundaries. Arguments in favour of universal military training would subsequently emphasise, to varying degrees, the value of universal military training to both the development of defence and the promotion of social cohesion.

On 30 April 1946, the Army’s Chief of the General Staff (CGS), Lieutenant-General Vernon Sturdee, sent the Minister for the Army, Forde, a report that detailed the comprehensive findings of a meeting of the Military Board. Early in that month, the Military Board had examined the Army’s responsibilities and, with a view to the establishment of the Post-War Army, tabled what it considered the Army’s basic

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23 NAA: MP742/1, 240/1/2347, Military Board Minute, Interim Post War Strengths of the Forces, 30 April 1946. The Military Board consisted of the Minister for the Army, the Chief of the General Staff, the Vice Chief of the General Staff, the Adjutant-General, the Quartermaster General, the Master General of the Ordnance, the Finance Member, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, and the Secretary of the Department of the Army.
requirements. The first issue to be addressed was manpower. The Military Board recommended that Cabinet's decision to reduce the Army's strength to a maximum of 91,000 troops by 30 June 1946, and to 50,000 by the end of that year, should be revised to permit an upper limit of 67,321 personnel. The Military Board did not want to retain too many troops, but neither was it prepared to release too many. Either course of action would have been detrimental to the Army's operational efficiency.

Because the post-war strategic situation had only begun to crystallise, it was difficult for the Military Board to determine the kind of defence force that Australia needed to develop. However, a number of basic responsibilities had already been accepted, and for these, the Army's requirements could be accurately forecast. One of the main tasks that had already commenced was the classification, preservation, and storage of vast quantities of war surplus equipment. Additional responsibilities included the continuing medical care of thousands of serving and demobilised personnel and the custody of enemy prisoners of war and internees. The Military Board insisted that the establishment and maintenance of the Australian contingent of the BCOF was an operational commitment, and therefore separate from the Army's other responsibilities. It was considered unwise to accept any fewer than 10,000 troops as the requirement for Australia's contribution to the BCOF.

The Military Board warned the Minister for the Army that a reduction in the Army's total strength to 50,000 personnel would create a number of serious problems. Without sufficient manpower to cope with existing tasks, the Army would be forced to

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
dispose of serviceable military stores for which a need might arise in a defence emergency. The problem would be compounded by the necessity to curtail many essential military activities, including training exercises, which were the only reliable measure of operational capability. This, it was argued, would have a devastating effect on the efficiency, and by extension, the morale, of the Army. In turn, the Government could expect to incur the wrath of an electorate that was beginning to focus again on the defence needs of the nation. The Military Board concluded that, at the beginning of 1947, no less than 67,000 troops would be needed to carry out the Army’s various post-war responsibilities.26

Although the problems that confronted the Army were likely to affect the process of post-war reorganisation if they were not solved quickly, Forde queried many of the points that were raised by the Military Board. The Minister for the Army requested a more detailed justification of the projected manpower requirements and ignored the warning of dire political consequences should demobilisation effected too quickly result in the unnecessary waste of military stores. Forde noted that the Army would be relieved of the responsibility of all existing medical cases by 1947 and insisted that the repatriation of all prisoners of war and internees should be expedited.27 The operational efficiency of the AMF was always an important concern of the Federal Government. However, Forde was prepared to dismiss the warnings of the Military Board, which he evidently considered alarmist. Those warnings were doubtless unwelcome because they seemed to contradict the basic aim of a swift conclusion to the demobilisation

26 Ibid.
27 NAA: MP742/1, 240/1/2347, Minute, Interim Post-War Strength of the Forces, F.M. Forde, 25 May 1946.
programme. The Minister for the Army was under intense pressure to accede to the public's demand for rapid demobilisation and knew that any delay would be unpopular.

Although the Government tried to ensure that demobilisation proceeded on a fair and equitable basis, the programme attracted considerable criticism. For example, the Age learned that in February 1946, nine Germans and Austrians had been released from the Aliens Labour Corps, despite not having qualified for discharge. The Aliens Labour Corps had been raised during the war to perform domestic labour duties, and as part of the Permanent Military Forces, its members were entitled to apply to the Ministry for Post-War Reconstruction for demobilisation benefits. The discharges had been authorised under the provisions of the Department of Post-War Reconstruction's education scheme and had been brought forward to allow the men to enrol in university courses. In two strongly biased reports, the Age newspaper argued that there was no prospect of accelerated discharge for the Australian soldiers still overseas, and complained that the admission to educational courses of aliens from enemy countries would impede the repatriation of ex-servicemen.28

In Federal Parliament on 29 March 1946, George Bowden (Country, Gippsland) produced a list of nineteen names of Germans and Austrians who had been admitted to Australian universities. Although Bowden conceded that the men had been persecuted in their home countries, he attacked the Government for giving preference to aliens of enemy origin.29 The Minister for Post-War Reconstruction, John Dedman (Labor, Corio), explained that the policy of accelerating the discharge of servicemen who had

28 Age, 21 and 22 February 1946.
successfully completed at least one year of a university course and were eligible to resume their studies had applied in the cases of 911 servicemen. The Government reasoned that the disbandment of the Aliens Labour Corps was desirable because the steady return of demobilised men to civilian industries had rendered the organisation obsolete.

In the meantime, the Federal Opposition moved to censure the Government after Dutch relief supply ships suspected of carrying arms for use against the Indonesian nationalist movement were held up at Australian ports by the communist-dominated Waterside Workers' Federation, thereby endangering relations between Australia and the Netherlands East Indies colonial administration. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Arthur Fadden (Country, Darling Downs), also alleged that the Chifley Government had mismanaged the demobilisation programme after basing it upon an unfair points system for discharge eligibility that was likely to retard the development of the national economy by unnecessarily limiting the size of the labour force. Fadden echoed the warning that the RSSAILA had made earlier when he declared that serious trouble could be expected throughout the country if prompt action was not taken to solve the problems of unemployment and an acute housing shortage.

31 For an account of 'the ships that did not sail' see Rupert Lockwood, Black Armada, Australasian Book Society, South Sydney, 1975.
32 CPD, vol. 186, 6 March 1946, pp. 22-31; The Motion of Want of Confidence in the Government was sustained by the Opposition over three days: CPD, vol. 186, 6 – 8 March 1946, pp. 6-153; the points system for discharge eligibility was used to govern the pace of demobilisation and was designed to ensure that the discharge of personnel proceeded fairly. Points were awarded according to length of service, marital status, and age: Grey, A Military History of Australia, p. 193.
The pressure on the Chifley Government intensified amid growing dissatisfaction with the pace of demobilisation. In August 1946, Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph* reported an allegation made by the RSSAILA New South Wales State President, Ken Bolton, that, in a blatant attempt to hide inefficiency, under-employed Army tradesmen had been ordered to “look busy” during the inspection of a base workshop. Given the League’s leading advocacy of a strong defence force, it is ironic that a senior member of the RSSAILA leadership should have urged the speedy return of Army personnel to civilian industry.

The *Daily Telegraph* exposé prompted questions from the Federal Opposition in both houses of Parliament. Percy Spender (Liberal, Warringah) told the House of Representatives: ‘It is alleged that many men who should be discharged, having the requisite number of points, are retained in the Army doing absolutely nothing, thus being prevented from rehabilitating themselves in civil life’, and demanded to know if the Army had any legal authority to retain men who had qualified for discharge. On the same day, George McLeay, a South Australian Liberal Senator, asked his Western Australian opposite, Labor Senator James Fraser, if the Government intended to investigate the allegations contained in the *Daily Telegraph* report with a view to taking disciplinary action.

When Forde sought answers from the Secretary of the Department of the Army, he complained about his many tormentors:

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33 *Daily Telegraph*, 6 August 1946.
34 *CPD*, vol. 188, 6 August 1946, pp. 3718-19.
35 *CPD*, vol. 188, 6 August 1946, p. 3666.
I am continually being attacked from within the Government, from members on the Government side of the House and members of the Opposition, in addition to almost daily attacks in the public press, as to alleged waste and extravagance in the Army on employment of manpower and the continuance of unnecessary installations and procedures.\textsuperscript{36}

Forde claimed that he did not accept much of what the critics said about the Government's handling of general demobilisation. Nevertheless, he was obviously upset by the harassment he was experiencing. Frustration may have led him to betray an apparent distrust of the Government's military advisers when he added indiscreetly that, in his view, 'where there is smoke there is fire'.\textsuperscript{37}

The Adjutant-General responded with a report that outlined a litany of problems that had been created by the rigid adherence to the points system for discharge. The Minister for the Army was to be reminded that the Government had been made fully aware of the likelihood of these problems during the early planning stages of the demobilisation programme. Therefore, it should have come as no surprise that 'if the efficiency of the Army was to be maintained during the demobilization period at a reasonable level some soldiers would have to be retained for varying periods until men could be trained to replace them'.\textsuperscript{38} Put simply, the Army had no option other than to delay the discharges of certain so-called 'key personnel' until volunteers came forward in sufficient numbers to replace them.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} NAA: MP742/1, 240/1/2347, Minute, Interim Post-War Strength of the Forces, Forde to Sinclair, 6 August 1946.  
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{38} NAA: MP742/1, 240/1/2447, Minute, Army Post War Strengths, Adjutant-General to Sinclair, 13 August 1946.  
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
The Adjutant-General identified three basic categories of retained personnel. The first included highly skilled men, including doctors and dentists; tradesmen filled the second category; the third encompassed all other essential personnel, such as cooks and drivers. The retention of a number of personnel from each of these categories for varying periods could not be avoided if the Army was to continue to function efficiently. The Adjutant-General claimed that the total number of men who had qualified for discharge and were retained against their wishes had fallen from a maximum of 16,400 in May 1946, to approximately 5,500 only three months later. Further, the peak figure of 16,400 was not a true reflection of the situation because it was derived from a reduction in the number of points that Service personnel had to accumulate before they became eligible for discharge. This amendment was facilitated by the unexpectedly swift pace of demobilisation and had been introduced by the Government in an effort to ensure that the total strength of the Army was reduced to 91,000 personnel by 30 June 1946. The Adjutant-General estimated that, at the time of writing his report, the total remaining Army strength of 77,000 personnel included approximately 24,000 men who desired discharge.\(^{40}\)

Of the increasingly vocal demand for discharge by retained personnel, the Adjutant-General wrote: ‘The reason is that the reduced number of voices is offset by the greater volume of each voice, as only naturally the further the war recedes the less does the soldier, who was called up for war service, appreciate being retained against his wishes’.\(^{41}\) The Adjutant-General also noted that ‘every recruit means one more man

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
\(^{41}\) Ibid.
who can be demobilized’, and included in his report an appraisal of the recruiting situation. Because the possibility of service with the BCOF had proved to be a great incentive to recruiting, the ranks of the Interim Army were already filled with volunteers for service in Japan. Unfortunately, recruiting officers were no longer able to entice prospective recruits with the offer of service with the BCOF, as to do so would be both ‘unfair and unwise’. Consequently, the likelihood of an upsurge in enlistments was not very great, as no other inducement was available. Pessimistic about the prospects for success of a recruiting campaign planned for September 1946, the Adjutant-General advised against any action by the Government that would lend further impetus to the demobilisation programme.43

A scarcity of volunteers was not the only problem that Army recruiting staff encountered during the first year of the post-war re-establishment. The standard of applicants was also a serious cause for concern. In May 1946, an officer at the Recruit Training Centre in Greta, New South Wales, who was responsible for the allocation of recruits to the various corps, complained about a general decline in the calibre of Army enlistees. Recruits were assessed as belonging to one of four main groups – inferior, fair, good, and superior. It was estimated that the sizes of the middle groups had remained relatively stable; however, a decrease in the size of the superior group was matched by an increase in the inferior group. The corps allocation officer ventured that this general decline in standards was attributable to the discrepancy between the bright prospects of skilled workers and students in civilian life and the lot of the ‘the dead end

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.

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kid, educationally backward, honest toiler, or "won't worker" who only enlists thinking of an easy life'.

In an effort to arrest the decline in Army strength, defence advisers submitted the first Army Post War Plan to Cabinet in September 1946. The Vice Chief of the General Staff (VCGS), Lieutenant-General Sydney Rowell, later explained that the Military Board's objectives were fourfold. The first priority was to raise a Regular Army brigade group, including an armoured component, which would be capable of overseas deployment at short notice. The second aim was the re-establishment of the part-time Citizen Military Forces, which remained the basis of Australian defence planning. The third goal was the organisation and re-establishment of a string of military training establishments throughout the country. A fourth, more contentious objective, was the introduction of a system of National Service training that would help to increase the pace of any future mobilisation.

The hopes of the many supporters of compulsory military training were raised both by the Military Board's argument that Australia was unable to maintain a large, full-time Army during peacetime and by the observation that the system of voluntary enlistment had 'failed to produce the standard and numbers required for war including an adequate reserve'. The Military Board therefore envisaged that the CMF would continue to comprise the bulk of Australia's defence capacity. Compulsory military training was needed, it was argued, to supplement the existing organisational structure.

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45 Rowell, Full Circle, pp. 163-64.
46 NAA: A5954, 1884/3, Military Board Minute, Army Post War Plan, September 1946.
A system was proposed that would require the nation’s young men to submit to at least four months’ continuous military training. The Military Board considered four months to be ‘the minimum period required to carry out a man’s basic training and to enable units to undergo a period of collective training without which the efficiency of officers and staffs cannot be achieved’.

Important conclusions can be drawn from what the Military Board’s proposal for the introduction of a system of compulsory military training did not contain. Significantly, there was no suggestion that National Service training should necessarily be based upon a principle of universal service. Nor did the proposal contain any obligation for part-time training after the four-month period of full-time training. The Military Board was evidently interested only in imparting to the nation’s youth the most rudimentary military skills. The numerous vacancies that existed in the ranks of the Post-War Army and the CMF would still have to be filled by volunteers. The proposed system of compulsory military training would be simple to administer and cost-effective and its primary purpose was to acquaint the nation’s youth with military life.

Regardless of whether or not the National Service scheme would involve full-time or part-time training, the provision of an adequate number of instructors would certainly have presented a problem for the Army. However, the absence of any ongoing liability for part-time service would have at least avoided the problem of having to establish additional CMF training centres. Nevertheless, it was undoubtedly optimistic to present to Cabinet a defence plan that contained a provision for compulsory military training.

47 Ibid.
regardless of its features. Rowell later admitted that the Military Board had not really
expected the Labor Government to agree to the introduction of National Service
training. Nevertheless, the Defence Committee subsequently noted that ‘the forces
now suffer a grievous loss of experienced men who would, in normal circumstances, be
available to undertake the instruction of post-war recruits’ and identified this as ‘the
main factor of immediate importance’. The Defence Committee agreed that ‘a scheme
of National Service on the lines proposed in the Army Plan is necessary for the Army
and is very desirable for the Navy and Air Force’. The decision to raise the issue of
compulsory military training placed the issue squarely in the public domain.

In his role as Federal Treasurer, Chifley had already presented to Parliament a
Financial Statement, which read in part: ‘Within the limits of its obligations to the
nation for security and for the re-establishment of former servicemen and women, the
Government will curtail war, defence and associated expenditure to an absolute
minimum’. Hence, the Government’s position was plainly stated and the Services’
endeavour to attract recruits of a reasonable standard and in sufficient numbers was
made more difficult. The possibility of an improvement in conditions of service that
might make enlistment more attractive had become extremely remote. Rowell later
conceded that he and his colleagues knew that they would struggle to realise their
objectives: ‘It was becoming clear, even at this stage, that if and when our proposals
were endorsed by the government, we would have trouble meeting our targets in the

49 NAA: A816, 52/301/249A, Minutes of Defence Committee Meetings held on 19 November and 19
December 1946, Nature and Functions of Post-War Defence Forces. The Defence Committee consisted of
the three Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of the Department of Defence.
51 *CPD*, vol. 187, 12 July 1946, p. 2450.
face of full employment in a country lacking the tradition of a peacetime Regular Army service.' It is almost ironic that, although the Australian people demanded rapid demobilisation, they were not at all complacent about defence.

As a federal election was due to be held in September 1946, the public’s dissatisfaction with the pace of demobilisation could easily be converted to retribution at the ballot box. Although the Labor Party managed to retain office, the Minister for the Army, Forde, lost his seat of Capricornia and the Member for Adelaide, Cyril Chambers, took over the portfolio. Another Labor casualty that at least one colleague thought was a consequence of the Government’s inability to effect instant demobilisation was the Minister for Repatriation, Charles Frost. According to the Minister for Information and for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, the electors of Franklin punished Frost ‘because all the soldiers weren’t repatriated the day the war ended’. Calwell maintained that Frost was treated ‘very unfairly’ as nearly all the troops had returned to Australia before the election.

The re-election of the Chifley Government briefly stifled the National Service debate. Clearly, there was no prospect of a reversal of the Labor Party’s ideological objection to military compulsion. In any case, of more immediate concern to the Government and to the Service chiefs were the major administrative and logistical problems that still had to be solved as general demobilisation neared conclusion: the maintenance of the BCOF commitment and the establishment of a Post-War Army.

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52 Rowell, *Full Circle*, p. 165.
54 Ibid.
Given their conflicting agendas, disagreement between the Army and the Government about the level at which the personnel strength of the AMF should be maintained was perhaps inevitable. Jeffrey Grey explains the principles accepted by both protagonists upon which the defence planning that was about to occur was based:

first, the security of the Pacific region rested primarily with the United States, second, Britain would continue to play a significant role in Southeast Asia, and third, the run-down of the forces in the inter-war period had been a mistake, the consequences of which had been demonstrated in 1942. 55

On 12 March 1947, the Council of Defence surprised no one when it decided that compulsory military training was an unacceptable part of the Army Post War Plan. It directed the Military Board to rewrite the plan and to base its revision upon the system of voluntary enlistment. 56 The Military Board expected that it would continue to prove very difficult to attract recruits in sufficient numbers to either the full-time Army or the CMF. Therefore, an explicit reference to compulsory military training featured in a summary of the revised plan’s potential for expansion during any future mobilisation: ‘This plan could be readily adapted for the introduction of National Service training if, at a later date, a change occurs in the international situation or in Government Defence policy, and as a result, it is decided that a higher state of readiness is required’. 57

The plan provided for the establishment of a 19,000-strong Regular Army and a 50,000-strong CMF to replace the Interim Army. 58 The Army organisation was to

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56 NAA: A816, 52/301/249A, Conclusions of the Council of Defence, Strength and Organisation of Post-War Defence Forces, 12 March 1947. The Council of Defence consisted of the Defence Committee, the Prime Minister, the Minister for Defence, the Ministers for the Navy, the Army and Air, the Minister for Supply and National Development, and the Government Senate Leader.
58 Ibid.
consist of a Permanent Field Force of one independent brigade group and a CMF Field Force of two infantry divisions, an armoured brigade group, support units, and detachments for fixed defences. The CMF annual training obligation was set at 24 days' home training and a 14-day camp. Whilst it was proposed that the liability for overseas service should extend to Regular Army personnel during peace or war, under the plan, CMF personnel were to be liable for overseas service in time of war only. As a recruiting stimulus was needed to attract volunteers, the point was made that: 'Attractive conditions of service, modern training facilities, adequate equipment and efficient instruction are essential features proposed for the CMF under this plan'.

The Military Board noted that a generally lower state of readiness for war than might otherwise have been achieved would result from the decision of the Council of Defence to proscribe compulsory military training. Any future mobilisation was also predicted to be consequently slower. The Army could expect to receive £12.5 million of a total annual defence budget of £50 million during the 1947-48 financial year, and given these severe financial constraints, operational deployment would be restricted during the first twelve months of a defence emergency to the approved 69,000-strong peacetime personnel establishment.

The Military Board also considered the Army's broad short-term and long-term strategic objectives. Short-term objectives included the maintenance of national defence and regional security. These considerations were underscored by a long-term
commitment to United Nations collective security arrangements. Australia’s commitment to the BCOF remained a separate consideration for which additional personnel were provided. Cabinet approved the revised Army Post War Plan on 3 June 1947, which paved the way for the implementation on 1 July of a five years defence plan that relied exclusively upon the system of voluntary enlistment.62

The decision not to discount entirely the possibility that National Service training might be introduced at a later stage may have encouraged the RSSAILA to call upon the Federal Government to introduce compulsory physical training for all males and females aged up to 18 years, and military training for all physically fit males between the ages of 18 and 26 years. The League also demanded the establishment of a defence force of at least 100,000 personnel. The Federal President of the RSSAILA, Eric Millhouse, hoped that Britain’s Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Lord Bernard Montgomery, during his impending visit to Australia, would manage to convince the sceptics within the Government of the merits of National Service training.63

However, when in July 1947 Montgomery enquired about the possibility of Australia introducing a system of compulsory military training, the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Sir Frederick Shedden, told him that there was no prospect of it in the short term. Only a ‘grave deterioration in the international position’, Shedden said, might prompt the Labor Party to consider introducing a system of compulsory military service with a liability for overseas service like the one that had allowed

62 Ibid.
63 Reveille, May 1947.
conscripted men to be sent overseas to serve within the South West Pacific Zone during the Second World War.\footnote{NAA: A5954, 1884/3, Record of Conversation between Sir Frederick Shedden and Field Marshal Sir B.L. Montgomery in Sydney, 31 July 1947. See also David Horner, \textit{Defence Supremo}, chapters 11 and 12, which reveal Shedden's considerable influence on the defence planning of the Chifley Government.}

While a resort to compulsory military training was effectively ruled out for as long as the Labor Party retained office, the Army continued to deal with the compelling problem of recruiting. A reduction of the minimum height standard that applied to recruits was implemented in a bid to accommodate applicants who were otherwise acceptable to the Army. The VCGS, Rowell, informed the Adjutant-General that he was unhappy about the five feet six inches minimum height requirement and wanted to see it lowered to five feet four inches. The Army's Director General of Medical Services (DGMS) argued that the Army should continue to 'try for the higher standard in the first instance and only consider a lowering of the standard if it becomes apparent that the required number of volunteers will not come forward'.\footnote{NAA: MP742/1, 275/1/381, Minute, DGMS to the Adjutant-General, 19 August 1947.} The DGMS informed the Adjutant-General that, of the 2,035 men who had most recently volunteered to enlist, 81 per cent were at least five feet six inches tall, fifteen per cent were between five feet six inches and five feet four inches, and four per cent were less than five feet four inches tall. The DGMS observed that 'the man within the average height limits of a race can be built into a much better physical condition than the man who is considerably below the average height'.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}
However, the evidence that, based upon Rowell's proposal some fifteen per cent of volunteers were prevented from joining the Army, must have appeared as a compelling argument for a relaxation of the height restriction. Nevertheless, the DGMS also believed that 'the present pay and conditions of service for the PMF [Permanent Military Forces] are attractive enough to justify an expectation of sufficient volunteers once the conditions of service are fully realised by the public'.\textsuperscript{67} Rowell had already argued: 'I don’t believe we are going to have such a rush of recruits that we will be able to keep up this standard and I feel that we should face that fact now', and refused to be dissuaded.\textsuperscript{68} A reduction in the height standard was effected almost immediately and Army recruiters were subsequently directed to invite all applicants who had previously been rejected for failure to meet the original height requirement to reapply.\textsuperscript{69}

Although it was considered very unlikely that the required number of suitable volunteers would offer for service, racial discrimination against Aborigines and other men not predominantly of European descent further reduced the pool of eligible recruits. Nevertheless, a temporary resident of Asian descent was not only enlisted in the Army, but was sent to Japan to serve with the BCOF.\textsuperscript{70} In response to this administrative oversight, the Secretary of the Department of Defence passed on to all District Commands a point that was brought to his attention by the Department of Immigration. Shedden had been advised that the Army should exercise more care when processing the applications of recruits ‘not substantially of European descent’, because

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{68} NAA: MP742/1, 275/1/381, Minute, Rowell to the Adjutant-General, 6 August 1947.
\textsuperscript{69} NAA: MP742/1, 275/1/381, DPA Signal, 21 August 1947.
\textsuperscript{70} NAA: MP729/8, 41/431/139, Military Board Minute, DPA to Commands, 11 September 1947.
embarrassment is caused ... in securing the immediate departure of persons of Asiatic race who have been enlisted and have served in the Australian Forces'.

The most notable man rejected on racial grounds was Reg Saunders, who during the Second World War became the first aboriginal commissioned officer in the AMF. Saunders returned to civilian life during the period of general demobilisation, but discovered that few opportunities for personal advancement were available to him. When Saunders tried to re-enlist, the Army rejected him. His biographer, Harry Gordon, believed that Saunders could have successfully appealed against his rejection, but he instead denounced the Army’s discriminatory policy, describing it as ‘ignorant and narrow-minded’.

It is not possible to ascertain the outcome of the application of another aboriginal volunteer, Daniel Diking, but it is known that Army recruiting staff initially assessed him as ‘in all respects suitable’ for induction. Diking’s case was then referred to the Army’s Director of Personnel Administration (DPA), who took the opportunity to study the problem of aboriginal enlistment in its broader context. At the time, no Aborigines had been enlisted in the Regular Army, the Navy was not prepared to consider the enlistment of Aborigines, and the Air Force policy of accepting only the sons of Australian-born parents of exclusively European descent was under review. The DPA

73 NAA: MP742/1, 275/1/696, Telegram, 1st Military District Headquarters to Army Headquarters, 13 May 1949.
considered the possibility that an aboriginal soldier might rise to a position of command over white troops and judged that such a situation ‘may not be desirable’.\textsuperscript{74} Access to intoxicating liquor was cited as another possible reason to disallow the enlistment of Aborigines, although it was felt that military discipline could be relied upon to prevent this from becoming a serious problem. The DPA concluded that, whilst white troops might be less willing to share barracks, ablutions and messes with Aborigines in peacetime than in wartime, segregation was not feasible and it was reasonable to recommend that the respective Commands should be permitted to enlist aboriginal recruits at their own discretion. The problem of aboriginal integration in the Army would be overcome, the DPA concluded, ‘if only the better types were enlisted’.\textsuperscript{75} Such were some of the difficulties that the Army encountered during its attempt to recruit volunteers for the Post-War Army.

In the first few years after 1945, defence policy was formulated only gradually and demobilisation made it difficult to establish an Army capable of carrying out operational tasks. The Prime Minister’s prediction of world peace also perhaps frustrated the Army’s attempt to consolidate. In April 1948, Chifley declared that, despite the outbreak of what he described as ‘certain frictional incidents’ between the Cold War antagonists, he remained confident that global peace would endure for at least the next fifteen years. Chifley was convinced that no country was likely to mount a military challenge to the United States, which was generally considered the only nation with the industrial capacity necessary to wage a modern war.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74} NAA: MP742/1, 275/1/696, Minute, DPA to the Deputy Adjutant-General, 20 May 1949.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 28 April 1948.
Unfortunately for Chifley, the extent to which his opinion differed from that of many Australians increased as ‘frictional incidents’ in international affairs were followed by acts of overt aggression. Peter Edwards notes that the Soviet blockade of West Berlin confirmed Australian suspicions about the ‘aggressive and expansionist designs’ of the Soviet Union, which was also believed to be the force driving communist uprisings in Malaya, Burma, Indonesia, India, and the Philippines.\(^77\) The unstable international environment influenced two out of every three Australians in 1948 to expect a third world war to break out within ten years.\(^78\) A Gallup poll also revealed that 61 per cent of Australians considered the Soviet Union to be a potential aggressor, while only 22 per cent believed that its intentions were peaceful.\(^79\) David Lee has explained that by the end of 1948, after a prolonged disagreement with the Chiefs of Staff and the British Government, the Chifley Government had reluctantly accepted that Australia should commit to British Commonwealth strategic planning based upon the possibility of war against the Soviet Union in the Middle East.\(^80\)

After 1945, First World War veterans dominated the upper echelons of the RSSAILA and ensured that the value of manpower to the armed forces was not understated. During the First World War, military strategists considered numerical superiority paramount. Hence, many in the League advocated the establishment of a large force, capable of rapid mobilisation, instead of a smaller, technology-based force that would need more time to expand after war broke out. As has been discussed, the

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\(^77\) Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*, p. 29.
\(^78\) AGP/APOP, nos 548 – 558, October – November 1948.
\(^79\) AGP/APOP, nos 487 – 497, February – March. 1948.
League proposed the introduction of a system of physical training for all boys and girls to the age of 18 years, it wanted a system of compulsory military training for all physically fit males between the ages of 18 and 26 years, and demanded the establishment of a 100,000-strong full-time defence force. Australia had been unprepared for war in 1939 and onset of the Cold War prompted calls for major improvements to the nation’s defence. An advocate of universal compulsory military training argued in *Reveille*: ‘At the age of 18 every young Australian should be called up for national training. We have the buildings and camps and weapons now. We won’t have them if we have fumblers in office without the nous and guts to frame a strong defence policy’.

The Federal Government already had to contend with criticism levelled by an association of retired Australian Army Generals in relation to the decision to rule out a system of compulsory military training. In a letter to the Minister for the Army, Chambers, they wrote: ‘An army system that is not capable of expanding rapidly to the maximum required in war cannot fulfil the nation’s requirements. This condition can only be achieved by having the whole of the young manhood of the country trained in peace time.’ Chambers replied that the Government had made a firm decision about the kind of Army that needed to be established and that it was now a matter for the people to decide whether or not to support it:

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81 *Reveille*, May 1947.
82 *Reveille*, October 1947.
If it is the wish of the Australian people, particularly the young manhood, to prepare themselves, then the proposed Post-War Army will be filled and facilities will be provided for adequate training. If the Australian people do not wish to prepare themselves, then no system – permanent force or universal or voluntary training, will be a success.  

For the Generals, defence was far too important a matter to depend upon the whim of young men whose attitude they understood to have always been ‘that the Government will make them train if it really thinks it necessary’. Clearly, however, the Chifley Government considered universal compulsory military training to be neither desirable nor necessary.

Some members of the RSSAILA formed a view contrary to that upheld by a majority within the League. Unconvinced that the proposed establishment of a large, full-time Army and the introduction of universal compulsory military training was the appropriate response to the challenges that Australia was likely to encounter, one contributor to Mufti argued:

The demand that Australia should have a standing army of not less than 100,000 is now so ridiculous as to make it doubtful whether any serious thinking lies behind its continued inclusion in League policy. It is a demand that exists to the detriment of the cause of those who are working intelligently for adequate defence.

Such views were exceptional, however. In August 1948, the RSSAILA Federal Executive reaffirmed its support for the immediate introduction of universal compulsory military training and urged the Federal Government to look to Great Britain, where in

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84 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 1, Letter, Chambers to Steele, 18 September 1947.
85 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 1, Letter, Steele to Chambers, 11 November 1947.
the previous year National Service training had been introduced, for a model upon which to base Australia’s defence programme. In 1947, the United Kingdom introduced a system of National Service based upon a universal liability for military training of all males between the ages of 18 and 26 years and involving eighteen months’ full-time service and a total of 60 days’ part-time service spread over the following four years.

The Minister for the Army noted in his reply that the decision to establish the Post-War Army on a strictly voluntary basis had attracted a great deal of criticism, and agreed that Australia should be capable of rapid mobilisation. Chambers also conceded that Australia might receive less warning of war than it had in the past. However, he was confident that the Government’s defence plan was adequate. Chambers argued that a large, partially trained force would actually hinder the pace of any future mobilisation. The administration and training of a National Service-based force would absorb too much of the annual defence budget, and thereby diminish the nation’s capacity for scientific research that would lead to the production of the modern weaponry that was needed to wage war successfully. Rejecting the League’s demand for universal compulsory military training, Chambers declared: ‘It is infinitely better under modern conditions of warfare to have a comparatively small, well trained and well equipped force than to provide for limited training of large numbers of compulsorily enlisted men.’

87 NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/109, Letter enclosing Resolution no. 20 – Universal Training, of the August 1948 Meeting of RSSAILA Federal Executive, General Secretary of the RSSAILA, J.C. Neagle, to Chambers, 15 September 1948.
89 NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/109, Letter, Chambers to Neagle, 12 October 1948.
would attract more recruits and reduce the problem of personnel retention, the Government’s attitude towards the question of defence was set firmly.90

The implementation of the five years defence programme did little to alleviate the manpower deficiencies of both the Regular Army and the CMF. In December 1948, the Regular Army contained 17,887 troops, including some 4,912 men serving with the BCOF in Japan, which was close to, but still short of, the approved personnel establishment of 19,000. The personnel deficiency of the CMF, meanwhile, was chronic. Since the commencement of CMF recruiting on 1 July 1948, the part-time force had managed to attract only 13,389 volunteers, which was far short of the approved 50,000-strong establishment.91

The Vice Chief of the General Staff soon afterwards revealed that, during the implementation of the post-war defence plan, the seemingly intractable problems of manpower and accommodation shortages were fully exposed.92 Rowell declared: ‘We have a whole bunch of problems that can be solved in due course. But we do need the goodwill of the community, particularly in relation to helping rather than penalizing those young men who have the spirit to join the CMF’.93 Rowell was conscious of the danger that poor conditions of service presented to Army recruiting and was determined to avoid the mistakes of the inter-war years, when through neglect the Services were allowed to run down. Rowell argued that: ‘All the democracies in the period between

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90 Ibid.
91 NAA: MP742/1, 240/1/2798, Strength of Post-War Army, 17 February 1949. The strengths of the Regular Army and the CMF as at 15 December 1948.
93 Ibid.
the wars took the line of disarmament and appeasement and we are all equally responsible for the troubles that came upon us in 1939.\textsuperscript{94} The rapport with the people was tested, however, when the Army was called upon to break a strike on the coalfields of western New South Wales in July 1949.\textsuperscript{95}

The Labor Party’s resort to military intervention in order to settle an industrial dispute is evidence of the Federal Government’s growing frustration. Because the strike caused widespread disruption and because it was orchestrated by communist trade unionists, the decision to send the Army to the coalfields was welcomed by a majority of Australians who had already witnessed a wave of industrial action since 1945. Geoffrey Bolton has explained how the Government’s problems of economic management were compounded after 1945 by a volatile industrial situation.\textsuperscript{96} Many people were convinced that communist aggression should be countered with aggression on the domestic and international fronts. Therefore, if Chifley did not tackle the problem of communism, it was clear that the Labor Party would stand little chance of retaining office.

The decision to use the Army as a strike breaking force signalled a dramatic departure from the Labor Party’s traditionally sympathetic approach to workers’ grievances and risked alienating its key constituency. The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) newspaper, \textit{Tribune}, may have unwittingly helped to relieve some of the pressure

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
on the Government when it described the strike breaking action in terms of a bitter class struggle. The radical views expressed in *Tribune* illustrated the ideological gulf that separated the CPA and the Labor Party and confirmed their mutual antipathy: ‘Chambers’ troops are mostly from working class families. They don’t like the job which Australian big business has allocated. They know that the miners they will face include thousands of Australian ex-servicemen who saw action in one or both world wars’.  

With respect to the issue of remuneration for Army personnel engaged in open cut mining, Rowell believed that the Government would be unwise to approve any additional entitlement while the mining was taking place. Rowell did not wish to antagonise the striking miners who feared that their existing conditions of employment, however poor, would be eroded by the strikebreaking action. Instead, Rowell recommended the retrospective payment of a gratuity or bonus. The Prime Minister nevertheless approved the payment of a weekly bonus of either £5 or £8 per week to troops engaged in open cut mining, depending on whether or not work was performed on a Sunday. Rowell told Chambers that, although this gesture was appreciated, ‘we are dealing here with a situation which has not before been experienced by the Australian services in peace and I feel that we have to be more than usually careful that we do not create an undesirable precedent’.

98 Ibid.  
100 NAA: MP729/8, 40/431/20, Memorandum, Newman to Sinclair, 10 August 1949.  
The operation had the desired effect of forcing the miners back to work, but Rowell knew that it could easily have provoked resentment of the Army, and more than two decades after the event described the task as 'distasteful'. However, the Army's action was approved by a majority of people:

To the people of Sydney the troops could well have been those of a victorious army and there was even a suggestion that there should be some sort of triumphal march through the city. I thought the last thing wanted was to appear to rub salt into the miners' wounds, an action which could have fostered bad relations with sections of the civil population.

In the months before the federal election of December 1949, the RSSAILA maintained pressure on the Government when the Wagga Wagga Sub-branch complained to the Prime Minister in April, and again in May, about the state of Australia's defence, comparing it to the situation that had prevailed in 1939. The failure of voluntary enlistment to meet recruiting targets was cited as a reason to introduce National Service training, and it was pointed out that such a move would be welcomed by a majority of people. On 18 May 1949, Chifley dismissed the League's suggestion: 'Whilst I appreciate the concern of the Branch in regard to the defence of Australia, I think they can safely let the arrangements in regard to defence matters remain in the hands of the military experts'.

Since 1945, the RSSAILA had become an increasingly formidable political force. In 1947, the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction, John Dedman, questioned the right

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102 Rowell, *Full Circle*, p. 172.
104 NAA: M1458/1, 19, Letters, RSSAILA Wagga Wagga Sub-branch Secretary K.L. Telfer to J.B. Chifley through A.N. Fuller (Labor, Hume), 29 April 1949 and 13 May 1949.
105 NAA: M1458/1, 19 Letter, Chifley to Fuller, 18 May 1949.
of the League to criticise the Government’s defence policy and to present alternative views. Mufti retaliated by declaring that the Chifley Government had failed to develop the national defence programme adequately and condemned the Government for allegedly adopting a set of pacifist principles derived from a ‘traditional dislike of anything military, or anything deemed likely to breed a war-like spirit’. The League was determined to express its views. ‘Defence’, Mufti asserted, ‘is everybody’s business. It is the one question that affects every man and woman in the Commonwealth, and the one in which the League must – Mr. Dedman or no Mr. Dedman – speak often and loudly enough to be heard’. The Federal President of the RSSAILA, Millhouse, responded to Dedman’s comments in a measured tone: ‘Surely’, Millhouse asked, ‘the men who have fought to protect their country should have a say in its defence policy?’

In May 1948, the RSSAILA Federal Executive hastily endorsed an amendment of the Federal Constitution, Rules and By-laws to deny known communists and communist sympathisers the right of League membership. The resolution stated that: ‘No communist shall be permitted to become or remain a member of the R.S.S. & A.I.L.A.’. The decision to expel and exclude all known communists was unanimously supported by the Federal Executive and enshrined as League policy because, as Millhouse explained later to rank-and-file members that:

107 Ibid.
109 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 202, Folder 3116c, Part 2, RSSAILA 33rd Annual Report and Balance Sheet 1948.
An accumulation of evidence has convinced your Federal executive that far from being inspired by democratic ideals, communism is a subversive movement which is not acting in the best interests of the Australian community and which owes allegiance to interests outside the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{110}

It is important to note that some within the League wondered if communism warranted the close attention that it was receiving from the RSSAILA leadership. One member even suggested that communists would surely have been flattered by their elevation ‘to the status of worthy foemen’ and argued that the League should confine its activities to the welfare of returned servicemen.\textsuperscript{111} Such views were uncommon. The danger that communism was believed to present, both to the League and to the wider Australian community, demanded decisive action on the part of the RSSAILA Federal Executive. So haunted was the League by the spectre of communism that it called upon Arthur Calwell, in his capacity as the Minister for Immigration, to support a 33rd Annual Congress resolution in 1948: ‘That the rights and privileges of Australian Citizenship be withdrawn from any person who expresses allegiance to a foreign power’.\textsuperscript{112}

Calwell replied that the \textit{Nationality and Citizenship Act} contained provisions for the revocation of Australian citizenship granted to a registered or naturalised person who was later proved disloyal or disaffected to the Crown. However, the \textit{Nationality and Citizenship Act} could not be invoked against Australian-born citizens. Calwell observed that in spite of the popular view: ‘There are no legal grounds for assuming that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[\textsuperscript{110}] \textit{Ibid.}
\item[\textsuperscript{111}] \textit{Mufti}, January 1949.
\item[\textsuperscript{112}] NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 203, Folder 3136c, Letter enclosing RSSAILA 33rd Annual Congress Resolution no. 126, Neagle to Calwell, 3 March 1948.
\end{footnotes}
a person who subscribes to communist views has sworn allegiance to another country or that he is disloyal to the Crown or the Government of his country'. Thus denied legal recourse, the League resolved to implement its own expedient measures to deal with communism.

The RSSAILA leadership was particularly concerned that its organisation's very strength made it a prime target for communist infiltration. The New South Wales State Branch Secretary, J.R. Lewis, voiced his suspicions about communist conspirators who, he alleged, wanted to infiltrate non-metropolitan sub-branches. Lewis warned: 'Communists are continually on the alert and never relax their subversive activities, and it is up to R.S.L. members to remember the League’s motto: “The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance”. They must apply it if Communist infiltration into this grand organisation is to be stopped'. As a federal election year, 1949 presented the League with an ideal opportunity to step up its anti-communist campaign, and it proceeded to do so with telling effect.

After the Second World War, during the onset of the Cold War, and to the eve of the 1949 federal election, the Australian people remained decidedly uneasy about the state of the nation's defence. At the end of 1945, eight out of every ten Australians favoured the introduction of a system of universal compulsory military training. The Service chiefs had included their own proposal for National Service training in the plan for a Post-War Army. The Government's refusal to accept it attracted criticism from

113 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 203, Folder 3136c, Letter, Calwell to Neagle, 15 March 1949.

114 Reveille, September 1949.
various quarters that helped to draw the public's attention to the Army's struggle to attract recruits of an acceptable standard and in sufficient numbers while relying upon the system of voluntary enlistment.

As has previously been discussed, in 1948, some two-thirds of Australians expected another world war to break out within ten years; a series of disturbing events both at home and abroad seemed to confirm the validity of their fears. The following chapter will investigate how the Federal Opposition, with some unsolicited help from the RSSAILA, ensured that the following election was contested largely on the issues of communism and defence. When the Australian electorate went to the polls in December 1949, Australia's lack of military preparedness ten years earlier was uppermost in the minds of many voters.
CHAPTER TWO

Defence and the threat of communism

The first great thing is that we should continue to be free. The second great thing is that we cannot be free indefinitely without national self-discipline, urgent preparation, and an unswerving determination to co-operate with our friends in the defence of liberty in those places in which the aggressor may strike.¹

Robert Menzies, Prime Minister, 25 September 1950.

This chapter will investigate responses to the issues of communism and defence in the approach to the 1949 federal election and during the Coalition Government's first year in office. Peter Edwards has written that: 'The Menzies Government regarded Korea, Malaya and Indochina as separate but linked theatres within a global struggle between communism and democracy, which required a greater Australian defence effort'.² This connection between defence and the threat of communism continued to strengthen while planning was under way for the introduction of a system of compulsory military training. A deterioration in Australia's strategic situation evidenced by the outbreak of war in Korea prompted the Federal Government to base the National Service training scheme upon the principle of universal service.

¹ NAA: A5954, 1138/3, The Defence Call to the Nation, Menzies' radio broadcasts of 20, 22 and 25 September 1950.
² Edwards, Crises and Commitments, p. 64.
In the August 1949 edition of Reveille, the Federal President of the RSSAILA declared the period from 4 August to 3 September Anti-Communist Month. The use of the anniversary dates of Australia’s entry to the two world war reflected the bellicosity of the League. Millhouse wanted to make it difficult for communists to gather and demanded that they be denied the use of public halls to conduct meetings. At the same time, Millhouse encouraged League branches throughout the nation to convene public rallies, at which pledges of loyalty to Australia, the British Commonwealth, and constitutional democracy could be taken, and statements made in condemnation of communism. The Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen’s Fathers’ Association fully supported the League’s anti-communist initiative, declaring: ‘The time is overdue for a more positive action to combat this menace, and we will do all in our power not only to support your efforts but to enlist the general public on your side’.

In several ways, 1949 was an important year for the RSSAILA. After an initial setback, its resolution to impose a ban on communists was ratified. In July 1948, a member of the New South Wales State Branch, A.R. Bergeest, successfully sought an injunction in the Supreme Court of New South Wales against an attempt to expel him from the League for being a communist. On 14 October 1948, Justice Bernard Sugerman ruled that the State Branch had no power under its by-laws to expel a member solely on the grounds of him being a communist or a communist sympathiser. On 2 March 1949, however, the New South Wales State Full Court upheld an appeal

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3 Reveille, August 1949.
4 Ibid.
5 Reveille, August 1949.
6 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 198, Folder 3028c, Parts 1, 2 and 3, A.R. Bergeest, injunction against the League for accusation as a Communist, 1948.
against this decision.\textsuperscript{7}

In the wake of Anti-Communist Month, \textit{Tribune} exhorted all communist League members to 'stay in and fight the brass-hat big business plot to make the RSL another New Guard to attack the workers in the coming depression'.\textsuperscript{8} The RSSAILA leadership subsequently sought to enlist the co-operation of the Australian people: 'In continuance of our uncompromising campaign to eradicate communism from the Australian way of life, and having regard to its menace to Australia's defence and economic progress, we urge all loyal Australians to actively support all lawful means to eliminate this evil'.\textsuperscript{9}

The evident desire to develop a rapport with the wider community seems to confirm the commitment of the League to a political role, and an opinion expressed earlier in \textit{Mufti}, that 'fighting men should be in politics up to their necks', was now being realised.\textsuperscript{10} The RSSAILA Victorian State Executive argued that by joining one of the political parties, returned servicemen would promote League policy objectives.\textsuperscript{11} Because the official policies of the RSSAILA usually resembled Liberal-Country Party policies rather than those of the Labor Party, the Coalition and the League were, in many respects, natural allies. For example, while the League was rooting out communists, Menzies was promising to declare the Communist Party of Australia an illegal organisation: 'Communism in Australia is an alien and destructive pest. If

\textsuperscript{7} NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 202, Folder 3116c, Part 2, RSSAILA 33rd Annual Report and Balance Sheet 1948.
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Tribune}, 8 October 1949.
\textsuperscript{9} NLA Manuscript Section RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 219, Folder 3471c, Minutes of RSSAILA Federal Executive Meeting held on 17 – 18 May 1950.
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Mufti}, February 1949.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Mufti}, March 1949.
elected, we shall outlaw it’.  

As a forerunner to the federal election, Anti-Communist Month drew the public’s attention to the problem of communism, which helped Menzies to exploit the issue. On 8 December 1949, only two days before the election, Menzies tapped a rich vein of popular sentiment when he declared publicly that ‘we are going to declare war on the Communists, we are going to give them a thrashing’. Menzies condemned Australian communists, describing them as rebels who had done everything possible to create trouble for their fellow countrymen. Menzies could also expect that his anti-communist offensive would hurt the Labor Party, because the Chifley Government had too often in the past failed to act decisively against communism. Although relations between the Labor Party and the CPA were strained, Menzies was able to cast doubt in the mind of the electorate by referring regularly to their lengthy association. Alistair Davidson has pointed out that, although the Labor Party had, since the 1930s, consistently rejected communist overtures for the establishment of a closer relationship, in 1949, its failure to formulate an unambiguous response to communism would have troubled many voters.

The problem of communism elicited two very different responses from the major political parties. While the Coalition warned the Australian people about communism, the Labor Party reassured them that communism did not represent a great danger. In

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14 Argus, 8 December 1949.
March 1949, Chifley confidently declared that the United States would come to Australia's aid in the event of an attack by a foreign aggressor. The Prime Minister later claimed that the possibility of a Soviet invasion of Australia was remote because the Soviet Union was incapable of waging war and had no designs on Australia. Tribune later tried to develop this argument: 'The Soviet wants peace because peace is the only possible policy to be pressed by a Socialist country'.

According to Alastair Davidson, if Australia wanted the protection of the United States, both the Labor Party and the Coalition had to foster American support by actively opposing communism. The question of how the two parties responded to the problem of communism promised to have a major influence on the outcome of the federal election. Consequently, it is fair to say that Australian anti-communism in the late 1940s was attributable primarily to political rather than defence considerations. Nevertheless, anti-communism was not confined to the political arena. As Davidson has noted, 'the Cold War brought a climate of extreme bigotry and hostility toward communism among the Australian people as a whole'.

The Government was conceding valuable ground to the Coalition on the issues of communism and defence. In October 1949, controversy was generated when the Sunday Herald in Sydney reported that the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Vernon Sturdee, after a six-month tour of Europe and the United States during which he

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16 Argus, 3 March 1949.
17 Argus, 12 May 1949.
18 Tribune, 15 October 1949.
19 Davidson, The Communist Party of Australia.
assessed the Cold War situation, had told Cabinet that war between Russia and the West was inevitable.\(^1\) Sturdee's alleged observation that British Commonwealth countries had to accept a global defence role subordinate to the United States was not surprising. Potentially damaging for the Government, however, was the allegation that British and American defence chiefs – who were said to be 'horrified' by the poor state of Australia's defence – had recommended that compulsory military training be introduced to rectify the problem.\(^2\)

The Minister for the Army, Chambers, took the opportunity to deny the claims made by the *Sunday Herald* after George Lawson (Labor, Brisbane) asked if there was any substance to the remarks attributed to Sturdee. Chambers replied that the CGS had not briefed Cabinet since returning to Australia and the report was a total fabrication. Chambers wondered aloud if the *Sunday Herald* would prove as keen to publish Sturdee's condemnation of the article as it had been to manufacture the controversy.\(^3\)

The allegations made in the report remained unsubstantiated, but nevertheless encapsulated the concerns that many people had about Australia's defence. With a federal election imminent, the Government was embattled.

Chambers tried to relieve the mounting pressures on the Government when he responded to a detailed criticism of Australia's defence that a member of the public had made through his federal Member of Parliament. Chambers gave an assurance that the Army was satisfactorily fulfilling its role by supporting the United Nations while

\(^1\) *Sunday Herald*, 25 October 1949.
\(^2\) Ibid.
participating in British Commonwealth Defence. At the same time, the Army was providing national security through the establishment and maintenance of a basic organisation capable of ready expansion. Chambers emphasised the Government’s approval of a peacetime military establishment consisting of a 19,000-strong Regular Army and a 50,000-strong CMF, but failed to mention the acute shortage in the number of personnel actually serving. Chambers responded to the charge that the Army was burdened with obsolete equipment by conceding that, whilst war surplus issues were the norm, adequate modern military equipment was available to give troops interesting and realistic training in the methods of modern warfare.24

As an election issue, defence gave the Coalition a significant advantage over the Government because the Coalition planned to introduce a system of compulsory military training. Menzies promised to introduce military and physical training ‘for periods suited to our conditions and by methods and on conditions as to call-up and numbers, to be determined by the best expert advice’.25 It is fair to say that most people would have assumed that the Service chiefs would ultimately decide the appropriate nature and scale of any National Service training scheme.

The Melbourne Herald argued that the matter of Australia’s defence should have been settled already and sided with the Coalition:

25 Age, 11 November 1949.
Defence policy would have no place in party electioneering if the lessons of the recent war had been thoroughly learned. But the Prime Minister’s statement that Labor will never introduce compulsory training except in a national emergency shows that it is dangerously easy to forget the high price of unpreparedness.26

The *Herald* contended that Australia’s experience of the Second World War had demonstrated the need for adequate defence preparations, and pointed out that, on five separate occasions since 1943, public opinion polls had recorded strong majorities in favour of universal military training. The *Herald* concluded: ‘There can be no confidence in a national defence policy which is so complacently blind to the warnings of the recent past’.27

Despite the Liberal-Country Party Joint Executive’s unanimous support for the introduction of a system of compulsory military training, there was considerable variance of opinion about how the policy should be presented to the electors. Menzies suggested challenging the Labor Party’s argument that the introduction of compulsory military training would seriously disrupt the national economy.28 Curiously, Menzies believed that the initiative belonged to the Government and anticipated an attack on the Coalition’s compulsory military training proposal. While planning a pre-emptive strike, Menzies wondered if a decisive defence policy statement should be issued, and whether or not it was advisable to raise the possibility of holding a referendum to amend the *Defence Act* in order to provide for compulsory military training.29

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26 *Herald*, editorial, 16 November 1949.
27 Ibid.
28 NLA Manuscript Section, Sir Robert Menzies, MS4936, Box 434, Series 19, Folder 1, Letter, Menzies to members of the Liberal-Country Party Joint Executive, 27 November 1949.
29 Ibid.
Most members of the Joint Executive agreed that it would have been inappropriate to mention the possibility of a referendum during an election campaign. Although the Coalition’s defence policy was consistent with the majority of public opinion, like Menzies, John McEwen was extremely cautious, and thought that it should not be relied upon too heavily as a vote winner. Earle Page recommended the immediate release of a defence policy statement without any acknowledgment of opposition to National Service training. Thomas White warned that a referendum should be viewed as a last resort because ‘too much bitterness would be aroused again, as before’ (in 1916 and 1917). Harold Holt was similarly fearful of the ‘political embarrassment’ that would be suffered if the compulsory military training proposal was rejected at a referendum. Holt reasoned that, because Labor would undoubtedly control the Senate, the most that a Coalition government could hope to implement was a ‘generally acceptable’ National Service training scheme.

Percy Spender advised Menzies to tell the electors that, in order to achieve a balanced defence programme, National Service training would have to be based upon selective service. Spender described universal military training as ‘impracticable’ and elaborated that:

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30 NLA Manuscript Section, Sir Robert Menzies, MS4936, Box 434, Series 19, Folder 1, Telegram, J.J. McEwen to Menzies, 2 December 1949.
31 NLA Manuscript Section, Sir Robert Menzies, MS4936, Box 434, Series 19, Folder 1, Telephone message, E.C.G. Page, 30 November 1949.
32 NLA Manuscript Section, Sir Robert Menzies, MS4936, Box 434, Series 19, Folder 1, Letter, T.C. White to Menzies, 28 November 1949.
33 NLA Manuscript Section, Sir Robert Menzies, MS4936, Box 434, Series 19, Folder 1, Telephone message, H.E. Holt, 28 November 1949.
34 Ibid.
The proportion of men under arms to men in industry is a basic consideration. Moreover, the number of men is not as significant as their training and equipment and organisation. It is not, I hope, intended to encamp the whole young population and withdraw them from industry. This should be made quite clear. It is selective training which is important.  

Above all, Menzies was anxious to assure the Australian people that a Coalition government would exercise patience when implementing extensive defence reform, and that the process would not cause the social and economic dislocation that the Labor Party claimed. Menzies suggested a statement:

In the first place, we shall need to have full consultation with our expert advisers as to the nature and conditions of the physical and military training necessary. When a scheme has been adopted, it will then be necessary to train instructors and make other extensive arrangements for camps and equipment. Under these circumstances, a number of months must elapse before any precise scheme can be submitted to Parliament.  

When Labor’s attack came, it was easily repelled. Menzies ultimately frustrated his critics by refusing to discuss the form that the compulsory military training scheme might take. This simple tactic denied the Labor Party the chance of winning support by discrediting the Coalition’s proposal. That Menzies’ tactic worked seems to indicate that many voters were generally unconcerned about the minutiae of the Coalition’s defence policy. Senior ministers of the Chifley Government rallied in a desperate rearguard action. Contrary to the evidence of the opinion polls, the Attorney-General, H.V. (‘Doc’) Evatt, claimed that, having rejected conscription in 1916 and again in 1917, a

35 NLA Manuscript Section, Sir Robert Menzies, MS4936, Box 434, Series 19, Folder 1, Letter, P.C. Spender to Menzies, 28 November 1949.
36 NLA Manuscript Section, Sir Robert Menzies, MS4936, Box 434, Series 19, Folder 1, Letter, Menzies to the Liberal-Country Party Joint Executive, 27 November 1949. In other replies, Arthur Fadden, Eric Harrison, Allan McDonald, and Sir Philip McBride indicated that they trusted Menzies’ political judgment.

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majority of the Australian people were opposed to compulsory military training. Calwell reiterated Chambers’ warning that compulsory military training would cripple the national economy, and later asked rhetorically if the sons of the wealthy might discover convenient ways of avoiding military training ‘such as by attending Oxford or Cambridge universities’. The Minister for Defence, John Dedman, followed the lead of Calwell and Chambers by stressing the dire economic consequences of compulsory military training.

The wartime commander of the Australian Military Forces, retired General Sir Thomas Blamey, refuted Labor’s arguments. Blamey declared: ‘It is a straightforward way of coming to a national disaster to have no trained forces. It is a ridiculous statement to say that taking young men out of industry for a limited period each year would cause a national disaster. If we don’t have any forces there will be no national economy to preserve’. In a last-ditch attempt to convince the electorate that the Coalition was trying to avoid accountability, Dedman described as ‘sinister’ the absence of a detailed defence policy statement, although it was only on the issue of compulsory military training that the Opposition chose not to elaborate. Within days of the federal election, the Labor Party was irrevocably committed to its stance against compulsory military training and the opportunity to revise the defence programme had long since passed. In defence policy as in other matters, the Chifley Government’s hopes of retaining office rested on its past achievements rather than its future aspirations.

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37 Argus, 26 November 1949.
38 Age, 3 December 1949.
39 Argus, 3 December 1949; Daily Telegraph, 3 December 1949.
40 Daily Telegraph, 5 December 1949.
41 Sydney Morning Herald, 8 December 1949; See NAA: A5954, 1138/3, Extracts from Statement of Joint Opposition Policy relating to Defence, Foreign Policy and Internal Security, November 1949.
The communists pounced on Menzies' intention to introduce National Service training. *Tribune* published an article under the startling headline, ‘Ming The Merciless Wants To Make Your Son A Killer’, in which it was alleged that: ‘Menzies wants war, and conscription would be essential to the wars he has in mind’. According to *Tribune*, the Australian people would reject conscription because it would result in ‘the mass debauching of the minds of youth’ and lead to the ‘military persecution of peace-loving people – the militarisation of the whole community’. Unfortunately for the communists, such absurd claims failed to win them much popular support.

Of the mainstream press, only the *Argus* asked Menzies to explain why the Coalition thought that National Service training was necessary for Australia’s defence and how the proposed system of military training would operate:

What age groups will you call up, and for how long? How will your proposed withdrawal of labour from Australian industry affect the economy of the country? And why is Conscription necessary for the defence of Australia? You know the answers to these questions, but the electors don’t know them. Why not give the answers?

When Menzies did discuss compulsory military training, he spoke only in the broadest terms possible and sometimes resorted to highly emotive language: for example, he claimed that if the nation’s youth were not given adequate military training, an invasion of Australia would represent a death sentence for the Australian people. During his

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42 *Tribune*, 30 November 1949.
43 Ibid.
44 At the 1949 Federal Election, the 34 Communist Party of Australia candidates polled 40,941 votes, or 0.87 per cent of the formal vote. In 1951, the 27 CPA candidates polled 45,759 votes, or 0.98 per cent of the formal vote. In 1954, the 42 CPA candidates polled 54,911 votes, or 1.21 per cent of the formal vote. In the light of these election results, it is clear that the CPA never threatened the two-party system: NAA: A6122, 438.
45 *Argus*, editorial, 2 December 1949.
46 *Age*, 6 December 1949.
final campaign speech, Menzies appealed to the women of Australia:

Let me put the matter quite plainly to the magnificent mothers of a race which has twice in this century given to the free world some of its greatest fighting men ... Do you believe that there is no risk of war? The Government does not, for it claims credit for the largest peacetime defence vote in our history. And if the risk of war becomes a reality, do you want your sons thrown into war, perhaps a war of survival, untrained and unprepared?  

Menzies' warning of an impending catastrophe must have seemed timely. In late 1949, the Soviet Union achieved an atomic weapons capability and communists seized control of mainland China. Meanwhile, communist guerrillas remained active along the Malay peninsula, an area considered vital to Australia's strategic interests, and in Indonesia, the nationalist movement was poised to assume power through an agreement reached with the Netherlands through the United Nations. Ross McMullin has argued that a combination of unpopular policies and unjustified complacency sealed the fate of the Chifley Government. The Coalition recorded a convincing victory that heralded an era of conservative government that would span more than two decades.

In January 1950, Reveille noted with deep satisfaction that ex-servicemen dominated the new Federal Cabinet. Of the nineteen Cabinet ministers, thirteen were ex-servicemen. They included Sir Eric Harrison, who was assigned the Defence and

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47 Argus, 8 December 1949.
50 Nationally, the Liberal-Country Party won 51.0% of total votes on a two party preferred basis. Of the State electorates, the Coalition failed to win more than half of the vote only in New South Wales (49.2%) and South Australia (49.4%): 'House of Representatives – Two Party Preferred Results 1949-2001', in Australian Electoral Commission, <http://www.aec.gov.au/_content/when/past/hor2party.htm>.
51 Reveille, January 1950.
Post-War Reconstruction portfolios. The Ministries of Labour and National Service and Immigration were entrusted to Harold Holt, while Josiah Francis became the Minister for the Army and the Navy. Walter Cooper, a Country Party Senator from Queensland, took over the Repatriation portfolio. Allan Martin has noted that, of the 48 Liberal and Country Party members who were elected to Federal Parliament for the first time in 1949, 34 were Second World War veterans. In stark contrast, of the nineteen new Labor Party members, only one had rendered wartime military service. Menzies was eager to recruit young ex-servicemen into the Liberal Party, and Martin estimates that this initiative contributed significantly to the Coalition’s election victory. This strong representation of returned servicemen seemed to invite the establishment of a dialogue between the RSSAILA and the Federal Government. The League would subsequently use its harmonious relationship with the Menzies Government to advance its agenda with respect to the issues of communism, defence, and immigration.

In February 1950, the editor of the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* reported on the progress of preparations for the introduction of a compulsory military training scheme, writing that ‘all electors ask is that the new system shall be realistic and organised in such a way as not to dislocate industry’. This sentence neatly encapsulated the problem that had to be weighed carefully by defence planners. The *Daily Telegraph* argued that the establishment of a well-trained nucleus of fit young men required the annual trainee intake to be ‘regulated to the number of skilled training personnel

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available'. However, this suggestion implied that a system of selective service should be implemented, which was contrary to what a majority of the public had wanted since the end of the Second World War.

After 1945, the armed forces looked to the state of civil-military relations for an explanation of the apparent disjuncture between the public’s desire for a more robust defence programme and their reluctance to offer for service. The *Australian Army Journal* recorded much of the subsequent debate as Army officers examined various ways of improving the civil-military relationship. On 11 April 1949, the Vice Chief of the General Staff, in an address to the United Services Institution of South Australia, discussed the issue of National Service training. Rowell voiced what was to become a familiar refrain when he stressed that universal military training would necessitate a significant increase in the defence budget. Rowell also indicated that the Army expected the burden to be shared when he argued that the introduction of universal military training would risk creating a serious imbalance in the respective strengths of the three Services. Rowell refuted the suggestion that the Army was interested only in the establishment of a large, full-time force:

This assumes that, as a profession, we have no appreciation of the economic and man-power problems involved in raising large regular forces. We are only too well aware of the limited man-power pool available to us and of the high and ever increasing costs in running a regular force, and we know, perhaps a little better than the critics, just what force we would be likely to obtain and what funds could be provided for its maintenance.

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55 Ibid.
57 Sydney Rowell, 'Where Does the Army Stand Today?', *Australian Army Journal*, no. 7 (June – July 1949), pp. 3-5.
At least one member of the RSSAILA wondered whether the League should continue to support the system of voluntary enlistment: ‘If in bolstering up a wrong system returned men succeed in making it a half success they may not be serving their country in the long run’.  

The need for compulsory military training was so obvious to the writer that he was moved to declare: ‘This talk of no compulsion, of course, is stupid. There has to be compulsion in war, and it surely should be operable in preparation for war’. The RSSAILA maintained an official policy of support for both compulsory military training and the system of voluntary enlistment and pledged to support the Services’ recruiting campaigns in every way possible.

The *Australian Army Journal* responded to Rowell’s observations by inviting its readers to respond to the hypothesis that: ‘No armed service can have a high degree of morale unless, amongst other things, it is nourished by the goodwill of the community from which it is drawn’. Lieutenant-Colonel C.W.T. Kyngdon wrote that soldiers could not ‘live in detachment from the main stream of national life’. Kyngdon acknowledged that conscription was a divisive issue and that ‘historically, the sentiment of the Australian community towards the Army is liable to considerable variations in accordance with the imminence or otherwise of war’. Although the introduction of a system of compulsory military training seemed to present a good opportunity to develop the civil-military relationship, a study of the planning process reveals that the Army’s

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support for it was always qualified. Regardless of whether or not compulsory military training was appropriate to the Australian strategic situation, it is arguable that the Federal Government’s failure to address properly the Army’s reservations ultimately undermined the military value of the National Service scheme that was eventually implemented.

In January 1950, the Minister for Defence, Harrison, received the Military Board’s plan for the introduction of National Service. The plan explained that, during the next decade, the possibility of an invasion of the Australian mainland was likely to be determined by the outcome of preliminary overseas conflicts. Therefore, Australia’s defence should be organised in such a way as to allow for the deployment of an expeditionary force to support the British garrison in the Middle East within six months of an attack by Soviet forces in that theatre. The Military Board estimated that the Australian commitment should consist of a primary component of one Regular Army divisional group and a secondary component of two CMF infantry divisions. Thereafter, a further two divisions would be raised at the end of the first year of war. The Military Board proposed that a selective National Service training scheme could be used to meet the minimum requirement of 100,000 reserve troops.64

The Military Board’s plan for National Service provided for continuous (full-time) military training of 18-year-old males for three-and-a-half months, including two months of basic training and one-and-a-half months of corps training. National

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Servicemen would then be required to complete three years of part-time training with a CMF unit before being transferred to the Reserve or Inactive List for a further six years, during which they would not be required to perform any further military training but would remain liable to be recalled to duty in the event of a defence emergency. 65

Of the approximately 56,000 young men who were due to turn 18 each year, the number of men fit to undergo military training was estimated to be 42,000. If all of these men were to be called up, no fewer than 8,670 additional Regular Army personnel would be needed to administer the National Service training scheme. Clearly, it was beyond the Army’s capacity to administer universal military training on such a scale and a proposal was put forward for an annual National Service call-up of 15,000 men in three intakes of 5,000. In recommending the introduction of selective military training, the Military Board left it to the Government to decide how the number of young men liable for National Service training should be reduced. However, the Military Board at the same time rendered the Government’s decision problematic by insisting that ‘no one single group of tradesmen, such as mechanics, electricians, etc., can be wholly excluded from training. The Army, in common with the other Services, requires the full range of trade categories for it to be really efficient’. 66

Two basic considerations would need to determine the size of the annual National Service call-up. These were an acute shortage of Regular Army administrative and instructional staff and a scarcity of suitable accommodation for both Regular Army personnel and National Servicemen. The Military Board warned that, if the national

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65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
economy remained buoyant, the Regular Army would continue to struggle to overcome the problem of personnel because too few incentives existed to attract recruits. The Military Board suggested that as strategic considerations no longer justified the maintenance of the BCOF, which now consisted of Australians only, it should be withdrawn from Japan and its members employed in National Service-related duties. The administration of the proposed National Service training scheme would, nevertheless, require an additional 2,000 Regular Army personnel. A suggestion was made to recruit military instructors from the United Kingdom and to re-establish the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS). A building works programme at an estimated cost of £3,150,000 was needed to solve the accommodation problem.67

Because the ability to mobilise an Australian expeditionary force was considered paramount, the liability of troops for overseas service also had to be addressed. The Military Board wanted every member of the Army to become liable for overseas service, and declared that: ‘Unless this liability is provided for under the National Service scheme to be introduced, the reserve would be of very little real military value in implementing the war plan. The necessary amendment to the Defence Act to remove the restrictions on overseas service is required’.68 The Chief of the General Staff believed that very few CMF personnel would hesitate to volunteer for overseas service, but thought that National Servicemen would probably prove less willing.69 Experience suggested that CMF troops ‘are most eager to be assured that their services will be used

68 Ibid.
in the most effective manner for the Defence of Australia if war comes’, and that many were ideal candidates for both commissioned and non-commissioned rank. The CGS argued that their enthusiasm should not be dampened by an unrealistic situation in relation to overseas service during wartime, and that a liability for overseas service during defence emergencies should be made a condition of CMF service. A liability for overseas service, it was claimed, would attract, rather than deter, prospective CMF volunteers.

The Military Board wanted to integrate National Servicemen with Regular Army and CMF volunteers by posting them to CMF units for a period of three years after their initial period of continuous training. The Military Board believed that it was possible to establish a cohesive Army consisting of full-time and part-time volunteers and conscripted men; but Sturdee ‘deeply regretted any suggestion that the PMF Field Force might have to be dismembered to provide the administrative and instructional staff for National Service’. The Military Board argued that the Regular Army should not be encumbered because the ‘existing basic structure of the Army is an essential minimum with or without National Service’. This point was strongly emphasised by the CGS: ‘No army, worthy of the name, can today afford to be without its regular nucleus of formed units, I am convinced that it would be a retrograde step to break up the PMF Field Force which would merely result in the Army becoming completely out of

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70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
The Regular Army needed time to prepare for National Service training and 1 July 1951 was nominated as the earliest possible date for the commencement of the scheme, although 1 January 1952 was considered preferable. The Military Board predicted that: ‘There will undoubtedly be considerable political pressure to accelerate the commencement, the justice of which will only be disclosed by the results of recruiting and works services’. For the Army, it was unreasonable to commence National Service training before the basic problems of personnel and accommodation had been solved.

In April 1950, Rowell succeeded Sturdee as Chief of the General Staff upon the latter’s retirement. During his farewell speech, Sturdee referred to the ‘machine-like precision and efficiency’ with which general demobilisation had been effected, and discussed other noteworthy Army achievements, including the establishment of the Regular Army and the re-establishment of the CMF, and Australia’s leading commitment to the BCOF. Sturdee also enthused about the development of training establishments such as the Staff College, Queenscliff, the Royal Military College in Canberra, and the School of Tactics and Administration, Seymour. However, the departing CGS was perturbed about the state of general enlistment. Sturdee noted that although ‘the recruitment of over one-third of our requirements reflects great credit on CO’s [Commanding Officers] and members of each Citizen Force Unit … the response

75 Ibid.
77 Reveille, May 1950.
of the youth of the country to voluntary recruiting had been disappointing. Sturdee concluded by warning that the Regular Army must not become complacent after the introduction of National Service training: ‘Whatever the form National Service takes, it will always be essential to have a large number of volunteers in the organisation as officers, NCO’s [non-commissioned officers] and experienced other ranks’.

On 14 July 1950, the Deputy Prime Minister, Arthur Fadden, announced that National Service training would commence in early 1951 and that the annual National Service call-up would ultimately reach 21,000 trainees, building up from 13,500 in the first year to 15,000 in the second year and 19,000 in the third year. The Army’s Director of Staff Duties (DSD) was unaware of the dimensions of the scheme that Fadden outlined and maintained that 10,000 National Service trainees would be called up in the first year, followed by 11,000 in the second year and 13,500 in the third year. The DSD understood that during the fourth and subsequent years, a maximum of 15,000 National Servicemen would be trained annually in three quotas of 5,000.

Peter Edwards has argued persuasively that the outbreak of war in Korea on 25 June 1950 dispelled the Government’s doubts about sending a flight of Lincoln bombers to Malaya. It also exposed fully the Army’s acute shortage of personnel. The total Regular Army Field Force of approximately 550 troops was committed to the BCOF, and it was therefore from the BCOF that Australia’s initial commitment to the Korean

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78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
81 NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/606, Military Board Minute, 18 July 1950.
82 Edwards, Crises and Commitments, p. 97.
conflict was to be drawn. As all available Regular Army personnel had to be used to optimum efficiency, Rowell was confronted with the problem of adhering to the age limit for operational service of 20 years that applied to members of the Regular Army after some 125 troops under the age of 20 had volunteered to serve in Korea.\textsuperscript{83}

Rowell requested the Minister for the Army to approve a lower age limit for operational service. After all, no equivalent age restriction applied to Navy or Air Force personnel. In anticipation of ministerial approval, Rowell continued to allow troops under the age of 20 years to be sent to Japan, with the clear intention of subsequently deploying them to Korea.\textsuperscript{84} The following day, Francis gave his approval on the condition that this dispensation would be applied only to troops already serving in the Regular Army and that there would be no attempt to extend it to recruits who might be subsequently enlisted with a view to sending them to Korea.\textsuperscript{85}

Rowell later sought a further concession when he informed Francis of an opinion he shared with the Adjutant-General, that the age restriction applying to volunteers for Korea was a deterrent to recruiting.\textsuperscript{86} Rowell claimed that because recruits in the 18 to 20 years age group had not previously settled into civilian occupations, they were more likely than older men to re-engage after their initial six-year term of service. Rowell argued that younger recruits were more valuable to the Army because they were more likely to become non-commissioned officers than were older recruits, many of whom

\textsuperscript{83} NAA: MP742/1, 100/1/22, CGS Minute no. 141/50, Rowell to Francis, 15 August 1950.  
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ibid.}  
\textsuperscript{85} NAA: MP742/1, 100/1/22, Minute, Recruits for Korean Force, Francis to Rowell, 16 August 1950.  
\textsuperscript{86} NAA: MP742/1, 100/1/22, Minute, Recruits for Korean Force, Rowell to Francis, 4 September 1950.
had ‘tried and failed to make a satisfactory start in civilian occupations’. Rowell supposed that an appreciable deterioration in the international situation would prompt the Federal Government to permit volunteers aged 19 years and over to serve overseas, but warned that the decision should be taken beforehand. Otherwise, the system of training 19-year-olds in anticipation of their deployment overseas would be jeopardised.

While assuring the Minister that there was no desire to ‘go any further than the war time policy which prevented only volunteers under 19 years from proceeding to an operational area’, the Adjutant-General requested that consideration be given to allowing 19-year-olds to serve in Korea. This measure, the Adjutant-General assured the Minister, ‘would increase the flexibility of the Regular Field Force to which practically all young ARA [Australian Regular Army] recruits are now posted’. In June 1951, the Minister for the Army recommended to Cabinet that the minimum age for operational service should be reduced to 19 years. The Army’s Deputy Chief of the General Staff (DCGS), Major-General Eric Woodward, supported the Minister’s recommendation. Woodward stated that the Army age restriction should be brought into line with that of the Navy and the Air Force, and that experience in two World Wars had demonstrated that ‘the modern youth at 19 is sufficiently mature to be able to accept the rigours of active service’. Cabinet approval was subsequently granted on 16 July 1951.

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87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 NAA: MP742/1, 100/1/22, Minute, Service Abroad of Members of the ARA, Adjutant-General to Francis, 1 December 1950.
90 Ibid.
91 NAA: MP742/1, 100/1/22, Notes for Minister on Cabinet Agendum – Minimum Age for Service in Operational Areas, 29 June 1951.
This issue would be revisited at the end of the decade when the Adjutant-General recommended a further reduction in the qualifying age for operational service to 18 years, on the condition that troops first be classified as fully trained. This proposal was again based upon the principle that Army age restrictions should be brought into line with those of the Navy and the Air Force and on the need to maximise the operational efficiency of the Army.92

The appointment of Lieutenant-General Sir Edmund Herring as the Director-General of Recruiting preceded the launch of an intensive recruiting campaign for the armed forces.93 Herring’s immediate objective was the reduction of personnel shortages totalling approximately 13,000 for the three full-time Services and 29,000 for the Citizen Forces. Herring also sought 1,000 infantry volunteers for Korea.94 On 18 September 1950, Menzies told the acting Minister for Defence and Harrison’s eventual successor, Sir Philip McBride, about Herring’s misgivings in relation to ‘the unsuitability and poor conditions of many of the premises now used by the Services for recruiting’.95 Many recruiting depots, ‘remotely placed and in bad order …’, Herring complained, ‘generally present the reverse of the attractive picture that the prospective recruit is entitled to expect’.96

92 NAA: MP742/1, 100/1/22, Military Board Agendum no. 48/1959, Service in Operational areas – age limits for members of Australian Regular Army, 21 September 1959.
93 The recruiting campaign included magazine advertisements that appealed to men’s sense of patriotic duty to protect Australia against communism in the tradition of the citizen-soldier tradition: Murphy, Imagining the Fifties, pp. 37-40.
95 NAA: MP742/1, 275/1/966, Letter, Menzies to McBride, 18 September 1950.
96 Ibid.
Menzies also wrote to the Minister for the Army, Francis, to warn him that Herring's abrasive manner might lead to strained relations with the Service chiefs. The Prime Minister's concern about the success of the recruiting campaign is reflected in his advice that:

Undoubtedly the contented recruit will be the campaign's best advertisement, and, equally obviously, discontented recruits will cause untold harm to our objective. Therefore, I feel that there should be an immediate overhaul of conditions at Service establishments, with particular regard to accommodation, food and amenities, and that efforts should be made to ensure that recruits are assured of sympathetic and intelligent reception.\(^9^7\)

Meanwhile, the provision of a general pay increase of approximately seventeen per cent for the Regular Army lent additional impetus to the recruiting campaign.\(^9^8\)

Also in September 1950, Cabinet set personnel strength targets for the Services to meet as quickly as possible. The agreed total strength of 48,529 for the Permanent Forces included 15,173 Navy, 19,000 Army, and 14,356 Air Force personnel. A target of 68,220 Citizen Forces personnel included 7,580 Navy, 50,000 Army, and 10,640 Air Force volunteers. Cabinet also agreed that the first National Service call-up of 21,000 young men should commence training on 1 May 1951. Cabinet decided, too, that the Field Force in Australia should be expanded to a brigade group by adding a third battalion, and that a second brigade group should be recruited as soon as the first Brigade Group was brought up to strength. Another important decision, which was approved by almost two-thirds of respondents to a Gallup poll, was that Regular Army

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\(^9^7\) NAA: MP742/1, 275/1/966, Letter, Menzies to Francis, 18 September 1950.

\(^9^8\) On 8 September 1950, the average per capita pay rate for Regular Army personnel increased from £482 per annum to £584 per annum: NAA: A463, 1958/3589 Part 4, The Army Today, commentary by J. Francis, April 1954.
and CMF volunteers would, forthwith, be enlisted for service anywhere. 99

The Prime Minister, in a series of radio broadcasts to the nation, outlined the measures that the Federal Government was taking to counter the threat of international communism. 100 Menzies detailed the state of each of the three Services and discussed the positive effect that National Service training would have on Australia’s readiness for war. Menzies also announced the establishment of a National Security Resources Board (NSRB). Menzies explained that the NSRB would comprise government and industry representatives who would survey Australia’s civilian and military resources and assess the nation’s defence priorities, which would enable the Government to co-ordinate more effectively national war planning. The NSRB was necessary, Menzies claimed, because ‘wartime experience has shown that we must have such bodies when the fight is on; and commonsense therefore indicates that if you are going to prepare for war in grim earnest you need organisation of this kind in advance’. 101

During his third and final broadcast on 25 September 1950, Menzies argued that Australia needed to strike a balance between immigration and economic development, social stabilisation, and military preparation. The Prime Minister stated bluntly that a greater allocation of the nation’s resources to defence would make great demands on the people. By accepting the discipline that would be essential to the success of the National Service training scheme, Australians could demonstrate their determination to co-

100 NAA: A5954, 1138/3, The Defence Call to the Nation, Menzies’ radio broadcasts of 20, 22 and 25 September 1950.
operate fully with their allies in preparing for war.\textsuperscript{102}

Meanwhile, the Army wanted to reclaim several camps that had been converted into Migrant Reception Centres by the Department of Immigration. In a report to the Quartermaster-General, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff stated:

Army camps will be urgently required on mobilization, and unless our recent reforms to speed up the provision of formations are to be delayed by our inability to provide accommodation, it would seem that plans must be prepared by Department of Immigration, in conjunction with Army, for the immediate evacuation of Army camps required on mobilization.\textsuperscript{103}

Woodward complained that all of the Army’s attempts to evict the Department of Immigration had failed, and concluded that, ‘we are in danger of accepting the situation that they would remain in time of war’.\textsuperscript{104} The DCGS considered the situation serious enough to warrant official clarification of the action to be taken in the event of a defence emergency. Woodward wrote that: ‘Under the circumstances, the disposal of those New Australians remaining in Army camps should be the subject of plans prepared now and, after approval, incorporated in the Commonwealth War Book’.\textsuperscript{105}

Although solutions to the ongoing problems of accommodation and manpower remained elusive, by late 1950, planning for National Service training had progressed to the point that the Army could begin to address relatively minor issues that, nevertheless, contained significant legal implications. For example, during a meeting of the Military Board on 1 November 1950, general leave for National Service trainees was discussed

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} NAA: MP729/8, 45/431/94, Minute, Accommodation Occupied by Immigration Authorities Required for Mobilization, DCGS to the Quartermaster General, 23 October 1950.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
and opposed. Because the proposed National Service legislation required trainees to undergo fourteen weeks of continuous training, the provision of general leave could have been interpreted as the avoidance of a legal requirement.  

For the Military Board, it was probably more important that an uninterrupted training programme would be conducive to the maintenance of good order and discipline, which would enhance the effectiveness of the training regime. The Military Board was concerned that many trainees would fail to return from leave on time, or at all. Disciplinary action would then have to be initiated, which would create a major administrative burden that could be avoided if National Service trainees were given no leave entitlement in the first place.  

Francis was unmoved by these arguments, however, and recommended that two long-weekend breaks should be incorporated into the training syllabus. Although the Military Board considered that fourteen weeks was ‘not too long for parents and National Servicemen to be separated’, in this instance the Minister’s word was final.  

When Harold Holt introduced the National Service Bill into Federal Parliament in November 1950, he emphasised both the defence and the social benefits that compulsory military training was expected to deliver. The political and public debate that followed in the weeks and months after the introduction of the National Service legislation was argued in terms of defence needs and social benefits. In the meantime,

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106 NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/509, Military Board Minute, Recommendations of Policy Committee Military Board Agendum 67/1950, 1 November 1950.

107 Ibid.

108 NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/509, Minute, National Service Training – Military Board Agendum no. 67 of 1950, 9 January 1951.

the Army tried to meet the essential requirements of National Service training, including the provision of adequate accommodation and sufficient administrative and instructional staff. According to the RSSAILA, as much as a pay increase was needed to stimulate recruiting, soldiers needed respect, which could be measured by the Government's treatment of returned servicemen:

The Government lately increased the rates of pay of servicemen, and the mercenary appeal to youth is stronger than it ever was before, but recent administration have lost a great deal in goodwill by showing a strange reluctance and tardiness to improve conditions for those who have already service, and who have suffered in the serving. 110

The Army's situation was not helped by the Federal Government's decision to reject a request for Service chiefs and senior public servants to appear before a Senate Select Committee on National Service to give evidence about the effects of National Service training on Australia's defence. In early February 1951, a draft press statement was prepared in which Arthur Fadden condemned the Senate Select Committee as a frivolous political device that the Labor Party had convened with the sole intention of discrediting the Coalition Government's defence reform agenda. The Deputy Prime Minister defended the order that prevented the nation's military leaders from speaking out by declaring that: 'The Committee would be doing a better service for Australia if it let these officers get on with the job of preparing for Australia's defence and if the Committee members would lend their support to encouraging their supporters to play their proper part in the national effort'. 111 Fadden avoided controversy by wisely withholding the press statement. 112

110 Reveille, September 1950.
111 NAA: A663, O180/2/147, Draft Press Statement, 2 February 1951.
112 NAA: A462, 3/1, Letter, Fadden to Francis, 12 February 1951.
The Federal President of the RSSAILA, Sir George Holland, also declined an invitation to give evidence to the Committee. A majority of the State branches were of the view that the Committee was politically driven. Only the New South Wales and Western Australia State branches encouraged Holland to take the opportunity to explain the attitude of the League towards compulsory military training. The president of the New South Wales State Branch, William Yeo, respected the Senate Select Committee as an official entity and insisted that 'the R.S.L. should lose no opportunity whatsoever in placing our views before Parliament, even though this entails constant repetition'. The Western Australia State Secretary, John Chappell added:

In all matters of Defence it is realised that it is a good thing for the League to be in the forefront, and where necessary take a leading part in, not only pressing the long standing policy of the League, but also to use every endeavour to convert other Organisations, including the Government, that the League’s views in this particular matter are the only solution to the great problems with which the Country is confronted in matters of Defence.

When the Argus newspaper learned that the Federal Government had directed the Service chiefs to decline the Committee’s invitation to give evidence, it blasted what it interpreted as an example of the subordination of civil authority to military interests. The Argus argued that the Government had circumvented Labor’s power in the Senate by subverting the political process: 'It would be wrong and intolerable for anyone to

113 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL Series 1, MS6609, Box 228, Folder 3648c, Letter, Holland to the Clerk of the Committee, J.R. Odgers, 2 February 1951.
114 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL Series 1, MS6609, Box 228, Folder 3648c, The following State Secretaries advised that a boycott of the Committee was supported by their branches were L.R. Lucke (Tasmania), 18 January 1951, H.K. Joyce (Australian Capital Territory), 20 January 1951, F.U. Hall (South Australia), 24 January 1951, G.J. Angell (Queensland), 31 January 1951, and C.W. Joyce (Victoria), 31 January 1951.
115 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL Series 1, MS6609, Box 228, Folder 3648c, Letter, Yeo to Neagle, 23 January 1951.
116 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL Series 1, MS6609, Box 228, Folder 3648c, Letter, Chappell to Neagle, 27 January 1951.
encourage military contempt for either of the two Federal Houses of Parliament. If this encouragement is transformed into a definite order, and comes from the Government, it is more than wrong: it is disgraceful. The Service chiefs might have welcomed the opportunity to explain the implications of National Service training, but their evidence would have lost currency in the wake of a significant expansion of the National Service training scheme.

On 28 February 1951, the Minister for the Army, Francis, cited a 'progressive deterioration in the world situation' and stagnant CMF recruiting figures as reasons for Cabinet to support a recommendation to increase the National Service intake from 10,000 to 15,000 trainees during the first twelve months of the scheme's operation. Francis explained the effect that such an increase would have on the Regular Army:

The more recruits that are received, the more instructors are needed to train them. Then as trained recruits are passed to their field force units, these units expand and require more and more Non Commissioned Officers, the very type of man required as instructors. Finally, once National Service personnel start to flow into CMF units, the pool of Regular Army instructors with those units must be strengthened.

Rowell had earlier estimated that any additional demand for National Service instructional staff could be met only by: 'Gravely impairing the efficiency and progress to completion of 1st Infantry Brigade Group, at present our only potential mobilizable force'. Rowell had also predicted that 'acute troubles' would arise in the CMF when understaffed units began to receive National Servicemen after they completed their

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117 Argus, editorial, 9 February 1951.
118 NAA: A816, 44/301/158, Cabinet Submission, National Service – Army Contribution, Francis, 28 February 1951.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
initial period of continuous training.\textsuperscript{121} Whereas Sturdee had seen the integration of volunteers and conscripts as a way to prevent division within the ranks of the CMF, Rowell believed that the opposite effect was more likely.

Cabinet decided to ignore these warnings when it abrogated the plan for a gradual increase of the annual National Service call-up. On 1 March 1951, Cabinet more than doubled the size of the total annual call-up and ruled out any industry-based exemptions from National Service training.\textsuperscript{122} Cabinet later proscribed any occupational exemptions and referred specifically to the exemption of coal miners that had been proposed by the Military Board.\textsuperscript{123} The Cabinet meeting memorandum reveals that: ‘The Chiefs of Staff were of the opinion that not more than 8 trainees to 1 instructor was desirable. Under pressure they were prepared to agree to 12 to 1 and apparently were recommending accordingly’.\textsuperscript{124}

Yet, Cabinet considered even this to be ‘unrealistic’ and increased the ratio of trainees to instructors to well over twelve to one.\textsuperscript{125} The total National Service trainee intake of 10,250 that was planned for 1951 was increased to 12,500, the 1952 total intake was increased from 15,250 to 38,250 trainees, and the total intake planned for 1953 and beyond was increased from 18,750 to 40,250 trainees.\textsuperscript{126} National Service instructors therefore faced a daunting task. Undoubtedly, this emphasis on the quantity

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} NAA: A4638, XM1 Set 1, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 128, Without Submission – Defence Preparedness – National Service call-up, 1 March 1951.
\textsuperscript{123} NAA: A816, 44/301/162, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 37, Without Submission – National Service Act, 2 July 1951.
\textsuperscript{124} NAA: A4638, XM1 Set 1, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 128, Without Submission – Defence Preparedness – National Service call-up, 1 March 1951.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} See Appendix A: Summary of annual National Service intakes before and after 1 March 1951.
rather than the quality of National Servicemen to be produced limited the usefulness of the scheme to Australia’s defence.

Even these increases were not enough for the RSSAILA Federal Executive, which urged the Government to extend the liability for National Service training to all men up to and including the age of 25 years and to men who were called up in 1945 but received less than six months’ training. In the light of the dramatic expansion of the National Service training scheme, it seems ironic that the Minister for Defence, Sir Philip McBride, should reply that it was necessary to consider ‘the Services’ estimate of their capacity, in present circumstances, to accommodate and train National Servicemen, and to avoid a recurrence of the inadequate arrangements which did so much to render the previous system of Universal Training so unpopular.  

Menzies justified the enlargement of the scheme by arguing that Australia had to prepare for war in three years. The day after Cabinet met, an assembly of the State Premiers in Canberra was informed by the Prime Minister that ‘the possibilities of war are so real and so serious that Australia cannot with justice to herself and her allies grant herself a day more than three years in which to be prepared’. The scale of the proposed expansion of the armed forces was impressive. Menzies explained:

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127 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 2, RSSAILA Federal Executive Circular no. 69/51, Resolution no. 168 of the RSSAILA 35th Annual Congress, 20 February 1951.

128 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 2, Letter, McBride to Neagle.

129 NAA: A5954, 2214/2, Statement to the Premiers, 2 March 1951.
The present strength of all three Services is 65,000. We have been planning by June, 1953 to increase this by means of voluntary enlistment and national service training. But the new and urgent timetable makes it necessary that by the end of 1953 we should have a total mobilisation strength of 183,000! This means that we must find and train 118,000 more men than we have in the Services now.\textsuperscript{130}

The Prime Minister appealed to the Premiers for their co-operation in the task of gearing the national economy to defence. Menzies' address to the Premiers was inspired in part by a report compiled by the General Staff in 1950 that outlined a grim Australian strategic situation. It was envisaged that any future war would have a sudden and severe effect on the national economy. Modern warfare would potentially absorb industrial resources on an unprecedented scale and demand nothing less than unconditional commitment from 'an educated, informed, and thinking population with an unshakeable morale and national spirit'.\textsuperscript{131}

The decision to prepare for war in three years involved substantial increases in annual defence expenditure. Menzies announced that the 1949-50 defence budget of £54 million was to be increased to approximately £100 million in 1950-51, and that further increases would possibly exceed £200 million in each subsequent financial year. Whilst two-thirds of the defence vote was directed to the ongoing maintenance of the armed forces, the modernisation of equipment was also a significant factor that accounted for almost one-quarter of total defence expenditure during the first half of the 1950s, and the trend towards increasingly sophisticated and costly modern weaponry was likely to

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{131} NAA: MP742/1, 240/1/3238, General Staff Report, A Review of the Purpose and Functions of the Army in the Light of World Events and Trends, July 1950.
David Lee has written that Menzies’ warning of war in three years was motivated partly by a desire to consolidate Australia’s membership of the Western anti-communist alliance. Menzies hoped that an invitation from Britain and the United States to participate in Allied military planning would guarantee Australia’s security. However, the appropriateness of universal military training came into question after war broke out in Korea and the Army struggled to assemble a single battalion for overseas deployment.

The Director of Personnel Administration noted that the expansion of the National Service training scheme would require Command units to accept reductions in staffing levels. The availability of too few commissioned officers meant that Warrant Officers Class Two would often have to act as National Service platoon commanders. The DPA advised that the minimum requirement of one Regular Army instructor for every 24 National Service trainees should not be accepted as the ideal. Commands should try to achieve a ratio of one instructor for every 12 trainees.

An indication of the pressures that the expansion of the National Service training scheme created is revealed in a letter from the Director General of Medical Services to the Adjutant-General. In April 1951, the DGMS complained that he had not been consulted about medical support for National Service training and had no authority to

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133 Lee, Search for security, pp. 115-16.
134 NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/522, Minute, National Service – Review of Staffing Position, 21 March 1951.
fulfil the requirement. Furthermore, as National Service training in the Army was due to commence on 6 August, too little time remained to recruit and train additional Regular Army medical personnel. The DGMS asked to be absolved from the responsibility for a situation that had arisen as a consequence of a serious oversight during the planning for National Service training.\footnote{NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/522, Minute, National Service – Revised Basis of Call-up, 9 April 1951.}

Rowell reminded the Minister for the Army that the Regular Army establishment had been increased to 27,000 personnel to offset the additional burden of National Service training. However, that figure was decided with a maximum annual intake of 15,000 National Service trainees in mind. Rowell argued that because the Army’s National Service intake had been increased to 9,000 trainees in the first year, and to 29,250 trainees in each year thereafter, a commensurate increase in the Regular Army establishment should follow. Rowell conceded that training installations, headquarters, and base and administrative units could usually absorb considerable increases in the manning levels of their client units. However, he added that ‘this process cannot be continued indefinitely; and detailed examination shows that the point of overstrain has been reached’.\footnote{NAA: MP729/8, 20/431/101, Letter, Planned Establishment, Rowell to Francis, 30 July 1951.} Rowell argued that the creation of an additional 6,000 military and 800 civilian positions should be approved and hoped that some National Service trainees would volunteer for Regular Army service.\footnote{Ibid.}

The Federal Government responded with a slightly modified version of a proven solution. Recruiting standards were relaxed on 18 May 1951 when the Regular Army

\footnote{Ibid.}
Special Reserve (RASR) was re instituted. This permitted the re-engagement of ex-service personnel for a period of three years to perform National Service training duties. Special dispensations were granted to RASR recruits, who had to be under the age of 49 years and of a medical classification not lower than B2 at the time of enlistment. The examining medical board needed only to be satisfied that any existing physical disability would not deteriorate during the term of enlistment to a point that would necessitate discharge. As an additional incentive, a provision was made for former Warrant Officers and non-commissioned officers to enlist with rank and serve in the RASR as National Service instructors.138

The re-establishment of the RASR coincided neatly with a call by the RSSAILA Federal Executive in May 1951 for revised conditions of Army enlistment that would accommodate returned servicemen who hitherto had been prevented from re-enlisting because of their age or medical classification. The RSSAILA Federal Executive submitted to the Minister for the Army the following resolution:

That in view of the alleged shortage of instructors for the National Service training and in view of the willingness of many members of the R.S.L. to assist in training but who are at present debarred from assisting because of medical classification and age, the Federal Government be urged to revise the existing conditions of enlistment to make special provision for such volunteers.139

138 NAA: MP742/1, 240/1/2798, Military Board Minute, Strength of Post War Army, Appendix B, 19 February 1949. The RASR was first raised by the Chifley Government between April and October 1948, during which 5,340 men were enlisted on three-year engagements. Applicants had to be British subjects under the age of 54 years with a satisfactory service record and of a medical classification that would not be likely to necessitate discharge. A £60 gratuity was payable at the end of the three years or in the event of the member’s service-related medical discharge or death.

139 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 2, Letter, Neagle to Francis, 8 June 1951.
The Minister for the Army replied with an invitation to all ex-servicemen to participate in the task of National Service training.  

The Director of Staff Duties was moved to comment that the critical shortage of Regular Army personnel dictated that, as far as National Service training was concerned, 'adequate handling of the situation rather than perfect handling must be accepted' and that: 'It is quite impracticable in the time that is available to expand the whole organization to meet the needs of the 9,000 intake on the ideal basis designed when the intake was 5,000. Nevertheless it remains the intention to achieve the original standard as soon as possible.' The DSD conceded that the Army was unlikely to experience any short term relief and that: 'In the meantime, it must be recognized that the short term expedient must be made to work, wherever possible by internal re-arrangement and device, rather than by increases in establishment which have little or no prospect of being filled.'

The Military Board had already notified participating units about the gravity of their undertaking:

National Service is probably the most important project ever undertaken in peace by the Australian Army. Every aspect of National Service administration and training will be subjected to the most intense scrutiny by all sections of politics, the press and the people. Failure in any degree, in relation to any aspect of administration or training, will cause criticism to be levelled at the Army, whether it be the Army's fault or not. The Army must ensure, therefore, that nothing is left undone which ought to be done to ensure success.

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140 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 2, Letter, Francis to Neagle, 29 June 1951.
141 NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/528, Military Board Minute, National Service Training Re-consideration on New Basis, DSD, 2 May 1951.
142 Ibid.
143 NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/442, Military Board Minute to Participating Units, 30 August 1950.
According to the National Service Manual, the role of public servants in the District Employment Offices was equally important: 'The success of National Service Training and its value for the defence of Australia will depend in no small measure on the way in which the persons undergoing training are dealt with before they are enlisted in the Services.'

The mission of the National Service training units contained several aspects. While producing basically-trained soldiers for each Arm and Service, units were also to ensure that National Servicemen made a smooth transition from civilian to service life. The leadership potential and the moral and physical wellbeing of trainees were to be developed to make them better citizens and soldiers. At an estimated cost of £44,553,000 in the six years from 1950-51 to 1956-57, it was hoped that the training units would also realise the overarching military aim of National Service. That aim was to 'increase the preparedness of the Armed Forces for war by providing adequate numbers of trained and partially trained personnel to raise existing units quickly to war establishments, to form the additional units required on the outbreak of war, and to provide for the planned rate of expansion.'

Despite the administrative and logistical obstacles that the Regular Army had to overcome during preparations for National Service training, the collective attitude of regional Commands was remarkably positive. Northern Command reported to Army Headquarters its readiness to receive its first intake of National Service trainees.

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145 NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/442, Military Board Minute to Participating Units, 30 August 1950.
Eastern, Southern, Central and Tasmania Commands advised that, with the exception of some accommodation, clothing, and equipment shortages, and ongoing concerns about meeting the minimum requirement for instructors, their preparations were adequate. The General Officer Commanding (GOC) Western Command, meanwhile, offered a single, laconic sentence: ‘GOC advises that arrangements are complete and that there are no worries’.

During the RSSAILA 36th Annual Congress in 1951, the president of the South Australia State Branch, Brigadier T.C. Eastick, moved that it was the duty of League members to educate the Australian people about the expansionist nature of communism, and warned that: ‘It is a well known fact that Soviet Russia is heading for world dominion and already controls 800,000,000 people, and is definitely heading south. If we are to survive as a free nation we must warn our people from their apathy and disinterest, and show the dangers that beset us’. Eastick wanted the Australian people to know that in Korea war was being waged in deadly earnest and could easily escalate into another world war. The press did not escape censure. Reveille sarcastically congratulated Sydney’s Daily Telegraph for its ‘amazing discovery’ of Australian involvement in the Korean War. Particular criticism was levelled at the Daily Telegraph because for more than a year it had failed to promote the League’s Overseas Services’ Comforts Fund to the satisfaction of the RSSAILA leadership. Reveille lamented: ‘If they had lent their weight to the R.S.L.’s appeal in 1950, there would have been much

147 NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/564, Report, National Service Training – Progress Made in Preparations, Rowell to Francis, 30 July 1951.
148 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 237, Folder 3819c, Minutes of the 36th Annual Congress of the RSSAILA, 29 October – 1 November 1951.
less reason for our men in Korea to accuse Australians of forgetting them'.

During the early 1950s, whilst most Australians were confident that the Korean War would not escalate, more than one-third believed it to be the beginning of a third world war. Amid this uncertainty, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Congress did not hesitate to reaffirm its traditional opposition to compulsory military training, which the Melbourne Age described as both 'disappointing' and 'regrettable' while interpreting the ballot result (224 to 170 votes) as at least 'an encouraging sign of growing realism and adjustment of thinking about defence'. The Age espoused the benefits of National Service training, noting that, apart from basic military training, National Servicemen achieved 'greater alertness ... improved bearing, physique and health', and the 'development of the team spirit', which produced a 'capacity to act with others, and co-operation for set purposes'. Also at this time, the Menzies Government was prevented from moving against the Communist Party of Australia when, by a very narrow margin, its referendum proposal was rejected.

The following two chapters will examine the two phases of the National Service training scheme. Chapter Three will investigate the first phase, spanning the years 1951 to 1954, which features an attempt by the Federal Government to maintain the principle

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149 Reveille, December 1951.
150 AGP/APOP, nos 711 – 720, September – October 1950.
151 Age, editorial, 6 September 1951.
152 Ibid.
153 The Menzies Government wanted the people to approve an amendment to the Constitution that would allow the Federal Parliament to pass new security laws to target communists and communism. When the referendum was held on 22 September 1951, a majority of electors in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia rejected the Federal Government's request for more power. Overall, 2,317,927 favoured a crackdown on communism and 2,370,009 were opposed. Therefore, the referendum proposal failed by 52,082 votes: 'Referendum results', in Parliamentary Library, <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/elect/referend/results.htm>
of universal service, which is followed by the introduction of provisions that imposed limits on the annual call-up, thereby culminating in a change to selective military training. Chapter Four will investigate the second phase, spanning 1954 to the suspension of the scheme in 1960, during which the scheme was contracted further through the implementation of even greater restrictions. This study of the changing complexion of the National Service training scheme will include a consideration of the reactions of individuals and organisations from political, military and social perspectives. This will enable an appreciation of the National Service scheme of the 1950s as a forerunner to that which was introduced in the 1960s. A number of parallels will emerge through an investigation of public perceptions of the value of National Service to defence and social development.
CHAPTER THREE

From a universal to a selective National Service training scheme

The main purpose of the scheme is to provide a reservoir of trained men to be available for service with the Defence Force in the normal way in the event of an emergency. Effective forces must be available for instant use should war occur, and the Government’s aim is to provide by the end of 1953, through voluntary enlistment and National Service, the strengths which would be required by the three Services on mobilisation.1

Sir Philip McBride, Minister for Defence, 17 September 1951.

This chapter and the next will together examine the operation of the National Service training scheme from its commencement in 1951 to its suspension in 1960. This chapter spans the years 1951 to 1954 while Chapter Four spans 1955 to 1960. A focus on the central themes of universal and selective compulsory military training allows the history of the National Service training scheme to be divided into two phases. Briefly stated, the first phase commenced in 1951, when a system of universal compulsory military training was introduced, and ended in late 1954, when the exemption of certain classes of youth resulted in a system of selective military training. The second phase began in 1955, involved a further abbreviation of the scheme in 1957, and ended in 1960 when the National Service training scheme was suspended.

Together, these chapters canvass a number of interconnected issues that warrant thorough investigation. First, given that vast resources were spent on the administration of a universal – and later a selective – National Service training scheme that was of limited military value, it is necessary to consider the political motives of the Federal Government. Second, from a social perspective, it is important to trace the pattern of public support and the various arguments that were presented both for and against National Service. Third, within a military and a strategic context, it is likewise important to assess the positive and negative effects that National Service had on the development of the Regular Army and the CMF.

During the 1950s, the Defence Committee reviewed Australia’s strategic situation regularly and presented many recommendations for the consideration of Cabinet. It is fair to say that members of the Defence Committee and Cabinet ministers deliberated from markedly different perspectives. For example, the Service chiefs’ attitude towards National Service training was determined exclusively by its potential to improve the nation’s defence, whereas for the politicians, public support for National Service was an important consideration. As will be revealed, senior public servants too, sometimes played an influential role in defence policy formulation and implementation.

Australian defence planners were always mindful of the limited usefulness of atomic weapons and recognised an ongoing need for a trained reserve of troops. In March 1950, the Council of Defence considered the views of some leading American and British scientists and military leaders. An American, Dr Vannevar Bush, a former Defence Research and Development Board chairman and atomic bomb pioneer declared:

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Pushbutton warfare be damned. This talk has done a lot of harm. The trouble is that the American people get to thinking in terms of our pushing the buttons, and lose sight of the fact that, if there was a war tomorrow, it would be the same tough slugging match that the last one was. Certainly there will be innovations and modifications based on weapons introduced in the last war, but it would not be push-button warfare in any sense. Some of this 'Buck Rogers' thinking is a lot of hooey.²

Britain's Field Marshal Montgomery, the Chairman of the Western Union Commanders-in-Chief Committee, agreed that science was yet to eclipse the techniques of conventional land warfare.³ From an Australian perspective, the RSSAILA Federal President, Millhouse, explained the League's support for universal compulsory military training in the following way:

The League has never believed that the next war will be a push button affair and that a small number of highly skilled technicians could rapidly train a sufficient number of personnel to afford an adequate defence force in time of national emergency. League members with experience of two major wars feel that in the future, as in the past, war in the final analysis will depend on the man in the front line to a far greater extent than on the machine. I believe that the training of the greatest number of persons for the defence of this country is of the utmost importance.⁴

The inherent fairness of universal compulsory military training was a significant reason for its popularity. The Government recognised this and would therefore prove reluctant to change the National Service training scheme to a selective basis even after it became apparent that the universal principle was no longer sustainable.

The liability for National Service training applied to all male British subjects ordinarily resident in Australia who turned 18 on or after 1 November 1950. Section 18

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³ Ibid.
⁴ NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 212, Folder 3303c, Parts 1 and 2, RSSAILA 34th Annual Report and Balance Sheet 1949.
of the *National Service Act* exempted sufferers of prescribed physical and mental disabilities, members of the Permanent Defence Force, theological students, ministers of religion, and members of religious orders. So-called ‘full-blood’ and ‘half-blood’ Aborigines and men defined as less than ‘half-blood’ but who were living as aboriginal natives or amongst Aborigines were also excluded, although members of these groups could apply to undergo National Service training and their cases would be considered on their merits. Men recognised by the Courts as conscientious objectors were granted either a full exemption from National Service training or a partial exemption, in which case they were directed to undergo training as non-combatants.\(^5\)

National Service training began on 30 July 1951, when the Navy and the Air Force, both of which accepted only volunteers who were prepared to serve overseas, received 500 and 1,500 trainees respectively. One week later, on 6 August, the Army received an intake of 10,670 trainees. Navy and Air Force intakes were programmed for January and July of each year, while Army intakes were programmed for January, April (later May), and August annually. The total service obligation was initially fixed at 176 days for each of the three Services. National Servicemen in the Navy performed 124 days’ full-time training and thirteen days’ part-time training in each of the following four years. National Servicemen in the Air Force usually completed their training in one continuous period. National Servicemen in the Army served 98 days’ continuous training and 26 days’ part-time training in each of the following three years, made up of a short annual camp and regular weeknight and weekend parades. After completing

their training obligations, National Servicemen transferred to the Inactive List where they remained until the expiration of the total service obligation of five years from the date of call-up.6

In 1954, the Navy part-time training obligation was abolished and the period of full-time training was increased to 154 days; the Air Force training obligation was reduced from 176 days to 154 days; the Army total training obligation was reduced to 140 days, consisting of 98 days’ full-time training and 21 days’ part-time training in each of the following two years. In 1957, National Service training was suspended in the Navy and the Air Force. The Army’s reduced annual trainee intake of 12,000 was governed by a birthday ballot system, and the total training obligation was changed to 77 days’ full-time training and 21 days’ part-time training in each of the following three years, for a total of 140 days. The National Service training scheme was suspended on 30 June 1960.7

For National Service training, the Navy used depots including Flinders in Victoria, Balmoral in Queensland, and Fremantle in Western Australia. The Navy also made available four training vessels to give National Servicemen a minimum of six weeks’ seagoing experience. The Army used barracks at Wacol in Queensland, Brighton in Tasmania, Ingleburn and Holsworthy in New South Wales, Puckapunyal in Victoria, Woodside in South Australia and Swanbourne in Western Australia. The Air Force used many of its bases in locations throughout the country.8

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
During the period of continuous training, National Servicemen were instructed in drill, weapons, basic field craft, personal hygiene, first aid procedure, the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, and received spiritual and moral guidance. Initial corps training was also provided to National Servicemen before they were posted to CMF units where they received advanced corps training and gained on-the-job experience. All trainees were instructed in the basic skills of the rifleman and infantry units absorbed most National Servicemen. During the first year of operation, a total of 34,139 trainees were called up: 1,008 to the Navy, 27,448 to the Army, and 5,683 to the Air Force.\footnote{CPD, vol. House of Representatives (H. of R.) 24, 1–2 October 1959, pp. 1741-42.}

Corps with civilian trade equivalents derived the greatest benefit from National Service training. For example, an apprentice motor mechanic with a proven aptitude was an ideal candidate for the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, requiring considerably less training than a man with less mechanical knowledge. Although allocation boards could assess the basic aptitude of trainees for corps with no civilian equivalent such as Armour, Artillery, Engineers, and Signals, the suitability of a trainee for these corps could only really be properly assessed after he commenced specialist training. CMF units received National Servicemen in large numbers, which put instructional staff under a great deal of pressure. Although a substantial reserve of troops was established, its military effectiveness was limited ultimately by the amount of training that was provided.
Towards the end of 1951, each of the Commands advised Army Headquarters of their initial experience of National Service training.\textsuperscript{10} The tenor of each report was generally positive. Whilst Western Command had experienced only minor difficulties, Northern, Eastern, Southern, and Tasmania Commands all complained that National Service instructors were too few and too inexperienced to cope with large numbers of National Service trainees. It was generally conceded, however, that posting more experienced instructional staff to the National Service training units could solve this particular problem. Central Command endured the greatest misfortune: it lost valuable training time to flood relief duties and had to contend with an outbreak in the ranks of poliomyelitis.\textsuperscript{11}

All except Eastern Command agreed that the content and structure of the training syllabus was appropriate and that National Servicemen had achieved basic military proficiency. However, the General Officer Commanding Eastern Command expected the CMF units to buckle under the strain of National Service training and advised Army Headquarters that National Servicemen should receive adequate corps training before being posted to CMF units. CMF units should not, he declared, be responsible for the provision of corps training. The GOC Eastern Command reasoned that it would be extremely difficult for the undermanned and under-resourced CMF to perform the task of corps training. It was unrealistic to expect CMF units to produce troops of a reasonable calibre, he argued, adding that ‘the soldier who emerges from a full-time

\textsuperscript{10} NAA: MP927/1, A323/21/84, Minute, National Service – Syllabus of Training, DMT to DCGS, 30 December 1951; Reports on National Service, Western Command, 27 November; Central Command, 27 November; Southern Command, 28 November; Eastern Command, 3 December; Tasmania Command, 7 December; and Northern Command, 10 December 1951.

\textsuperscript{11} NAA: MP927/1, A323/21/84, Minute, DMT to the DCGS, 30 December 1951.
corps training unit, even one working under great difficulty, will be a far superior product to one who completes a CMF engagement under present conditions'.

The GOC Eastern Command recommended that the full-time training period be increased from fourteen to sixteen weeks to allow for an additional two weeks' corps training. National Service training units, he claimed, needed to provide a minimum of four weeks' full-time instruction in order to produce 'an individual capable of taking his place as one of the lesser skilled members of a sub-unit'. For the GOC Eastern Command, a corresponding reduction in the part-time training obligation was a small price to pay for trainees' military proficiency. The Director of Military Training (DMT) responded to the Eastern Command recommendation by pointing out that an extension of the continuous training period would create a programming problem because three fourteen-week periods of continuous training already filled the training calendar. Therefore, CMF units had to be entrusted with the responsibility for the provision of corps training.

Even before Army Headquarters had received these reports, the Minister for Defence, Sir Philip McBride, enthused about the vital function of National Service in preparing the nation for war. McBride evidently wanted to ensure that the public understood that National Service was vitally important to the defence programme. The Minister praised the three Services and the Department of Labour and National Service for their deft handling of the first National Service intake, and stated assuredly that the

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12 NAA: MP927/1, A323/21/84, Minute, GOC Eastern Command to Army Headquarters, 3 December 1951.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
initial shortages in both accommodation and instructional staff would eventually be overcome. Not only was McBride convinced of the value of National Service to the nation’s defence, he was confident that the National Service training scheme would make ‘a major contribution to Australian defence preparedness and to the physical fitness and character of the nation’. McBride’s expectation seemed to be vindicated by the steady early progress of National Service training, by the determined manner in which the Services had dealt with their problems, and also by the enthusiasm of the press, the public, and the National Servicemen themselves.

Sir Edmund Herring’s successor as the Director-General of Recruiting, Major-General W.M. Anderson, was keen to capitalise upon the positive atmosphere that prevailed. On 21 September 1951, Anderson suggested to the Minister for Air, William McMahon, that a journalist from a metropolitan daily newspaper in each State should be invited to live in a National Service training camp for several weeks. So impressed was Anderson by the attitude and the bearing of the Army National Service trainees whom he met during an inspection of Puckapunyal Barracks that he believed the scheme should be given maximum exposure in the press. Anderson also recognised the potential of favourable publicity of National Service training to stimulate Regular Army and CMF recruiting. The Director-General of Recruiting suggested that each of the Services should approach the press: ‘There is undoubtedly a story to be told of great national achievement and I feel that there is every justification for taking some special steps to let it be known to the Australian public’.

At the same time, the Regular Army came under additional strain when Cabinet decided to despatch a second infantry battalion to Korea.\textsuperscript{17} Robert O’Neill has written of the decision:

A second battalion was available, but at heavy cost to Australia’s capacity to raise a more powerful force in the long term .... Much criticism had been made by the Liberal and Country Parties when in opposition of the inadequacy of Australia’s defences. After nearly two years in office, however, the Menzies Government could still barely provide two battalions for operations and then only at the expense of the Army’s long-term development.\textsuperscript{18}

It is not surprising, then, that the Army had already begun to seek some relief from the burden of National Service training.

During the earliest stages of planning for National Service, the Army had decided that young men living in very remote localities and those employed in certain occupations, such as coal miners, should be exempt from National Service training. For the Army, there were already too many men liable for National Service training and it could well do without the administrative problem of men who, because they lived far from the CMF units to which they were posted, would find it very difficult to parade regularly for short periods of part-time training. Nor did the Army see any point in training men employed in essential industries who would not be called up under plans for mobilisation. The first problem was considered serious enough to warrant attention even before the initial intake of trainees was received by the Army.

\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{17} NAA: A4909, 164, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 164, Without Submission – Ground Forces for Korea, 25 September 1951. \\
On 2 August 1951, Major-General Eric Woodward, on behalf of the Chief of the General Staff, explained to the Minister for Labour and National Service, Holt, that the annual part-time training obligation consisted of a fourteen-day camp held in a training exercise area and twelve days’ home training conducted in or near the CMF unit’s location and comprising a combination of bivouacs, whole day, half day, and night parades. Woodward argued that it was unfair and unrealistic to expect men residing in remote localities to attend short periods of home training, and proposed that all National Servicemen living beyond a ten-mile radius of their nearest CMF unit should be required to attend the annual camp only, and be granted an exemption from home training. Woodward also wanted all National Servicemen who lived more than 48 hours’ travel time by normal surface transport from their CMF unit to be excused from all part-time training. For those men who wished to work or study overseas, Woodward also believed that it should be possible to arrange deferment of their National Service training obligation.¹⁹

The Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, Henry Bland, recommended that no immediate action be taken to provide exemption from the National Service training obligation for any class of youth. According to Bland: ‘Such an amendment would publicise the fact that a substantial proportion of persons called up for service in the Army might in certain circumstances not be required to serve the full 176 days and, apart from the question of equity as between individuals, this might make it difficult for the other Services, particularly the Air Force, to obtain the necessary

numbers of persons prepared to elect for those Services and volunteer for overseas service'.

On 1 November 1951, Holt approved an instruction that applied to men living within 24 hours’ travel time but beyond a ten-mile radius in metropolitan areas, and a five-mile radius in country areas, of their CMF units. Such men were to render a minimum of 20 days’ training annually and were to be encouraged to perform the standard 26 days, but no one was to be entitled to an exemption from training. Instead, at the discretion of CMF units, a maximum of six days’ annual leave could be granted to these so-called ‘out-of-radius’ men in order to avoid their inconvenience of having to travel long distances from their homes to perform short periods of training.

The Army was initially prepared to defer the problem by ensuring that the men affected rendered at least 20 days’ training each year; those who did not attend at least six days’ home training would be required to spend an additional six days on the fourteen-day annual camp – that being three days on the advance party and three days on the rear party – for a total of 20 days. The Director of Military Training considered the annual requirement of at least 20 days’ training to be ‘in the nature of a safety precaution’ in the absence of an amendment to the National Service Act that would provide for exemption from twelve days’ home training annually; in this way, National Servicemen would, after three years, still be liable to render another eighteen days’ training instead of 36 days.

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20 NAA: MP927/1, A4/4/44, Memorandum, Bland to Sinclair, 1 October 1952.
21 NAA: MP927/1, A4/4/44, Minute, National Service: personnel required to undergo 20 days’ training, DMT to DCGS, 21 October 1952.
22 Ibid.
However, it soon became apparent that the decision to provide for six days’ annual leave from home training instead of the twelve days’ exemption that was requested by the Army would not solve the original problem and would create another: so-called “20 Day” National Servicemen represented up to half of the posted strength of some CMF units in Northern Command. According to the provisions of the National Service Act, out-of-radius men would have, after three years, an outstanding service obligation of up to eighteen days. The DMT believed that the Army should continue to argue for twelve days’ annual exemption from home training for out-of-radius men. On 21 October 1952, the DMT advised the Deputy Chief of the General Staff that the Commands were wasting their time in trying to find a way around the impasse:

It is submitted that if Commands could be informed that a total exemption is still the aim, and that the present system is only an expedient pending appropriate amendments being made to the Act they would not be so concerned about finding means to further the training of the “20 Day” National Servicemen. 23

The Chief of the General Staff agreed. On 24 December 1952, Rowell informed the Minister for the Army that to require all “20 Day” National Servicemen to attend for six days on advance and rear parties in addition to the fourteen-day annual camp was simply not feasible. Because “20 Day” National Servicemen were so numerous they could not all be gainfully employed. The CGS explained that a proposal to stage a 20-day camp instead of a fourteen-day camp for “20 Day” National Servicemen had been examined and rejected by the Military Board because the proposal would create another problem of available personnel: regardless of the duration of the camp proper, it would still be necessary to organise three-day advance and rear parties. Consequently, it would

23 Ibid.
be necessary to find personnel able to render at least 23 days’ and up to 26 days’ continuous training. Rowell proposed that “20 Day” National Servicemen should be granted nine days’ leave annually and be required to perform only seventeen days’ training annually – a fourteen-day camp plus an advance or a rear party, or time spent travelling to and from the CMF unit in lieu. In so doing, the CGS made it clear that he ultimately expected the National Service Act to be amended to provide for the exemption from all home training of men living in remote localities.24

Another administrative difficulty arose when CMF volunteers with rank were called up for National Service training. A Tasmanian Liberal Senator, Allan Guy, informed the Minister for the Army that, when serving CMF non-commissioned officers were called up, they relinquished their rank, ceded their entitlement to additional pay, and reverted to the rank of private.25 Francis replied that all National Servicemen had to be treated in the same way in order to prevent allegations of preferential treatment. Besides, there was nothing to prevent a National Serviceman who formerly held non-commissioned rank from being promoted by his CMF unit a second time after completing his continuous training. To support his case for inaction, Francis remarked of the man affected: ‘If he has displayed the necessary ability and is favourably reported upon this would be a distinct advantage rather than a deterrent to his subsequent promotion’.26

24 NAA: MP927/1, A4/4/44, Minute, National Service: members outside the five and ten mile radius of training depots, Rowell to Francis, 24 December 1952.
25 NAA: MP927/1, A323/21/8, Letter, J.A. Guy to Francis, 15 January 1952.
26 NAA: MP927/1, A323/21/8, Letter, Francis to Guy, undated.
So determined was the Federal Government to treat all National Servicemen equally that it was prepared to treat some badly. The Government’s resolve seems to stem from an adherence to an inflexible principle of fairness that attached no value to voluntarism. The Government was prepared to ignore the disaffection of CMF volunteers called up for National Service training, and, whilst the intention was to avoid the creation of a division between volunteers and compulsorily enlisted men, the point was missed that the Services are necessarily hierarchical.

The Minister for Labour and National Service was initially adamant that registrants should be given every possible opportunity to submit willingly to National Service training and that the penalties prescribed for non-compliance with the *National Service Act*, including fines and military detention, should be imposed only as a last resort. Ultimately, very few men defaulted on their National Service obligation. A Department of Labour and National Service investigation of the first and second intakes revealed that breaches of the *National Service Act* were rare. Of the first intake, a total of 103 registrants failed to report for duty, and 88 of these men were able to provide acceptable explanations, as were 50 of the 75 men who failed to report for the second intake.

Despite the high rate of compliance with the *National Service Act*, a seamless transition from civilian to military life was beyond some young men. National Service Training Unit Routine Orders reveal that prosecutions for military offences such as

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27 *CPD*, vol. 215, 29 and 30 November 1951, pp. 3130-32.
28 NAA: MP1368/1, 1965/1533, Minutes, Failure to Obey Call-Up, South Australia, 4 April; Western Australia, 8 April; Victoria, 10 April; Queensland, 10 April; Tasmania, 16 April; New South Wales, 1 May 1952.
absence without leave and insubordinate behaviour were commonplace during the early intakes.29 The high incidence of disciplinary offences suggests an initial unwillingness or inability of trainees to observe the Army's code of conduct; it also indicates that Army authorities involved in the task of National Service training were not prepared to relax the enforcement of military regulations and were genuinely committed to achieving the goals of the scheme.

By the end of 1952, some 36,186 National Servicemen had completed their continuous training and the strength of the CMF had been built up to more than 50,000 personnel, five years after that target was set in 1947. Nevertheless, a stimulus for voluntary enlistment was still needed because within eighteen months of the commencement of National Service training, a pronounced detrimental effect on the CMF volunteer retention rate had become evident. On 1 July 1951, 20,883 volunteers were serving in the CMF; only six months later, that number had fallen to 16,756, and another 1,500 volunteers were lost to the CMF during the following twelve months. At the end of 1952, volunteers accounted for only 15,248 of a total strength of 51,434 CMF personnel.30 A disturbing pattern had emerged: as more National Servicemen entered the CMF, more volunteers left. The problem was a serious one, even though the decline in the proportion of volunteers was exaggerated when youths who would otherwise have enlisted voluntarily in the CMF were called up and counted as National Servicemen.

29 NAA: B5132, NN, National Service Training Unit Routine Orders. These are held by the Soldier Career Management Agency (formerly Central Army Records Office), Victoria Barracks, Melbourne.
At the time, the Regular Army was attracting the majority of volunteers and most new enlistments were attributable to the war in Korea. A long-awaited upsurge in Regular Army recruiting occurred slowly in the months from January to October 1950. During this period, the strength of the Regular Army increased from 14,770 to 16,175 troops. By May 1951, the strength of the Regular Army had increased to 19,362 personnel, and one year later, the figure was 27,725. A more modest increase subsequently resulted in a maximum strength of 28,052 personnel in June 1953, but before then, the defence programme buckled under the strain of a downturn in the national economy.31

The problem was exposed at a meeting of the Defence Preparations Committee on 21 August 1952. The Minister for Defence, McBride, noted that a combination of financial constraints and limited physical resources had prevented the completion of the defence programme by the end of 1953 as was originally planned. Menzies observed that a revision of the defence programme, which he conceded had now to be considered a year-to-year proposition, was necessary in order to avoid ‘political and economic chaos’.32 Menzies noted that the United Kingdom had encountered a similar problem and predicted that eventually, so too would the United States. Cabinet had authorised a reduction in the 1952-53 defence budget from £367 million to £200 million, but in spite of the implementation by the three Services of severe cost-cutting measures, at least £236 million was still needed to realise the aims of the defence programme. The

31 Ibid.
32 NAA: A4940, C649, Minutes of Cabinet Committee on Defence Preparations Meeting held on 21 August 1952. The Defence Preparations Committee was chaired by the Prime Minister and consisted of the Ministers for Defence, Army, Navy and Air, Supply, and Defence Production, the Secretary of the Department of Defence, and the three Service chiefs.
Committee studied closely the Services' maintenance costs and munitions orders with a view to saving the outstanding £36 million.\textsuperscript{33}

The Chief of the General Staff argued for a reduction in the Army's National Service intake to offset the rising cost of maintaining and equipping the Regular Army, which had increased in strength from 22,500 to more than 28,000 personnel since 1951-52. Reluctantly, Rowell proposed a reduction in the Army's annual intake from 29,250 to 22,500 National Service trainees, which would save between £1.8 and £2.3 million, allow a balanced Army organisation to be achieved within the constraints of an annual budget of £75 million, and relieve the pressure under which the CMF was labouring. Rowell advised that a reduction of 2,250 National Service trainees would create a delay of only six months in meeting the total Army strength target of 67,000 personnel.\textsuperscript{34}

Rowell ruled out any reduction in the strength of the Regular Army and any suspension of Regular Army recruiting at a time when the increasingly high standard of the 80 or 90 volunteers who were enlisted each week on six-year engagements – which had permitted the cessation of all special enlistment – was raising the overall standard of the Army. The Army also had to consider the adverse effect that a suspension of recruiting would have in the future. Indeed, the CGS indicated that a Regular Army strength of 29,000 troops was desirable in order to maintain a 'pipeline' of 1,000 men for the ongoing Korean commitment.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid. The Regular Army consisted of a Field Force of 10,700 men, 2,900 CMF cadre staff, 8,600 personnel in base and administrative units, 4,200 in training, and 3,000 involved in National Service training.
Air Marshal Sir Donald Hardman sought an increase in the permanent strength of
the Air Force from its existing level of approximately 17,000 personnel to 21,000 to
cope with National Service. The alternative that Hardman proposed was a 50 per cent
reduction in the programmed annual Air Force intakes of 8,000 National Service
trainees in 1952 and 10,000 in 1953, which would save an estimated £1.5 million. The
Navy was experiencing the least difficulty: an earlier upward adjustment of its National
Service annual intake from 1,000 to 1,200 trainees was absorbed easily and costs could
be minimised by deferring the commission of ships and by reducing the amount of time
that National Service trainees would spend at sea from one-half to one-third of the
training programme.\textsuperscript{36}

The Government members of the Committee, in the light of the successful
operation of the National Service training scheme, decided that whilst it was preferable
to avoid a reduction in the annual National Service intake, the Air Force was
experiencing undue strain while engaged in overseas operations. The Committee
therefore recommended no change to the Army and Navy annual intakes and a
reduction in the Air Force intake to a rate of 2,000 per annum for the balance of the
1952 calendar year and a rate of 5,000 per annum for the first half of 1953. At the same
time, the Committee imposed a £200 million ceiling on total annual defence
expenditure.\textsuperscript{37} Cabinet approved the recommendations on 27 August 1952.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} NAA: A4940, C649, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 525, Without Memorandum – Defence Preparations, 27 August 1952.
The Federal Government was understandably reluctant to alter the course of the defence programme, particularly in relation to National Service training. In August 1952, the Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, Bland, explained to McBride that the number of men becoming available for training each year matched approximately the total annual National Service intake of 39,200 that had been approved after a minor revision of the 40,250 target set by Cabinet in March 1951. ‘Any substantial reductions in the Service intakes will therefore mean that the number available will exceed the numbers required and some process of selection will be necessary’, Bland advised.\(^{39}\) Bland identified the universality of National Service training as an underlying reason for the scheme’s success; any change to selective military training would therefore not only present serious administrative problems, but could also turn people against the scheme. Bland warned that ‘if the principle of universality is departed from, the arbitrary decisions that would have to be taken as to who should be included and who should not would produce intense public criticism which the Government should not under estimate’.\(^{40}\)

On 23 June 1953, Harold Holt was notified of an impending surplus of National Service trainees in a Department of Labour and National Service report produced by one of its officers, Tom Graham. Graham observed that the Department had benefited greatly from the principle of universal liability because its application had simplified the administration of the National Service training scheme. The potential complication of the Department’s work perhaps explains why Graham was firmly opposed to a change

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
to selective military training. The total annual National Service intake of 39,200 trainees that had been planned from 1952-53 onwards was roughly equivalent to the 40,000 young men who were expected to become available for training each year. The small annual surplus of less than 1,000 registrants did not present any serious difficulty because they could be accommodated over time.\footnote{NAA: MP491/1, 55/764, Enclosed report by T.C. Graham, National Service, Memorandum, Cook to McBride, 23 June 1953.}

However, three problems had combined to create an impending annual surplus of up to 8,000 men who would become available for training from 1953-54 but who could not be called up. First, the decision in August 1952 to reduce the annual Air Force intake of 8,750 had produced an additional trainee surplus of approximately 4,400 after no equivalent increase in the Army and Navy intakes was authorised.\footnote{On 27 August 1952, Cabinet authorised the Air Force intake to proceed at a rate of 4,000 per annum for the remainder of 1952 and at a rate of 5,000 per annum for the first half of 1953. This produced a once-only adjusted intake of 4,375 trainees from the date of the decision to the end of June 1953. Cabinet’s decision changed the Air Force annual intake to 5,000 from 1953, not 4,375 as Graham calculated: NAA: A816, 44/301/185, Notes on Cabinet Agenda, National Service, 9 November 1953.} Second, since the scheme began, an average of only sixteen per cent of registrants – instead of 20 per cent forecast by Service medical authorities – had been granted medical exemption. This had resulted in the annual availability for National Service training of some 2,000 more young men than had been anticipated. Third, if the Government succeeded in its attempt to make unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for National Service training, it would add to the annual surplus by approximately 2,500 men in the first year and 2,000 men in each year thereafter. In all, the result was an approximate annual surplus of between 6,000 and 8,000 men. Graham concluded that if the principle of universal service was to be preserved, the annual intake had to be increased, and suggested that
the period of continuous training be reduced in an effort to limit the cost of the scheme.\textsuperscript{43}

The \textit{Argus} objected to any reduction in the number of National Service training days as a means of accommodating more trainees and presented two alternative courses of action: either increase the Army personnel establishment to enable it to handle a bigger annual intake, or grant exemption from National Service training only to youths employed in defence-related industries. The \textit{Argus} urged the Government to undertake a comprehensive review of Australia’s security situation in order to identify existing security threats and to establish Australia’s international strategic role. Australia, the \textit{Argus} contended, had entered a state of strategic limbo; it was geographically remote from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and its defence relationship with Great Britain had been effectively severed by that country’s exclusion from the Australia-New Zealand-United States security treaty (ANZUS).\textsuperscript{44}

Graham suggested two initiatives that were intended to provide for the maintenance of the system of universal military training, but neither was really feasible. The first option involved the postponement of each of the three National Service registrations that were scheduled to take place during the year. The effect would be to reduce the number of men to become available for National Service training and to allow the surplus of trainees to be cleared.\textsuperscript{45} Unfortunately, this was not a durable solution because excessive delays in the registration process would tend to aggravate

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Argus}, editorial, 30 June 1953.
\textsuperscript{45} NAA: MP491/1, 55/764, Enclosed report by Graham, National Service, Memorandum, Cook to McBride, 23 June 1953.
rather than alleviate the problem of a trainee surplus. Further, the longer that registrants waited to be called up, the older they would be when their turn for training finally arrived, and the older the registrant, the greater was the likelihood of disruption to his work or study, and hence the stronger would be his case for deferment.

The second option was based upon the application of a more rigorous medical standard as a means of disqualifying young men who would otherwise have been declared fit for National Service training. Graham noted that considerable discretion was already being exercised by Army medical authorities in an effort to minimise the number of men becoming available for training: the medical standard for National Service training had been set higher than that for CMF voluntary enlistment. The rejection on medical grounds of National Service registrants who would be passed fit without hesitation if they were volunteering to serve in the CMF would have made a mockery of the selection process. Besides, any increase in the medical standard would not only have been impossible to justify, it would also have been extremely difficult to implement. As these suggestions indicate, any significant reduction in the liability for National Service training demanded the abandonment of the principle of universal service, which the Government proved extremely reluctant to do.

A change to selective military training through the application of a set formula designed to limit the annual National Service call-up to a specific target was problematic. Graham outlined a variety of methods that were available. The geographical limitation of the call-up involved restricting the liability to men living in

46 Ibid.
certain areas. Graham noted that: ‘The Army has always wished to limit training to the
capital cities and larger towns, although it has never been clear why military training
should be an obligation or privilege restricted to city dwellers’. 47 Perhaps the “20 Day”
National Servicemen episode should have taught Graham that the Army was eager to
dispose of administrative liabilities. The geographical limitation method also involved
the exclusion of men living beyond a certain radius from a CMF unit, such as the ten
miles that had been used to determine the “20 Day” National Servicemen.

Another method of limiting the call-up involved granting exemption to industrial
or occupational categories, such as men employed in the rural industry, and coal miners,
whose exemption the Military Board had contemplated in the early stages of planning
for National Service training. The final method that Graham examined was that of
random selection, which involved the exclusion either of men born in a certain month or
whose registration number ended in a given numeral, or the introduction of a ballot
system based upon the birth dates of the young men liable for National Service.
Random selection was arguably the fairest, and certainly the simplest, method to
administer. However, it was also the most arbitrary and least efficient method because,
although it would reduce the intake, it would not avoid any of the other problems of
universality. 48

The introduction of selective service by any method was problematic because it
was widely accepted that the co-operative attitude displayed by those young men who
were liable for National Service training was directly attributable to the inherent fairness

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
of universal military training. 'Introduction of a system of exemption for certain classes is certain to re-open controversy and greatly weaken the willingness of those not exempted to make their contribution', Graham warned.49

The editor of the Melbourne Age proved the point by decrying the abandonment of the principle of universal service: 'The suggestion that wider exemptions be made to reduce the backlog should be rejected. If the system is to be universal it should deserve the name. Any exemptions based on employment or occupation would be unacceptable, as destroying the character of the scheme'. 50 The Age argued that the only appropriate way to deal with the surplus of men available for National Service training would be to reduce the period of full-time training and to increase the numbers trained. The Age asked whether the 98 days' continuous training period could be reduced to two months, but observed that military considerations would need to be taken into account and the advice of the Service chiefs accepted.51

On 10 July 1953, Philip Cook, the First Assistant Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, told Bland that a cut to defence spending was likely to feature in the 1953-54 budget. Increasing expenses and the need to offset the cost of the Korean commitment were likely to necessitate a review of National Service training. The Defence Committee sought significant reductions in the National Service training scheme. The Navy proposed a decrease in the total training period from 176 days to 154 days, while the Air Force wanted to reduce its annual intake by 1,000 and its total

49 Ibid.
50 Age, editorial, 30 June 1953.
51 Ibid.
training period from 176 days to 160 days. The Army had earlier devised two options for National Service training. Course A involved three intakes of 7,500 with the call-up restricted to areas selected by the Army and a total service obligation of 140 days, including 98 days' continuous training and 21 days' part-time training in each of two years followed by three years on the Inactive List. Course B involved maintaining three intakes of 9,750 and the same training obligation as for Course A, and contained a proposed that, after 98 days’ continuous training, men living in the cities beyond a ten-mile radius and in the country beyond a five-mile radius of a CMF unit, not be liable for part-time training and be transferred directly to the Inactive List for a period of five years.

Cook noted that the changes proposed by the Services would create a surplus of approximately 13,000 trainees in 1953-54 and that about 30 per cent of men available for training would have to be granted deferment or exemption from call-up. Bland later ventured that, although the longer Navy and Air Force training periods could possibly be regarded as inequitable, the disparity could be justified because both those Services accepted volunteers only. The Army would have the shortest training period, 'and it is in the Army', Bland observed, 'that those least enthusiastic about National Service training are required to serve'.

52 NAA: B142, SC1956/58, Letter, Cook to Bland, 10 July 1953.
53 NAA: MP729/8, 1/431/14, Minute, Director of Staff Duties to AG Branch, National Service Act – Amendment, 25 May 1953.
54 NAA: B142, SC1956/58, Letter, Cook to Bland, 10 July 1953.
According to Cook, McBride accepted that a reduction in the National Service annual intake and a consequential change to selective military training was inevitable. However, the Acting Minister for Labour and National Service had already rejected the Army’s original idea of limiting the call-up on a geographical basis as ‘quite unsatisfactory, both politically and administratively’, and favoured random selection by ballot. A ballot system was the only method that could preserve the universal liability for National Service training, at least until the ballot was drawn. The Government did not want to grant an exemption from National Service training to any class of young men because it knew that to do so would erode public support for the scheme. The Government favoured random selection by ballot for its fairness. The Department of Labour and National Service liked it for its simplicity. The Army, however, preferred a system of geographical exemption because it would solve the problem of home training attendance by men living beyond a reasonable distance from a CMF unit.

The legalities of the National Service training scheme were the subject of constant debate and the implementation of change was never a straightforward matter. For example, the question of whether or not an amendment to the National Service Act was needed to permit adjustments to the training obligations of the three Services illustrates the administrative problems that were encountered whenever changes to the scheme were contemplated. Section 33 of the National Service Act, which stated in part that ‘a person called up for service in the Citizen Forces shall render service in those forces for 176 days’, suggested to the Services that an amendment was necessary. The Department of Labour and National Service, however, maintained that the Government was entitled

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56 NAA: B142, SC1956/58, Letter, Cook to Bland, 10 July 1953.
to waive part or all of the service obligation of a man called up for National Service and that it was not incumbent upon the Services to ensure that 176 days' service was rendered. Bland believed that a flexible approach to the variation of training periods was desirable and that it should not be subject to the legal constraints of the *National Service Act*.\(^{57}\) The Acting Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department took a contrary view, but conceded the possibility of tabling the amendment in such a way as to avoid the need to make a further amendment in the event of a subsequent decision to restore the service obligation to 176 days.\(^{58}\)

On 4 August 1953, the Minister for Defence, McBride, presented the Services' National Service proposals for the consideration of Cabinet.\(^{59}\) Cabinet subsequently requested that McBride and the Minister for Labour and National Service, Holt, together examine the possibility of maintaining – within a £200 million annual defence budget – the National Service training scheme on a universal basis by adjusting other parts of the defence programme.\(^{60}\) Graham and Vincent Quealy from the Department of Defence subsequently noted that, on 18 August 1953, Cabinet had considered the National Service training scheme in terms of budgetary constraints and agreed in principle to a total annual National Service intake of 33,750 trainees, consisting of 1,200 for the Navy, 29,250 for the Army, and 3,300 for the Air Force. Cabinet had also decided to reduce the 176 days' service obligation to 154 days' continuous training in the Navy

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\(^{57}\) NAA: B142, SC1956/58, Minute, National Service Act, Bland to Holt, 3 August 1953.

\(^{58}\) NAA: B142, SC1956/58, Memorandum, Acting Secretary Attorney-General's Department to Bland, 7 August 1953.

\(^{59}\) NAA: A4940, C784, Cabinet Submission no. 513, The Defence Programme, National Service – Proposed Variations in Intakes and Periods of Training, 4 August 1953.

\(^{60}\) NAA: B142, SC1956/58, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 801, Submission no. 513 – The Defence Programme – National Service – Proposed Variations in Intakes and Periods of Training, 12 August 1953.
and the Air Force, and to 140 days in the Army, consisting of 98 days’ continuous training followed by 21 days’ part-time training in each of two years.\(^{61}\)

On the basis of Cabinet’s decisions, the trainee surpluses over the following three years were expected to be 8,000 in 1953-54, 11,000 in 1954-55, and 12,000 in 1955-56, while in each year 1,000 to 2,000 unnaturalised non-British migrants were anticipated to become available for training, subject to the Government’s success in making them liable. The annual cost of training an additional 11,000 National Servicemen was estimated to be £9.8 million (including £5.6 million for maintenance and £4.2 million for capital expenditure), and would require an extra 1,320 Regular Army personnel and a ‘substantial increase in the numbers of voluntarily enlisted officers and N.C.O’s’ in the CMF.\(^{62}\) Not only were the costs prohibitive, the problems of finding the necessary Regular Army and CMF personnel were insuperable.

On 24 September 1953, Cabinet formalised its earlier decisions that were taken in relation to the annual National Service intake and periods of training and agreed that, annually, the Navy would receive two call-ups of 600 trainees, the Army, three call-ups of 9,750, and the Air Force two call-ups – one of 2,000 and one of 1,300 trainees. By reducing the annual Air Force intake from 5,000 to 3,300 trainees, the annual surplus of men available for training was effectively increased by 1,700.\(^{63}\) Cabinet then turned its attention to the Regular Army. After a maximum post-war strength of 28,052 was

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reached in June 1953, Cabinet agreed that the Regular Army personnel establishment should not exceed 26,000, on the condition that the reduction did not compromise operational and training efficiency. The Minister for Defence announced the changes on 29 September 1953.

In October 1953, the Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, Bland, reported that, if the Army reduced the period of continuous training from 98 days to between 70 and 77 days, it could train an additional 10,000 men annually at no additional cost. The shorter period of continuous training could be offset by requiring 21 days’ part-time training to be rendered in each of three years instead of two. Bland favoured the maintenance of the principle of universal service for its simplicity, its fairness, and its popularity, and for its subliminal potential to influence public opinion in relation to the acceptance of a liability for overseas service: ‘The ready public acceptance of the principle of universal obligation for military service in peace time marks a step towards the eventual solution of this major problem and it may well be in the long run interest, from a purely military viewpoint, that the principle of universal obligation should be sustained.’

Bland ventured that the Federal Government, before considering the relative merits of universal and selective service, first had to establish the primary purpose of the National Service training scheme. If that purpose was to build up the reserve of

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65 NAA: A4940, C784, Press Statement, National Service, 29 September 1953. See also Appendix B Table 1: Summary of variations in the National Service training scheme annual intakes.
troops required for mobilisation, it was possible to justify a system of selective military training. If, however, the scheme's contribution to 'national fitness, discipline and morale' was paramount, universal military training was more appropriate. The Government knew that only universal military training could achieve both outcomes and was therefore reluctant to change to a system of selective military training.

Accordingly, on 9 November 1953, the Minister for Labour and National Service recommended that Cabinet reaffirm its commitment to the principle of universal service and direct the Services, and the Army in particular, to review their National Service plans. Holt argued that universality was fundamental to the integrity of the National Service training scheme and anticipated 'inevitable public disputation and dissatisfaction as well as complex administrative problems' in the event of a change to selective service. Hence, consideration needed to be given to methods of accommodating all available youths, including, for example, the method that had earlier been used in New Zealand, which involved a reduction in the period of continuous training from 98 days to 70 days and four instead of three annual intakes.

The Chief of the General Staff, Rowell, had already concluded that the Army simply did not have the capacity to absorb all youths who remained available for National Service training. According to the CGS, an increase in the size of the three annual intakes was not possible. Whilst a reduction in the period of training and an increase in the number of annual intakes was an acceptable alternative, it would

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67 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
nevertheless require an additional 300 Regular Army cadre staff and cost an additional £2.3 million annually in maintenance alone. Ultimately, CMF units would have to endure any increase in the number of National Servicemen. Regular Army personnel were unavailable to support the CMF because the rate of discharge greatly exceeded the rate of enlistment.\textsuperscript{70}

On 10 December 1953, the Defence Committee conducted a thorough study of the recommendations presented to Cabinet on 9 November by the Minister for Labour and National Service. The Defence Committee observed that the Army – with an existing annual intake of 29,250 National Service trainees – was expected to absorb any increase in the number of youths to be trained. Technical considerations placed a ceiling on the Navy and the Air Force annual intakes of 1,200 and 3,300 trainees respectively. If National Service training was to continue on a universal basis, it was estimated to involve an increase in the annual call-up from 33,750 to approximately 45,000 men. The specific proposal that would enable the increase involved a reduction in the Army’s initial period of continuous training from 98 days to 77 days, 21 days’ part-time training in each of three years instead of two, and four instead of three annual intakes of 9,750 trainees.\textsuperscript{71}

In reaching a series of conclusions, the Defence Committee rejected much of what Holt had proposed. The Defence Committee found that there was no military need for an increase in the National Service intake and that it was beyond the capacity of the

\textsuperscript{70} NAA: A816, 44/301/185, Enclosed report, Absorption by the Army of the total residue eligible for National Service training, Letter, Rowell to Francis, 6 November 1953.

\textsuperscript{71} NAA: A816, 44/301/185, Defence Committee Minute no. 314/1953 – National Service, 10 December 1953.
three Services to train more National Servicemen. Furthermore, a greater number of National Servicemen would create an imbalance in the defence programme of manpower reserves *vis-à-vis* equipment and no provision had been made for the additional expenditure that the training of more men would require. Holt’s proposals also contradicted the strategic basis of defence policy that had been revised at the beginning of the year and which had led to a decrease in the strength of the Reserve and relief for the CMF through a reduction in the National Service part-time training obligation by one year. The Defence Committee concluded that a change to a system of selective military training was inevitable. The Navy and the Air Force, as the two Services least affected, were prepared to support a system of selection that filled their training quotas. Methods of selection contained serious implications for military efficiency, however, and the Army rebutted a claim made in Holt’s Cabinet submission that proximity to a CMF unit was not a valid basis for selection. As the problem of the “20 Day” National Servicemen had demonstrated earlier, men living within a reasonable distance of their CMF units were more likely to render effective service than men living in remote locations.\(^{72}\)

Cabinet was ultimately persuaded by the arguments presented by the Defence Committee and decided not to approve Holt’s plan for the continuation of universal military training. Cabinet directed the Defence Committee and the Department of Labour and National Service to submit a joint proposal that would give effect to the National Service intakes and training periods that were approved on 24 September.\(^{73}\)

\(^{72}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{73}\) NAA: A4940, C784, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 901, Submission no. 576 – National Service, 18 – 19 December 1953.
Although Cabinet had practically abandoned the system of universal military training, it theoretically retained the principle of universal service. A solution was still required to deal with the problem of the trainee surplus, which would continue to accrue until a system of selective military training was formally introduced that would reduce the number of men becoming available for training each year.

The RSSAILA 38th Annual Congress had earlier resolved that all medically fit men who had not received military training between the end of the Second World War and the inception of the scheme should be made liable for National Service training.74 The Minister for the Army, Francis, replied that the National Service training scheme was already stretching all available resources to the limit. Any increase in the numbers to be trained, he warned, would ‘seriously overburden the whole training organisation and eventually lead to the adoption of a lower standard of training so much lower as to be unacceptable’.75 Francis continued:

The National Service Battalion commanders and instructors supported by the C.M.F. units which have absorbed the National Servicemen, are doing a grand job to build an effective peace-time force. Any change which would seriously disrupt the present organisation and drastically alter the scope and standard of training would, I am sure, be generally considered to be a retrograde step.76

The RSSAILA Federal Executive tried a different tack by proposing that exemptions from National Service training should only be granted on the grounds of

74 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 3, RSSAILA Federal Executive, 38th Annual Report, 1953.
75 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 3, Letter, Francis to J.C. Neagle, 14 December 1953.
76 Ibid.
medical unfitness and that military doctors should perform all medical examinations.\textsuperscript{77} The Minister for Labour and National Service replied that less than one per cent of registrants had been granted exemptions for reasons other than medical unfitness and that 86.3 per cent of men had been declared fit, which was a much higher proportion than the Services’ medical authorities had originally anticipated.\textsuperscript{78} Holt added that ‘there is no reason for concern about the number of exemptions from National Service or the conduct of National Service medical examinations’.\textsuperscript{79}

As has been established, it was the Federal Government that had the most reason to worry about the proportion of men passed fit for National Service, not in the sense of too few men becoming available for training, but too many. It was clear that public support for universal military training was not about to recede. The League’s resolutions appear to be in response to the reductions in both the Air Force annual call-up and the National Service training obligation variations for each of the three Services, and foreshadowed the controversy that was generated when Cabinet sought to effect more significant changes to the National Service training scheme.

When, in late 1953, the Chief of the General Staff reflected on the progress of National Service training and considered what had been achieved, Rowell wrote of the ‘three partners’ responsible for the scheme – the Regular Army, the CMF, and the

\textsuperscript{77} NLA Manuscript Section, RSL Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 3, RSSAILA Federal Executive, 38th Annual Report, 1953.

\textsuperscript{78} NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 3, Letter, Holt to Neagle, 15 December 1953. Only 0.40 per cent of registrants were found to have a prescribed physical or mental disability, 0.14 per cent were recognised by the Courts as conscientious objectors and granted total exemption, and 0.33 per cent were theological students, ministers of religion, or members of religious orders.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
National Servicemen — and praised each in turn. Rowell did not doubt the effectiveness of National Service in filling the ranks of the CMF: ‘For the first time in my service Australia has now for its defence a force in physical being which can be mobilised promptly instead of a phantom scheme on paper’. However, for the CGS at the end of 1953, the success of National Service had to be measured by the number of volunteers who would elect to continue to serve, ‘so as to produce the officers, NCO’s and specialists which are a vital, in fact a critical, element of any Army unit’. Therefore, the value of National Service to Australia’s defence had yet to be revealed fully because: ‘These senior leaders and specialists cannot be trained on a part-time basis in two or three years. We shall always need volunteers who serve on beyond the period of their obligatory training to provide this essential element for the Citizen Military Forces’.

By the end of 1953, the CMF Order of Battle consisted of 279 units, the personnel establishments of which were filled almost to capacity, although the operational capability of many of these units is questionable when phenomena such as the “20 Day” National Servicemen are considered. After two years of rapid expansion of the CMF, a method of winding back the National Service training scheme that would maintain the level of personnel and ideally satisfy the public needed to be found. Although the build-up of the armed forces had been impressive, the Services could not be expected to maintain a high level of training intensity, especially at a time when the likelihood of

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80 *Advertiser*, 22 December 1953.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
war was receding. A report by the National Security Resources Board subsequently confirmed that, since Menzies’ warning in March 1951 that Australia had to prepare for war in three years, the basis of Australian defence planning had shifted from ‘preparedness by a critical date to the maintenance of defence at a level that can reasonably be sustained for a “long pull”’. 85

In February 1954, the Defence Preparations Committee estimated that additional defence expenditure of £160 million over the following three years was necessary to correct what it described as ‘a disequilibrium between manpower and equipment’ in the Army. 86 Military authorities explained the gravity of the problem: ‘While the Field Force can fight with modern equipment, the C.M.F. must be equipped for war from existing stocks of World War II equipment which are unbalanced. They would barely suffice for one division but are quite inadequate for a force of three divisions’. 87 The nation’s defence was compromised because the Field Force division and brigade group that should have been capable of overseas deployment within 90 days of mobilisation was short of equipment to the value of £40 million. 88 Whilst the Federal Government had succeeded in providing the personnel required for mobilisation, it had failed to equip them adequately.

The National Service call-up ensured a constant number of National Servicemen, but the recruitment and retention of CMF volunteers remained a seemingly insoluble

85 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, Box 271, Folder 4284c, Defence and Development 1950-1953, A Report on Australia by the National Security Resources Board, 30 March 1954.
86 NAA: A5954, 1337/25, Defence Programme, Additional Provision of £9.6m. for Army Equipment in 1954/55.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
problem. In January 1954, the CMF contained some 70,659 troops, but of these, only 13,434 were volunteers.\(^8^9\) The Government finally allowed a distinction to be drawn between volunteers and men compulsorily enlisted when it granted a dispensation to six CMF officers who were due to be called up for National Service training. One of the men, Murray Low, appealed directly to Holt for indefinite deferment.\(^9^0\) Low was understandably anxious to avoid losing his commission, but the *National Service Act* did not permit his service obligation to be waived.

After giving the matter detailed consideration, the Military Board devised for CMF commissioned officers a special arrangement based upon the normal National Service training obligation. The Military Board decided that CMF officers should be permitted to volunteer for 98 days’ Regular Army full-time duty in lieu of continuous training, followed by the standard 21 days’ part-time training in each of two years. Two conditions almost guaranteed that the officers would volunteer for full-time duty. First: if the officer decided not to volunteer for full-time duty, he would be called up for National Service regardless. Second: if he resigned his commission before completing his service obligation, he would be compelled to render the balance as a private soldier.\(^9^1\)

By March 1954, the Department of Labour and National Service seemed to have accepted that a change to selective military training through wholesale grants of exemption – or indefinite deferment as the Government insisted on calling it – was all


\(^9^0\) NAA: MP1308/1, 65/2135, Letter, M.W. Low to Holt, 7 September 1954.

\(^9^1\) NAA: MP1308/1, 65/2135, Military Board Minute, National Service – Call Up of CMF Officers, 19 November 1954.
but inevitable.  

The Principal Administrative Officers' Committee (Personnel) was in no doubt whatsoever, and after studying the various methods of selection in detail, recommended to the Defence Committee that, from the Army's point of view, a combination of occupational and geographic deferment was the most appropriate way to limit the numbers of men becoming available for National Service training.  

The Defence Committee subsequently established that, in spite of 'substantial administrative difficulties for the Department of Labour and National Service', a combination of occupational and geographic selection was 'the most practicable and satisfactory method of those examined for the selection of National Service personnel'. For its part, the Department of Labour and National Service did not consider the administrative problems involved to be insurmountable. The Department agreed with the Defence Committee that, subject to statistical analysis, indefinite deferment of the liability for National Service training should be provided to permanent full-time rural workers, to underground coal miners and merchant seamen, and to registrants whose place of residence lay beyond a radius of approximately ten miles from the nearest Army training centre.

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92 For example, Graham discussed the methods of introducing a system of selective service that would go unnoticed by the public: NAA: B142, SC1956/58, Minute, Graham to Bland, National Service, 2 March 1954. Bland later conceded that the introduction of a system of selective service was probable: NAA: B142, SC1956/58, Minute, Bland to Holt, National Service, 15 March 1954.

93 NAA: B142, SC1956/58, Report by Principal Administrative Officers' Committee (Personnel) from Meetings held on 28 January, 1 April, 29 April and 6 May 1954.

94 NAA: B142, SC1956/58, Minutes of Defence Committee Meeting held on 13 May 1954.

Meanwhile, the Brisbane *Courier Mail* reported the generally positive findings of Army psychologists who had questioned a number of trainees in the third intake of 1953 about many aspects of National Service training at the Wacol camp. Most trainees seemed satisfied, convinced that National Service was necessary, and claiming to have found the training interesting and to have derived some physical benefit. The survey discovered that the trainees formed a cohesive group and most thought that the skills they had learned would prove useful in civilian life. More than 60 per cent stated that, in the event of another war, they would be prepared to serve overseas, and almost half expressed a desire to serve in a fighting unit.96

From a social perspective, the National Service training scheme was hailed by the Federal Government as an ‘unparalleled success’ through which: ‘Young men from every walk of life and from every social group have met on common ground and have learned the joys of tolerance, understanding and comradeship’.97 The Minister for the Army declared that, ‘apart from its great military value, it provides the young men of Australia with a background of good citizenship and teaches self-reliance, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility to the country, whose freedom and security will hereafter rest in their hands. They have responded manfully and enthusiastically to their obligations’.98 In the Burnie *Advocate*, the Federal President of the RSSAILA, Sir George Holland, argued that no changes should be made to the National Service training scheme, which he insisted was producing not only good soldiers, but also good

96 *Courier Mail*, 25 May 1954.
citizens. Some League members evidently believed that defence of the principle of universal service was important enough to warrant a little pressure to be applied to youths holding a contrary view of military service. The RSSAILA Queensland State Branch wanted the National Service Act amended so as to compel men who wished to be recognised as conscientious objectors to advertise in local newspapers their intention to seek exemption from National Service training. Given that, as Holt pointed out, applications for exemption from National Service on the grounds of conscientious objection were heard in Courts open to the public and the press, it is apparent that the resolution was intended to deter young men from applying to be recognised as conscientious objectors.

On 20 August 1954, the Minister for Defence recommended that Cabinet give effect to a selective National Service annual call-up of 33,750 trainees. McBride proposed the deferment of the call-up of two categories of youth. The first category included youths employed full-time as permanent rural workers engaged in the production of food or raw materials, underground coal miners, and merchant seamen. The second category comprised youths living outside areas defined by the Department of Labour and National Service in relation to Army training centres, which for practical purposes would usually be a radius of ten miles. McBride noted that the changes, which were programmed to take effect on 1 January 1955, were to be regarded as temporary

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100 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 3, Letter, Holt to Neagle, 29 November 1954.
measures only, ‘designed to meet the problems arising during the four years 1955 to 1958 inclusive’, and would remain subject to review at any time in response to changes in the strategic situation.\textsuperscript{101} Cabinet subsequently approved McBride’s recommendations on 8 September 1954.\textsuperscript{102}

Before the approved changes were announced in Parliament, Cabinet considered the extent of public support for universal military training and studied models of geographical or locality deferment that could have been used instead of occupational deferment. McBride seemed genuinely bemused by the amount of controversy that the plan to resort to a system of selective military training had started to generate. It was, in the Minister’s words, ‘merely a method of providing the numbers needed to be trained’ and did not affect the size of the intake.\textsuperscript{103}

McBride believed that the opponents of locality deferment had overlooked the established conventions of the National Service training scheme. Full exemption from National Service training had always been granted to youths residing in extremely remote localities, and partial deferment of the part-time training obligation had been made available to “20 Day” National Servicemen who lived far enough from a CMF unit for regular home training attendance to be considered impracticable.\textsuperscript{104} McBride tended to ignore the objection that the proposals would set an unpopular precedent by excluding from the National Service training scheme designated classes of youth.

\textsuperscript{101} NAA: A4940, C784, Cabinet Submission no. 80 – National Service, 20 August 1954.
\textsuperscript{102} NAA: A4940, C784, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 83, Submission no. 80 – National Service, 8 September 1954.
\textsuperscript{103} NAA: A816, 44/301/185, Cabinet Submission no. 118 – National Service, 20 September 1954.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
The Minister for Defence ruled out any possibility of an increase in the annual intake and insisted that a 30 per cent reduction in the number of young men to become available for training was necessary. McBride’s main concern was to select the most appropriate method of effecting the reduction, and he gave little consideration to opposing views held by other members of the Government. The Army was advocating a combination of locality and occupational deferment and the deferment of youths living outside a five-mile radius from a CMF unit, which would reduce the number of men available by approximately 25 percent, while the deferment of all full-time rural workers would yield an additional three-and-a-half per cent reduction.105

Two methods of reducing the number of men available for training without the need for occupational deferment were examined, both incorporating locality deferment and random selection by ballot. The first method involved balloting out five per cent of men living within the five-mile radius in addition to the deferment of the 25 per cent of men living outside the five-mile radius. The second method involved extending the radius to ten miles, which would reduce the number of men available for training by 21 per cent, and balloting out an additional nine per cent of men living within the ten-mile radius. McBride favoured the second method because the 21:9 ratio of men deferred by locality to men deferred by ballot was more evenly balanced, and therefore might appear fairer, than the 25:5 ratio of the first option.106 After considering McBride’s submission, Cabinet agreed that a combination of rural and locality deferment remained

105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
‘the most desirable method of dealing with call ups for National Service training’.

The Government needed to adopt the fairest and most transparent method of granting deferment even if it entailed additional administrative problems. It was generally accepted that public support for the National Service training scheme hinged on the perception of its fairness; but a quick decision was needed because at the end of 1954, some 64,000 men were available for training.

Bland had already informed the Department of Labour and National Service State Regional Directors of McBride’s impending announcement to Parliament of significant changes to the National Service training scheme:

The whole tenor of the statement will be that this is an interim arrangement and that liability for service will continue. While the general intent is to play down the selective service scheme, there are bound to be a lot of questions asked as to how the scheme will work and as to the numbers now available and not called up, and surpluses becoming available in future.

Bland advised the Regional Directors not to reveal any details of the changes to either the press or the public. No one outside the Government was to be told about the problem of having too many men available for training, or the plan that had been devised to solve it, because, Bland wrote: ‘There are implications in the international field, especially having regard to the current discussions in the Philippines’.

In the Philippines on that very day, representatives of Australia, Great Britain, the United States, New Zealand, France, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand were

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110 Ibid.
negotiating a collective security agreement that would culminate in the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO). The Melbourne Herald was the first newspaper to identify the risk of embarrassment that the Federal Government was taking. At the same time as it was promoting international defence co-operation, Australia could also have appeared to be undermining the integrity of its own defence programme. The Sydney Morning Herald sympathised with the Government about the practical difficulties associated with the administration of National Service, but warned of an adverse public reaction to the introduction of selective military training.

Peter Edwards has written that SEATO was ‘essentially an expression of the opposition of the United States and its allies towards communism in Southeast Asia’, and that, together with ANZUS, it allowed the Federal Government to limit Australia’s annual defence expenditure. The public was strongly in favour of Australia joining SEATO and might have been less parsimonious than the Government, with a large majority in favour of sending an expeditionary force to Malaya as part of a proposed SEATO anti-communist alliance. Significantly, more than 80 per cent of respondents to a Gallup poll believed that such a force should consist of volunteers only, and only thirteen per cent indicated that they considered a random ballot system to be an acceptable method of selection. The Government needed to consider such expressions of public opinion before changing the basis of the National Service training scheme.

111 Herald, editorial, 9 September 1954.
112 Sydney Morning Herald, editorial, 10 September 1954.
113 Edwards, A Nation at War, p. 23. See also Appendix B Table 2: Australian Defence Expenditure expressed as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 1945-46 to 1973-74.
115 AGP/APOP, nos 1036 – 1046, September – October 1954.
On 16 September 1954, a newspaper article drew attention to Australia’s changing strategic situation. The *Argus* reported the view of a recently retired Marshal of the Royal Air Force, Sir John Slessor, that Korea was the kind of war that Australia should prepare for by establishing a reserve of highly trained troops capable of rapid deployment.\(^{116}\) During the 1950s, commentary on Australia’s strategic situation by retired senior officers always made good copy and helped to sustain the ongoing debate about the direction of the defence programme and the future of the National Service training scheme.

On the following day, the editor of the Melbourne *Herald* added to the growing disquiet of Government backbenchers by advocating universal military training and publicising the views of a former Chief of the General Staff, retired Lieutenant-General Vernon Sturdee, about the inadequacy of the National Service training scheme. Sturdee believed that National Service taught young men to accept order and discipline, and that it subsequently bestowed a benefit upon civilian industry. However, he questioned the wisdom of diverting a significant proportion of the £200 million annual defence vote to the scheme and away from the ‘training and equipment of a small, highly efficient, hard hitting force’ capable of immediate deployment.\(^{117}\) According to Sturdee, the military value of National Service training was very limited, and without a scheme based upon at least eighteen months’ continuous training, Australia could not claim to have reserves of trained manpower. Mobilisation would take months, which in the age of modern


\(^{117}\) *Herald*, 17 September 1954.
warfare was too long, regardless of the theatre of conflict.\textsuperscript{118}

According to the editor of the \textit{Sun-Herald}, the real problem was the reluctance of young men to join the Regular Army and thereby provide sufficient instructional staff to sustain universal military training. A grave assessment of the strategic situation was presented in the wake of the withdrawal of French forces from Indo-China, which had removed a barrier between Australia and the downward thrust of communism. Although Regular Army numbers were in decline, it was specious to suggest, as the \textit{Sun-Herald} did, that a patriotic response by young Australians was needed to preserve the universal character of the National Service training scheme in order to meet the threat of communism and to retain the respect of Australia's allies.\textsuperscript{119} The Federal Government had, twelve months earlier, approved a Regular Army personnel establishment that was not to exceed 26,000 troops. Furthermore, National Service training was not intended as an unlimited enterprise and the three Services operated within tight budgetary constraints. For the \textit{Age}, the fullest possible application of the principle of universal service remained important:

Even though changes in training periods and annual intakes for branches of the services have at times been made, and exemptions are granted for certain limited categories, the supreme virtue of the scheme was that it automatically applied to all men on reaching a certain age, irrespective of occupation, fortune or any other consideration.\textsuperscript{120}

In Parliament on 23 September 1954, McBride responded to a question from the Opposition by claiming that a universal obligation to register for National Service,

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Sun-Herald}, editorial, 19 September 1954.
\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Age}, editorial, 17 September 1954.
rather than a universal liability for service, had always been a policy of the Government. McBride insisted that, even though it was the practice to call up all classes of youths except those living in very remote areas, the call-up had been 'confined to the number required to meet the needs of the services from time to time'.\textsuperscript{121} Certainly, a policy based upon the principle of universal service was adopted but never quite implemented by the Government. However, from at least March 1951, when Cabinet increased the total annual National Service intake, the intention was to implement and maintain a system of universal military training; the exclusion of men living in the remotest parts of the country did not render the scheme selective, as McBride inferred. As has been established, the Government desired to maintain the National Service training scheme on a universal basis even after Cabinet agreed in August 1953 to limit the total annual intake to 33,750 men. Only economic problems and changes in Australia's strategic situation intervened to force a reluctant change of plan.

Less than a week later, McBride explained to Parliament that, for the purpose of practicability, indefinite deferment would forthwith be granted to all National Service registrants living beyond a radius of five miles from a CMF training establishment, and consistent with mobilisation plans, to rural workers engaged full-time in the production of food or raw materials. Although the National Service training scheme could now be properly described as a system of selective service, McBride maintained that, because all young men were still required to register for National Service, and because those men in the deferred categories would become liable for training if their circumstances

changed, the universal liability for service remained intact.122

Although the introduction of provisions for locality and occupational deferment did not involve any reduction in the number of National Servicemen to be trained annually, that a future expansion of the National Service training scheme was now only a very remote possibility would have relieved the Army. Nevertheless, few supporters of National Service training were prepared to accept the modification without complaint, including some twenty Government backbenchers. Prominent among these were the Member for Chisholm and a veteran of the First World War, Sir Wilfrid Kent Hughes, and Henry Gullett, the Liberal Party Whip and Member for Henty, and the Member for Angas, Alexander Downer, both of whom saw active service during the Second World War. The Sydney Morning Herald reported that a backbench revolt was narrowly averted when the Prime Minister issued a challenge to the dissenters.123

The Argus later described the Federal Government’s alleged failure to explain its defence aims as ‘intolerable’ and argued that only a definitive statement by the Prime Minister would restore confidence in a national defence programme that many people now suspected was seriously under-funded.124 According to the Argus, the Government gave the impression that it was ‘tinkering with National Service in such a fashion as to create in this country a destructive and obnoxious system of class distinction’.125 ‘No lazier, or more haphazard, plan’, the Argus lamented, ‘has ever come from a Federal

123 Sydney Morning Herald, 16 and 17 September 1954.
124 Argus, editorial, 28 September 1954.
125 Ibid.
Government than that which waters down the intake of the National Service scheme'. 126 The *Argus* deplored the abandonment of the principle of universal service and claimed that it invited ‘appalling possibilities of class distinctions’ that would generate much resentment. 127 The exclusion of country youths from the defence programme set a dangerous precedent, the consequences of which would be suffered in a defence emergency, the *Argus* warned, and concluded: ‘Such a plan is neither universal nor democratic. It isn’t even real’. 128

For its part, the Melbourne *Herald* was surprised by the decision to change the basis of the National Service training scheme to one of selective service so soon after the conclusion of the SEATO pact on 8 September 1954. 129 The *Age*, meanwhile, insisted that the universal obligation not only to register, but also to train, should have been maintained if only to demonstrate to its allies that Australia was taking the issue of defence seriously. 130

Soon after the change to selective military training, the Army attempted to rid itself entirely of the administrative burden of National Servicemen living beyond a five-mile radius of their CMF units. The Chief of the General Staff requested that the Minister for the Army consider a proposal to grant leave to such men for the balance of their service obligations. Consistent with the recently introduced initiatives for deferment, Rowell also recommended that out-of-radius men who had been called up in

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126 *Argus*, editorial, 30 September 1954.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
130 *Age*, editorial, 29 September 1954.
the final intake in 1954 should be transferred to the Inactive List upon completing their continuous training. Francis rejected both ideas, insisting that the changes would not be permitted to take effect before 1 January 1955.

After meeting with senior Regular Army and CMF officers on 29 and 30 November 1954, Rowell, in one of his final acts as Chief of the General Staff, again appealed to Francis. The Army proposed that all out-of-radius men should be discharged from their part-time training obligation, and in order to compensate for the loss of personnel, recommended that the part-time training obligation for all other National Servicemen be restored from 21 days in each of two years to 26 days in each of three years. The Army was prepared to accept the additional workload that the extended part-time training entailed because CMF units could expect to derive considerable benefit from the superior proficiency and the greater maturity of National Servicemen in their third year of part-time training. In addition, because a three-year part-time training obligation would make the attainment of rank seem like a more worthwhile goal, it would help to overcome a shortage of junior NCOs in the CMF. It was also argued that, after three years, the development of a better appreciation of the Army would encourage more National Servicemen to volunteer for additional service. The Minister later indicated that he was prepared to review the proposal, but

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132 NAA: A816, 44/301/192, Appendix C to Military Board Agendum no. 4/1955, Minute, National Service, Francis to Acting Secretary of the Department of the Army, 28 October 1954.
133 NAA: A816, 44/301/192, Appendix D to Military Board Agendum no. 4/1955, Minute, National Service Training, Rowell to Francis, 10 December 1954.
only after it had been reconsidered by the Military Board.\footnote{NAA: A816, 44/301/192, Appendix E to Military Board Agenda no. 4/1955, Minute, National Service Training, Francis to Acting Secretary of the Department of the Army, 6 January 1955.}

Some people were less concerned about the scale of the National Service training scheme and more interested in Australia’s ongoing military commitments and the nation’s ability to meet the challenges of the regional strategic environment. A retired Royal Navy Commander, C.C.M. Usher, declared that ‘Liberal Party back-benchers and those who think our National Service training should be continued in its present form as an earnest of our obligations to SEATO are still fighting the last war’.\footnote{Age, letters, 20 September 1954.} Usher was convinced that National Service training had weakened the Regular Army, and argued that the priorities of the defence programme needed to be reassessed:

> Australia simply cannot afford to disperse or fritter away her efforts of elementary training for the many until after she has built up the few – her regular army and its fully trained reserves. Ten thousand reserves with two years’ service might turn the scale, whereas 60,000 men with only four months’ training might have to lay down their arms before completing it.\footnote{Ibid.}

However, many people were not greatly concerned about the value of National Service training to defence but were preoccupied with the fair and equitable administration of the scheme. Therefore, the argument of Sydney’s \textit{Daily Telegraph} that the National Service training scheme should be expanded – even if the training obligation had to be reduced in order to accommodate more trainees – did not lack appeal.\footnote{\textit{Daily Telegraph}, editorial, 1 November 1954.} A Gallup poll revealed that some two-thirds of respondents favoured the continuation of National Service training on a universal basis, while less than one-third
believed that exemptions should have been granted to certain individuals and groups, and a majority was prepared to spend an additional £10 million annually to preserve the principle of universal service. The Federal Government was conscious of the high level of public support for universal military training: indeed, it was largely responsible for it. In late 1954, the Federal Council of the Liberal Party of Australia announced that it regarded the ‘present call-up, period and standard of National Service Training as an absolute minimum’.

The editor of the Melbourne Herald, whilst disappointed by the reduction in the National Service training scheme, presented a circumspect assessment of the situation:

Fortunately the Government has not abandoned any of its powers under the National Service Act. It undertakes to review the whole training situation in 1955 in the light of military needs as they then appear. It will do well to give still more serious thought in the meantime to the psychological and other effects of reducing national training to a metropolitan and urban responsibility.

Greater stability in the international environment had made the change from a universal to a selective National Service training scheme more acceptable to the public than it might otherwise have been. David Lowe has captured the essence of the Australian Cold War experience during the first half of the 1950s:

Under Menzies, Australia’s Cold War involved a complex competition between certitudes and unknowns. Only from 1953 to 1954, as the Cold War changed its meaning to something very different from that of a prelude to a third world war, was there a sense of transition in government thinking, and a forced recognition that the post-war world was intelligible by means other than anticipating the next global struggle.
CHAPTER FOUR

An increasingly selective National Service training scheme

Unlike overseas schemes, where the NS man is employed to augment the strength of regular forces, the Australian plan has always been regarded as a training project only, the function of which is entirely separate from maintenance or operational tasks.¹

Director of Personnel Administration, 6 April 1959.

On 19 January 1955, the Military Board, led by the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Henry Wells, again sought Cabinet approval for a reversion, from 1 July 1955, to the original National Service part-time training obligation of 26 days in each of three years, on the condition that the Army be permitted to transfer all out-of-radius men to the Inactive List by 30 June 1955. By granting out-of-radius National Servicemen leave for the remainder of their service obligation and by requiring all other men to serve for an additional year, the Military Board aimed to relieve itself of a considerable administrative burden and at the same time increase the operational efficiency of the CMF. By this means, the value of the National Service training scheme to the defence programme would increase.²

¹ NAA: A6059, 65/441/33, Minute, National Service – Corps Training, DPA to DMT, 6 April 1959.
During the 1950s, the instability of the South-East Asian region continued to produce a gradual change in Australia’s strategic situation, which presented an organisational challenge to both the Regular Army and the CMF. The Military Board noted that the CMF remained ‘the basis for the provision of an expeditionary force in war and its organization must in general terms be related to the war requirement laid down by the Government’. In October 1953, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Sir William Slim, had advised the Defence Committee that Australia’s primary responsibility in Allied defence planning should be the defence of Malaya against communist aggression. This view encouraged the continuation of Australia’s strategic reorientation from the Middle East to South-East Asia, the beginning of which Mark Welburn has traced back to 1948, when Great Britain declared a state of emergency in Malaya, but which was subsequently checked by Britain’s insistence that Australia maintain as its primary strategic focus the Middle East.

The recognition by both Britain and Australia of the strategic importance of preventing Malaya and Singapore from falling to communism led to the establishment of a British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve in 1955, a force to which Australia contributed elements from each of the three Services, and a commitment that was approved by a majority of Australians. In November 1954, the CGS and the Commander in Chief of Far East Land Forces agreed that Australian forces needed to be

3 Ibid.
5 Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, pp. 213-16; AGP/APOP, nos 1070 – 1080, February – March 1955. Some 60 per cent of respondents favoured sending a garrison force to Malaya, 22 per cent disapproved, and eighteen per cent were undecided.
readily available for deployment within South-East Asia. Hence the Military Board concluded that in order to achieve the advanced state of combat readiness upon which the success of the plan ultimately depended, it was necessary to increase the efficiency of the CMF by extending the part-time training obligation of National Servicemen.6

T.B. Millar has described a transformation in Australian attitudes towards Asia during the 30 years after 1945 as ‘nothing less than a revolution’.7 It is reasonable to argue that the greater Australian awareness of Asia was due largely to the emergence of new threats to Australia’s security. In May 1955, the Minister for External Affairs, Richard Casey, wrote that communist China constituted the greatest threat to the countries of South-East Asia.8 Casey explained to the Mufti readership the military, political, and economic functions of SEATO and the Colombo Plan in preventing the regional expansion of communism, and argued that, despite the success of these initiatives, a number of South-East Asian countries remained in peril:

A great deal of time – and territory – has already been lost. Although the Communists were stopped in Korea, the price of ending the fighting in Indo-China was the handing over of half of Vietnam to Communist control. South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand are all sensitive to Communist pressure against their borders.9

The recently retired CGS, Rowell, had earlier detailed how, in the immediate aftermath of the Pacific War, the countries of South-East Asia were exposed and vulnerable to communism, and how the nature of modern warfare demanded a swift

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7 Millar, Australia in peace and war, p. 130.
8 Mufti, May 1955.
9 Ibid.
response in the event of an attack on Australia or any of the other SEATO members. Therefore, it was the responsibility of every Australian to maintain a constant state of ‘moral and material preparedness’ by ensuring that the defence needs of the nation were met.10

As its unhurried response suggests, the Federal Government remained unenthusiastic about the Military Board’s most recent recommendations. When, on 10 May 1955, Francis finally sought the view of the Minister for Defence, he reminded McBride that they, in consultation with the Prime Minister, had already rejected the proposal after Rowell originally submitted it at the end of 1954. The Military Board had anticipated that, by extending the period of part-time training to three years, the strength of the CMF would peak at 88,450 personnel in December 1957 for an additional annual cost rising from £1.01 in 1954-55 to £2.83 million in 1958-59.11 McBride cited a Defence Committee report on the personnel strength and the operational commitments of the Regular Army to effectively rule out the Military Board’s proposal. The report to which the Minister for Defence referred stated that understaffed National Service and CMF units had contributed to a general decline in Army efficiency; McBride reasoned that, because the ongoing problems of the CMF were considered serious, the transfer of out-of-radius men to the Inactive List would ease the situation only slightly. McBride admitted to being reluctant to approve additional changes to the National Service training scheme so soon after the change to a system of selective military training.12 To do so would have been to invite further public criticism.

10 Mufti, March 1955.
Although the Military Board ultimately abandoned its attempt to extend the period of part-time training, it did continue to advocate the release of out-of-radius National Servicemen from their outstanding training obligations. The Chief of the General Staff conceded that the declining strength of the Regular Army had prevented the CMF cadres from being filled, which certainly strengthened the case for getting rid of the approximately 14,000 out-of-radius men who were still serving in the CMF in September 1955. The CGS estimated that the reduction in the numerical strength of the CMF that would occur in transferring to the Inactive List those 14,000 men, whom the Army regarded as worse than non-effective, would be overcome by December 1956, when the number of National Servicemen in the CMF would recover to about 60,000. The CGS noted that an annual camp in early 1956 was the only training that the out-of-radius men were still required to perform, and observed that:

Their attendance at this camp is of no military advantage. As they do not have to attend home training parades they will in fact be a disruptive influence to training owing to their lower standards of training and efficiency. In the meantime they are a “paper strength” only and an additional administrative encumbrance to their units.¹³

Francis agreed with the Military Board's decision to withdraw its recommendation for an extension of the part-time training obligation and maintained strong reservations about the proposal to release out-of-radius personnel from their residual service obligations.¹⁴ McBride finally settled the issue by deciding that a variation to the part-time training obligation was not warranted and that because out-of-radius men had only one more camp to attend, they should not be transferred to the

Inactive List beforehand. It is arguable that both Francis and McBride subordinated defence to politics when they rejected the advice of the Army in relation to the proposals to extend the part-time training obligation and to transfer to the Inactive List of out-of-radius men.

In the meantime, the reduction in the number of regional CMF units that the changes to the National Service training scheme would inevitably entail became a cause for concern within the ranks of the RSSAILA. The Secretary of the Macksville Sub-branch, W.M. Brunsdon, analysed the implications of the change to selective military training for the coastal townships of northern New South Wales. In and around Macksville many youths would qualify for indefinite deferment from National Service training because they were living beyond a five-mile radius of their local CMF unit or were employed in rural industry. Brunsdon supposed that the system of voluntary enlistment would not sustain the personnel establishments of CMF units situated in sparsely populated districts. Consequently, men who had been called up when the National Service scheme was based upon the universal principle would not be replaced after they completed their training obligation. Therefore, many CMF units in regional areas would eventually be disbanded.

Brunsdon named seven other settlements situated along a 200-mile stretch of the New South Wales north coast – Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Wauchope, Kendall, Wingham and Taree – in which the local CMF unit would be similarly

15 NAA: A816, 44/301/192, Minute, McBride to Francis, 8 November 1955.
16 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 3, Letter, W.M. Brunsdon to J.R. Lewis, 4 April 1955.
affected. In an attempt to circumvent the provisions for locality and occupational deferment from National Service training, the returned servicemen of Macksville devised a strategy that involved the dispersal of the local Infantry Company’s platoons throughout the district. It was hoped that the creation of additional training centres would counter the exclusive effect of the five-mile radius and make more young men liable for National Service training. Brunsdon argued that if McBride was not prepared to reconsider the change from universal to selective military training, ‘he should discard the use of the term “universal liability” and substitute “selective liability”’ and ‘look forward to the not-far-distant time when the country battalions will shrink to such an extent that they will go out of existence’. Brunsdon warned: ‘When that day arrives Australia will be easy picking for any aggressor’.17

Ultimately, the best efforts of the League to resist change would prove futile. The Federal Government and the Army were both fully cognisant of the effect that the provision of locality and occupational deferment from National Service training would have on regional CMF units. The imperative of military efficiency dictated that CMF units in remote areas should not survive to enable a more effective concentration of the Army’s resources. Although the number of National Servicemen in regional Australia would decline only gradually and it would be some time before the effects of locality and occupational deferment became apparent, many non-metropolitan CMF units were effectively disbanded when the change was made to a system of selective military training.

17 Ibid.
Selective military training produced certain administrative problems. The argument presented by a CMF officer whose call-up was imminent suggests the emergence of an attitude that the principle of selective service was inherently unfair and therefore open to challenge. The officer in question, N.R. Miller, claimed to support National Service training, but resented being subject to a call-up that was applied unevenly. Miller indicated that, because of the personal inconvenience it would cause, he was not prepared to volunteer for 98 days’ Regular Army full-time duty, which the Military Board had authorised in November 1954. Of CMF volunteers who became liable for National Service training, Miller asked the Minister for Labour and National Service: ‘Do you think it right that they be compelled to give assistance additional to that which they have already given voluntarily?’

The Liberal Member for Bradfield, Henry Turner, made a representation on Miller’s behalf to the Minister for the Army, John Cramer, on 10 February 1956. Turner emphasised the unfairness of a system of military training that distributed the burden of responsibility for the nation’s defence unequally. Because Miller had already served a total of 182 days in the CMF, and because he intended to render further service, his request for an exemption from National Service training was not unreasonable. Turner suggested that a dispensation should be granted to men, like Miller, who had achieved the rank of subaltern and who had rendered at least 140 days’ CMF service, that being the equivalent of the total National Service training obligation.

19 NAA: MP1308/1, 65/2135, Military Board Minute, National Service – Call up of CMF Officers, 19 November 1954.
The Army, the bureaucracy, and the Government each adopted an inflexible stance that denied Miller an exemption from his liability for National Service training. The Army’s Director of Personnel Administration argued that no dispensation should be granted to Miller, citing the legal requirement that the training obligation had to be fulfilled by men deemed liable for National Service. The Secretary of the Department of the Army, Allan McKnight, advised Cramer that the Army considered it most desirable that all National Servicemen should fulfil their service obligation in accordance with the normal training programme: ‘Voluntary service is, of course, welcomed and encouraged by the Army and if it has resulted in the member qualifying for promotion, every effort is made to see that advantage is taken of these qualifications during the period of the member’s service’.

Cramer accepted this advice and rejected Turner’s argument that the *National Service Act* should be amended to recognise voluntary service as a substitute for compulsory service. The Minister for the Army insisted that its whole purpose ‘is to provide for obligatory training in the national interest by prescribed members of the community’. Any change in the system would be unfair, Cramer believed, because ‘many members who are rendering obligatory service also give voluntary service but are not permitted to count their voluntary service towards completion of their obligatory service’.

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22 NAA: MP927/1, A323/21/554, Minute, Suggested Exemption of CMF VEs From NS Training, DPA to Sinclair, 9 May 1956.
23 NAA: MP927/1, A323/21/554, Minute, Exemption from National Service Training, Sinclair to Cramer, 5 June 1956.
24 NAA: MP927/1, A323/21/554, Letter, Cramer to Turner, undated.
25 Ibid.
After the change to selective military training, the Department of Labour and National Service renewed its efforts to deal with youths who attempted to avoid their obligation by ignoring the requirement to register for National Service. The Secretary of the Department, Bland, advised the Regional Directors that so-called defaulters who were detected trying to evade the National Service call-up by deliberately failing to register should not be permitted to take advantage of the provisions for locality and occupational deferment, regardless of the prosecution outcome. The administration of the National Service training scheme suddenly began to take on punitive overtones: defaulters were to be considered available for training if, in assessing the case, the Regional Director was satisfied that the failure to register was premeditated. Further, the Department of Labour and National Service did not consider administrative oversights or legal loopholes that might prevent a successful prosecution to be sufficient reasons to excuse an alleged offender from call-up.26

The National Service Manual guidelines relating to the suitability for training of youths with criminal convictions were scrutinised closely when the Regional Director in Perth, Bruce White, informed Bland that the Deputy Director of the Commonwealth Investigations Service was providing details of criminal convictions of youths who had registered for National Service in Western Australia. Because the Western Australian Police Department originally supplied the information to the Investigations Service in strict confidence, the Deputy Director did not want the Police Department to discover that the information was being passed on to the Department of Labour and National

26 NAA: MP491/1, 56/1890, Minute, Bland to the Regional Director Hobart – For Information: Regional Directors Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth, 6 July 1956.
Service. Upon being informed that Bland and officers from the three Services would need to see the information in order to assess the suitability of the subjects for National Service training, the Deputy Director of the Investigations Service expressed concern that too many parties were involved. In order to maintain the confidentiality of his informal arrangement with the Investigations Service, White asked to be appointed the sole authority in Western Australia to assess the suitability for National Service training of registrants with criminal records.27

When the Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service considered the problem, he noted that, whilst Section 124 of the Child Welfare Act prohibited the disclosure of criminal convictions recorded in Children’s Courts, the press was free to report any convictions recorded elsewhere. Bland reasoned that, because the information supplied to White by the Deputy Director was of the latter kind, it could be considered public knowledge. Bland requested the information and at the same time instructed White not to inform the local Commands.28 Bland apparently wanted to observe the Services’ methods of identifying and rejecting men deemed unsuitable for National Service training.

The tendency of the Services to reject nearly all men with criminal records prompted the Department of Labour and National Service to investigate. B.K. Phelan subsequently reported that the Department was responsible for the assessment of illiterates, Aborigines, and men with criminal records who could reasonably be regarded

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as unsuitable for military service. An informal arrangement had developed whereby the Department would inform the relevant Service about any registrant found to have a criminal record. This arrangement was considered to have contributed to a high rate of rejection by the Services. Phelan explained that, 'because the Department may have to answer public criticism on the ground either that persons who are contaminating influences are called up, or that persons who have misbehaved avoid a duty which has to be performed by those with good records', the vetting process was potentially controversial.29

National Service registrants with criminal convictions created a dilemma for the Government. On the one hand, there was no political advantage in compelling them to perform National Service training. On the other hand, it was inappropriate to deem them unsuitable for service, as to do so would have undermined the fair administration of scheme. Phelan explained the problem:

It would be inequitable for lads who have never been guilty of crime to be compelled to undergo National Service while others profit by their offences to the extent of escaping this obligation. Furthermore it would be contrary to good rehabilitation policy to treat the wrongdoer, who has been duly punished, as an outcast who is not subject to the same obligations as other citizens and indeed his period of training could make him a better citizen.30

Because the identification of youths with criminal convictions was, in all States other than Western Australia, entirely arbitrary, Phelan reasonably assumed that some young men with worse criminal records than those of men rejected had satisfactorily completed their National Service training. Subjecting every registrant to a police check

30 Ibid.
was considered impracticable and questioning them about any criminal convictions was considered undesirable, but it seems that a combination of military discipline and peer pressure could perhaps be relied upon to solve the problem:

A registrant should not be treated as unsuitable for call-up merely because he is likely to prove troublesome to the Service authorities concerned. They have their own means of dealing with such cases. Nor should a lad be regarded as unsuitable simply because he may be an unpleasant comrade for other lads in his unit. They might also be expected to deal with the situation. 31

Phelan recommended that the Department of Labour and National Service continue to assess the suitability of registrants for National Service training but no longer notify the Services of registrants with criminal records. Forthwith, no adverse information about any registrant would be passed on to the Services. As far as the Department of Labour and National Service was concerned, it was up to the Services to establish a young man’s criminal history: ‘If, however, a registrant is considered suitable for call-up it is considered he should if he expresses a preference take his chance of being selected for the Service he prefers’. 32

On 11 May 1956, the First Assistant Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, Philip Cook, admitted that the National Service Manual provisions relating to the suitability for National Service training of men with criminal records were poorly defined, and suspected the Services of an increasing tendency toward the automatic rejection of such men. 33 Bland subsequently issued a set of instructions to the Regional Directors that were designed to deal with the problems raised in Phelan’s

report. Bland also ordered a review of all cases in which National Service registrants had been deemed unsuitable for military training.\textsuperscript{34}

The Regional Director in Melbourne thought that the decision to cease consultations with local commanders and to withhold from Navy and Air Force selection committees adverse information relating to National Service registrants was so strange that he requested clarification of the advice.\textsuperscript{35} The Secretary of the Department of the Army, McKnight, protested that the idea of a review was ill-conceived because it could only add to the existing surplus of men available for training.\textsuperscript{36} Bland replied that the revised procedure was designed to ensure that all registrants would be dealt with on a common basis: the principle of fairness dictated that a review should be carried out. Nevertheless, it seems that Bland did not expect too much co-operation from the Department of the Army. He concluded rather curtly: ‘It is anticipated that few, if any, of those to be reviewed will be made available and called up for training’.\textsuperscript{37}

The Army probably wished that a rigorous selection process was available to identify potential troublemakers, as when one National Serviceman was found to have distributed ‘subversive’ political propaganda. After disciplinary proceedings culminated in the trainee complaining of ‘political victimization’, one senior officer was moved to remark: ‘He is a bad political influence in the unit, as he is a fluent speaker and

\textsuperscript{34} NAA: A705, 168/2/406, Minute, Bland to the Regional Directors, 17 July 1956.
\textsuperscript{36} NAA: A705, 168/2/406, Minute, National Service Registrants with Criminal Records, McKnight to Bland, 14 August 1956.
\textsuperscript{37} NAA: A705, 168/2/406, Minute 56/1181(14), National Service – Registrants with Criminal Records, Bland to McKnight, 17 August 1956
possesses a personality above the average'. The Liberal Member for Forrest, Gordon Freeth, suggested that 'careful psychological study of such people' was necessary and expressed alarm at the amount of sympathy that the National Serviceman had received after his case was allegedly mishandled by the military authorities. Francis denied that any mishandling of the case had occurred and assured Freeth that 'constant and satisfactory' co-operation existed between the civilian and the military intelligence organisations.

Rigid enforcement of the provisions for locality and occupational deferment did not alter the public's general disapproval of selective military training. On 22 June 1956, the Military Board's CMF Member, Major-General Ivan Dougherty, observed ruefully that 'the whole scheme had now lost some of its national flavour'. The reduced period of part-time training and the deferment of most country youths were together believed to have had an adverse effect upon public opinion. Given that the total annual National Service call-up represented only about 60 per cent of all young men who registered, the Military Board – unlike the Government – did not pretend that the scheme was still based upon the universal principle.

Others in the Services maintained a more positive outlook. Wing Commander William Brill of the RAAF Officer's Training School noted that the National Service training scheme continued to generate a keen public interest in at least one aspect of the

42 Ibid.
defence programme:

Whereas items of a purely defence interest, no matter how important to the welfare of this country interest a pitiful few, any aspect of National Service affects almost every home. All those who have done National Service prick their ears at the mention of the words, all parents of teenage sons rouse themselves from their lethargy, and the teenagers in question become agog with interest. For Lieutenant-Colonel A. Green, the scheme had transcended basic military objectives and bestowed upon the Australian community much broader benefits: 'This is nation-building work, by the inculcation of manly ideals of service, and of high standards of conduct, hygiene and social co-operation, and in particular in present-day Australia, in helping in the assimilation of young New Australian trainees into the body politic'.

The Minister for Defence was equally effusive, declaring in Parliament: 'I believe that national service training has been one of the greatest achievements of this Government. It has been a great thing from the point of view of training and discipline, and in addition has provided us with a reservoir of men who are basically trained should a war occur'. McBride referred to what he described as the 'wholehearted support of the people of Australia, particularly those who have undertaken training'; but in the same speech, he also hinted at an imminent reduction in the scale of scheme.

In January 1957, the editor of the *Age* considered the implications for Australia of equipment instead of personnel as the new basis for the defence programmes of both the United States and Britain: 'The emphasis has changed from manpower to missiles. If

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44 A. Green, 'Army Officer – Mercenary or Missionary?', *Australian Army Journal*, no. 88 (September 1956), pp. 20-28.
this is recognised, national service training could go'. A former Chief of the General Staff, Rowell, disagreed with the editor’s suggestion that the possible discontinuation of National Service in Britain might prove a catalyst for an end to National Service in Australia: the circumstances in which the armed forces of the two country’s operated were markedly different. Rowell did, however, advocate the introduction of a ballot system to reduce the number of men becoming available for training, which would ‘not only relieve the pressure on the Regular Army but would also make a more manageable and better CMF’. Rowell confirmed Australia’s strategic reorientation when he claimed that a force capable of mobilisation and supplemented by National Service training ‘can only be effective if it carries with it an obligation for service in the area of South East Asia where we have vital strategic interests’.

In January 1957 also, the practical limitations of the National Service training scheme were exposed by a review of the continuous training programme. The Director of Military Training invited the Corps Directors to comment on a review of the training programme based upon 77 days’ instead of the existing 98 days’ continuous training. The revised training syllabus continued to provide both basic and corps training using the 377 periods of instruction available after 162 periods were set aside for administration. A further minimum of 160 periods was required for basic training that would include subjects relevant to all arms and services. Efficiency was enhanced by giving corps training ranging from Infantry to Engineers, Services, Ordnance, and

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47 *Age*, editorial, 18 January 1957.
48 *Age*, 23 January 1957. By February 1957, the number of serving CMF volunteers had fallen to a minimum of 14,600 from a maximum of 21,000 in July 1951: NAA: A816, 44/301/220, CMF – Strength of Volunteer Enlistment, February 1957.
49 *Age*, 23 January 1957.
Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. The more specialised corps, including Armour, Artillery, Survey, Signals, Intelligence, Catering and Medical, each had to devise their own corps training syllabi within the remaining 217 training periods.⁵⁰

After every avenue was explored in an effort to reduce the existing basic training syllabus to an acceptable minimum, the decision was made to retain citizenship training and church parades, which were described as ‘of indirect training value as they provide some “roughage” to assist the digestion of military training’.⁵¹ The important consideration of public relations was addressed in the following terms: ‘While the need to present NS Training in a favourable light to the public continues, participation in public demonstrations – e.g., Tattoos, Marches, Gymkhana – should be allowed for. Such activities foster public interest, and help maintain morale and enthusiasm’.⁵² These uplifting activities aside, the remaining periods needed to incorporate the basic training component of the continuous training syllabus, including drill, weapons, physical and first aid training.

It was considerably more difficult to revise corps training syllabi. Corps training requirements varied greatly because each corps performed a unique function. For example, given the specialist nature of Armour, National Servicemen posted to it could conceivably have trained entirely separately from other corps. The review concluded that it was more appropriate that all National Servicemen receive the same basic training in order to avoid a loss of ‘identity’ as National Servicemen and to avoid

⁵¹ Ibid.
⁵² Ibid.
making National Servicemen unsuitable for corps transfer.\textsuperscript{53}

Corps diversity also made it difficult for National Service training units to achieve a balanced inventory of stores required for training. The review stressed that National Servicemen's time should not be wasted by posting them to CMF units incapable of providing corps training and:

Finally it is vital that whatever training is given, it must be sufficiently interesting and efficiently handled, to gain and retain the interest of the average NS man. It is difficult to revive any interest in training once a NS man's confidence in the Army is lost, or boredom is induced by poor and/or inefficient instruction.\textsuperscript{54}

In the light of the review, National Service training was to proceed upon a basis of quality rather than quantity.

Senior corps representatives of Engineers, Signals, Survey, Medical and Armour were generally satisfied with the revised National Service training syllabus.\textsuperscript{55} The Director of Infantry, however, expressed concern about an already low standard of musketry in the CMF, and suggested that it might be more appropriate to maintain the 98 days' continuous training period and reduce the annual call-up. Otherwise, an attempt to improve the standard of musketry could possibly impinge upon leadership training and ultimately affect the standard of officer and non-commissioned officer produced.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} NAA: A6059, 65/441/33, Minute, DMT to the Corps Directors, 21 January 1957.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} NAA: A6059, 65/441/33, Minutes to DMT – Royal Australian Survey, 5 February 1957; Royal Australian Engineers, 25 February 1957; DGMS, 15 February 1957; Royal Australian Armoured Corps, 14 February 1957.
\textsuperscript{56} NAA: A6059, 65/441/33, Minute, Director of Infantry to DMT 19 February 1957.
Eastern, Central, and Western Commands gave a qualified endorsement of the revised training syllabus, while Southern Command suggested that a greater emphasis should be applied to basic training.\(^57\) Despite this broad consensus, both Tasmania Command and Northern Command raised serious objections.\(^58\) The GOC Northern Command argued that a continuous training period of 77 days was simply inadequate: ‘Previously it had been accepted that the minimum time required to train all members to a satisfactory level of basic training was 300 periods and with the proposed syllabus the minimum allocation of 160 periods is not considered adequate to bring the trainee to an acceptable standard’.\(^59\) The GOC Northern Command also warned that the implementation of the proposed syllabus ‘may well result in a deterioration of the standard of training considerably in excess of what might reasonably be expected to follow on the reduction of 21 days in the length of the intake’.\(^60\)

Of greatest concern was the proposed reduction in rifle, light machine gun, and field craft instruction. The allocation of only 26 periods to rifle training, in particular, was described as ‘hopelessly inadequate’.\(^61\) Northern Command also wondered how it was possible to ascertain if a National Serviceman had achieved the minimum standard of rifle proficiency that required him to hit a four-foot target at 300 yards when it was proposed that the only three rifle practices were to be conducted from either 100 yards or 200 yards. Northern Command recommended that the syllabus be expanded to 488

\(^{57}\) NAA: A6059, 65/441/33, DMT Minute, 22 May 1957.
\(^{58}\) NAA: A6059, 65/441/33, Minute, National Service Training, Commander Tasmania Command to Army Headquarters, 25 April 1957; Minute, National Service Training, GOC Northern Command to Army Headquarters, 1 May 1957.
\(^{59}\) NAA: A6059, 65/441/33, Minute, National Service Training, GOC Northern Command to Army Headquarters, 1 May 1957.
\(^{60}\) Ibid.
\(^{61}\) Ibid.
periods of instruction, with a standard 90 periods allocated to corps training and basic training of 398 periods. 62

When Cabinet met in February 1957, it considered two alternative National Service schemes devised by the Defence Committee. Plan A provided for two years' full-time Navy, Army, or Air Force service for 5,450 men annually, including a liability for overseas service in peace or war, and part-time training in the Army only for an additional 12,000 men. Plan B provided for the cessation of National Service training in the Navy and the Air Force, a reduced Army annual call-up of 12,000 men, a continuous training period of 77 days followed by 21 days' training in each of three years, and no liability for overseas service. Plan A represented such a radical departure from the existing scheme that the Minister for Defence, McBride, refused to support it and recommended Plan B. 63 The Minister for Labour and National Service, Holt, agreed that Plan B – incorporating a ballot system of random selection based on month or date of birth – was preferable, but maintained reservations about the discontinuation of National Service training in the Navy and the Air Force, which he believed 'could well have serious effects on the public attitude towards the scheme'. 64

On 4 April 1957, the Prime Minister explained to Parliament that major changes needed to be made to the defence programme. 65 The Government had always stressed the need to build up the reserve of partially trained troops that the National Service training scheme had been designed to produce. Now the Australian people had to be

62 Ibid.
64 NAA: A816, 44/301/220, Cabinet Submission no. 532 – National Service, 18 February 1957.
persuaded that the only appropriate response to a changing strategic situation was the establishment of a highly mobile, hard-hitting strike force, instead of one based upon numerical strength. Menzies claimed that recent 'great technological and scientific developments' had prompted Cabinet, in consultation with the Department of Defence, to reassess the chances of Australia becoming involved in conflict, the likely nature of that conflict, the strategic basis of Australian defence policy, and the composition and equipment of the armed forces.\(^{66}\)

In spite of his earlier stated conviction that economic considerations had to be subordinated to national security, Menzies also announced that defence expenditure in 1957-58 would not exceed the previous financial year's budget allocation of £190 million. The Army's share of £60 million was determined with three main considerations in mind. These were the standardisation of Australian military equipment with that of the United States, a reduction in expenditure on manpower and a commensurate increase in expenditure on equipment, and the release of Regular Army instructors from the task of National Service training.\(^{67}\) On the last point, Menzies elaborated: 'I will not need to tell the honourable members that it needs more than a government decision to expand the regular army. In these days of high competing wages and full employment, the number of recruits for the regular forces is limited. We certainly cannot afford to make an inadequate use of them'.\(^{68}\)

\(^{68}\) CPD, vol. H. of R. 14, 4 April 1957, p. 574.
Nor did Menzies need to tell the Service chiefs. The Army had carried most of the
burden of National Service training while the Australian economy boomed. During a
period of full employment, Service life had not proved very attractive and major
improvements in pay and conditions of service were needed to stimulate recruiting. As
Hugh Smith has observed, a proportion of Army personnel have always been prepared
to tolerate relatively low pay and poor conditions of service, but they are career soldiers
for whom the attraction of Service life overrides other considerations.69 The majority
has tended to follow very closely the trends of the domestic labour market. In Rowell’s
‘country lacking the tradition of a peacetime Regular Army service’, recruiting has
always been most brisk during times of economic downturn and slowest during periods
of economic prosperity.70

Menzies announced that National Service would forthwith be confined to the
Army, and that the annual call-up would proceed on a selective basis limited to 12,000
trainees. Menzies acknowledged that this decision would ‘produce disappointment in
many minds’ and hoped that the changes as a whole would improve the organisation
and enhance the efficiency of the permanent forces.71 The personnel strengths of the
Navy and the Army were to be maintained at 11,000 and 21,000 respectively, and the
Air Force could anticipate a slight increase in its personnel establishment from 15,000
to 16,725 by June 1960. The Prime Minister also announced that the centralisation of
government departments would continue with the relocation from Melbourne to

70 Rowell, Full Circle, p. 165.
Canberra of the Department of Defence and the three Service Headquarters. Menzies knew that these measures were unlikely to satisfy the advocates of universal military training, so he offered the following assurance that the discontinuation of National Service training was not contemplated: ‘We have, quite frankly, disturbing deficiencies on the equipment side. Such, however, have been the immense social advantages of national service training that we have been reluctant to modify that great scheme. I say “modify” because we have never thought of abandoning it!’.

The Sydney Morning Herald described the Government’s new defence plan as ‘a compromise between widely diverging views’, given that the Chiefs of Staff had wanted the Government to abolish the National Service training scheme and to increase defence expenditure. In the light of an attempt by the Federal Treasury to reduce the defence budget by approximately one-third, all that the military leaders could realistically hope for was a share of some £20 million that was expected to be derived from the National Service reduction and the long-awaited completion of the St Marys ammunition filling factory in Sydney. The newspaper also reported that Cabinet had rejected an Army request for a system of National Service based upon a longer period of training, which was intended to overcome the ongoing shortage of volunteers. The editors of the Melbourne Age and the Sydney Morning Herald welcomed the defence review, the latter declaring that ‘National Service has done a great deal for the young men of Australia in “instilling ideals of personal discipline, loyalty and service”’, but at the

74 Sydney Morning Herald, editorial, 5 April 1957.
75 Ibid.
same time arguing that the scheme was no longer useful to defence.\textsuperscript{76}

In Parliament on 1 May 1957, the Minister for Labour and National Service acknowledged that the changes to the National Service training scheme spelt doom for many non-metropolitan CMF units.\textsuperscript{77} Holt noted Cabinet’s decision to confine National Service training to the Army and announced that the annual call-up of 12,000 trainees was to be governed by a birthday ballot system of random selection. The total training obligation of 140 days was retained, but would now comprise 77 days’ continuous training and 21 days’ part-time training in each of the following three years. As for the effect of the reforms on CMF units located throughout regional Australia, Holt was able to offer little comfort to country dwellers, other than to explain that ‘if the national service intake had been cut further, a lot more units would have had to be disbanded. This would have been most unfortunate and regretted by many whose association with country units has been long and devoted’.\textsuperscript{78}

In an effort to avoid the problem of industrial disruption, trade apprentices would not be required to render any part-time training. Men balloted out would still be able to volunteer for National Service training, although Holt doubted that his Department would be inundated with applications. Indeed, the Minister observed that, since the legislation of the provision for voluntarism in 1955, 74 of only 125 volunteers for National Service training had been accepted by the three Services.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{76}Age, editorial, 5 April 1957; Sydney Morning Herald, editorial, 5 April 1957.
Holt resolved to punish more severely youths who attempted to avoid being called up for National Service by failing to register. Cabinet agreed that National Service defaulters should incur a £10 minimum fine and be called up for training regardless of the result of the ballot for which the defaulter was supposed to have registered. Defaulters deserved no sympathy, Holt declared, and should be liable for stiffer penalties because ‘they have neither a proper sense of duty to their country nor a proper respect for their obligations to all those who have’.\textsuperscript{80} It appears that the introduction of harsher prescribed penalties for breaches of the National Service Act was intended to highlight the Government’s renewed determination to administer the scheme fairly, and thereby foster public support after it had receded in the wake of the change to selective military training.

Cabinet’s review of National Service had yielded two options that were designed to improve the efficiency of the scheme. The first was to reduce the size of the annual call-up and increase the duration of training. The second was to maintain the annual call-up at its existing level and introduce a more rigorous training programme.\textsuperscript{81} Ultimately, Cabinet opted for the worst of both worlds when it scaled back the call-up and reduced the intensity of training. Holt claimed that, because the new legislation would allow the Army to select its National Service instructors more carefully, better-trained National Servicemen could be expected.\textsuperscript{82} In practice, the Army was required to supply fewer instructors to train fewer National Servicemen in a shorter period. There is no evidence that better instructors were subsequently posted to National Service training.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
units in response to the changes that were made to the scheme.

In any case, Alan Bird (Labor, Batman) was probably correct when he predicted that: ‘The lack of enthusiasm of the 12,000 drawers of the marbles will offset the increase of enthusiasm on the part of the instructors’.  

For Bird, the decision to reduce the scale of the scheme was sufficient proof that National Service training had failed to improve Australia’s defence: ‘The Government is convinced, in spite of itself, that the scheme has not fulfilled its early promise, because it is cutting down the intake of men for national service to a truly remarkable degree – from 33,000 to 12,000’.

Opposition to the changes emerged from both sides of politics, but for very different reasons. On the one hand, most Labor Party members refused to support any measure that would enable the continuation of National Service training. On the other hand, several Government members argued that they could not countenance the diminution of the scheme to dimensions that they perceived to be farcical. So disillusioned was Sir Wilfrid Kent Hughes that he declared that National Service had proved detrimental to the CMF because the integration of National Servicemen had curbed the enthusiasm of its volunteer members. Leslie Haylen (Labor, Parkes) agreed that the attempt to integrate young and immature National Servicemen and older, more experienced volunteers who had ‘the essential qualities of a soldier’ had harmed the CMF, and added: ‘The military usefulness, therefore, of maintaining an annual intake of 12,000 national servicemen is precisely nil’.

Gordon Bryant (Labor, Wills) claimed that the Government’s defence policy had ‘done little more than cripple the morale of the Army’, and declared: ‘The Government has killed voluntary enlistment in the Australian Regular Army and is now trying to kill the Army itself’.\footnote{CPD, vol. H. of R. 15, 9 May 1957, p. 1274.} Pointing to the decline in the number of CMF volunteers to about 14,000 men, Bryant argued that the CMF had traditionally been, and should remain, the basis of the Australian Army, and warned: ‘The Citizen Military Forces are going downhill fast. The Government has succeeded only in strangling what should have been the basis of the Army in the next war, whether it be global or any other kind’.\footnote{Ibid.} ‘The history of compulsory service in the Australian forces’, Bryant concluded sagely, ‘has not been a happy one’.\footnote{CPD, vol. H. of R. 15, 9 May 1957, p. 1275.}

Before looking forward to the reorganisation of the Army, the Minister for the Army acknowledged the work of National Service instructors and administrative staff:

I pay tribute again to those officers who have gone far beyond the normal scope of their duties in carrying out the work of training these young men. Australia cannot thank them too much for the work that they have done. I know of many cases in which instructors worked themselves into the ground training these young men, purely from a sense of loyalty and duty. They have done a magnificent job.\footnote{CPD, vol. H. of R. 15, 9 May 1957, pp. 1284-85.}

Cramer explained that the National Service training scheme had to make way for the establishment of a 4,200-strong Regular Army Field Force. The plan also provided for a total CMF strength of 50,700 personnel, which represented three divisions at two-thirds’ operational strength, one of which could be deployed overseas within five or six months.
of the outbreak of war. National Service would, however, continue to fill a vital role, Cramer claimed, because: ‘Officers and non-commissioned officers cannot be trained unless they have troops, so it is necessary to have a national service training scheme’. With the Army’s £60 million share of the 1957-58 defence budget of £190 million: ‘It would be impossible to train more than 12,000 and at the same time provide a brigade group. That is all that can be done with the money allocation that has been made.’

The New South Wales Labor Premier, John Joseph ‘Joe’ Cahill, perhaps sensing an opportunity to apply some pressure to the Federal Government, submitted a proposal to make police officers exempt from National Service training. Cahill argued that it was pointless to give police officers National Service training; as members of an essential service, ‘it would only add to the embarrassment of members of the Police Force concerned who, by reason of their occupation, would be precluded from joining the fighting Forces’ should war break out. The Minister for Immigration, Athol Townley, replied:

The changes made recently by the Government in the operation of the national service scheme have not affected its universal character whereby all young men in the prescribed groups must register and are liable to be called up for training. The principal effects of the changes are to reduce the numbers to be called up and to introduce a revised system of selection.

In other words, although the Federal Government was not prepared to make police exempt, Cahill could expect fewer police officers to be called up for National Service

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92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
training. Townley also advised Cahill that in some States, the successful completion of National Service training was a prerequisite for police applicants.\textsuperscript{96} It is likely that many of the 5,261 youths who volunteered for National Service training between 1957 and 1960 would have done so in order to meet police selection criteria.\textsuperscript{97}

The first National Service ballot, in Melbourne on 27 May 1957, was presided over by Frank Timson, the Liberal Member for Higinbotham. From a lottery barrel, the Labor Member for Bendigo, Percy Clarey, drew 74 of 182 marbles to ballot-in registrants who were born in the months from January to June, and then a further 75 of 184 marbles to ballot-in registrants who were born in the months from July to December. Each of the 366 marbles represented one day of a leap year. The first sign of controversy appeared immediately. The editor of the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} described the Government's decision to place a ban on the publication of the dates drawn as 'childish', and noted that the Government's apparent distrust of the nation's youth could erode the public's confidence in the conduct of a lottery that was not entirely transparent.\textsuperscript{98} The Government's decision was, however, a considered one. In April 1957, Holt had advised Cabinet that it would be unwise to permit the publication of the result of the ballot: 'Otherwise the chances are that some would hold back their registration until they knew the "unlucky" dates and that some would not register at all as born on those dates and claim, if detected, misunderstanding of their obligations'.\textsuperscript{99}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
  \item\textsuperscript{97} NAA: MP491/1, 57/1618, Periodic statistics of National Service training volunteers recorded between 31 July 1957 and 30 November 1959.
  \item\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, editorial, 28 May 1957.
  \item\textsuperscript{99} NAA: A816, 44/301/220, Cabinet Submission – Proposed National Service Bill, 4 April 1957.
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Ultimately, problems associated with the re-equipment and the reorganisation of the Army, which culminated in the failed Pentropic Division experiment, hastened the suspension of the National Service training scheme.\textsuperscript{100} Keith Howard has noted that, because the suspension of National Service training was announced late in the last parliamentary session of 1959, debate was forestalled until after the summer recess, by which time the decision had been implemented.\textsuperscript{101} The Minister for Defence, Athol Townley (Liberal, Denison), told Parliament on 26 November 1959 that: ‘The inescapable conclusion has emerged that there must be a major re-organization of the Army to enable it to concentrate on the provision and equipment of the type of forces required by the strategic situation, and therefore some present Army commitments must be reduced.’\textsuperscript{102} Townley explained that this represented the unanimous view of the Chiefs of Staff, which was consistent with contemporary global defence philosophy, and that National Service had been introduced at a time when there was a strong possibility that war would break out. ‘At the present time, however, national service greatly handicaps the development of a more effective Army because of the excessive demands it makes on both man-power and money, without adequate compensatory advantages’, Townley concluded.\textsuperscript{103}

For the Army, the lack of ‘adequate compensatory advantages’ was always a major concern. Throughout the 1950s, the Army’s support for National Service training was understandably qualified. While the Regular Army struggled to maintain an

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\footnote{Grey, \textit{A Military History of Australia}, pp. 221-22. For a detailed account of the Pentropic organisation, see Welburn, \textit{The Development of Australian Army Doctrine 1945-1964}, pp. 44-59.}
\footnote{Howard, ‘Political Benefit, Defence Burden’, p. 180.}
\footnote{\textit{CPD}, vol. H. of R. 25, 26 November 1959, p. 3185.}
\end{footnotesize}
effective system of military training, the provision of more resources ultimately proved to be a false expectation. Consequently, the Army's enthusiasm for National Service training receded as the decade progressed. By 1959, the National Service training scheme was in an advanced state of decline. The Director of Personnel Administration told the Director of Military Training that the increasingly common practice of 'employing National Service trainees in maintenance tasks of little or no real training value should be checked' in an effort to uphold the Government's policy and thereby discourage the Minister for the Army from asking awkward questions about the scheme's progress.¹⁰⁴

The extent of dissatisfaction with the scheme in its final manifestation can be measured by the generally positive reaction to its demise. Indeed, the Age editorial of 27 November 1959 applauded the decision to cease National Service training: 'The abolition of national service training, despite the very good reasons in favour of such a scheme, will cause no regret. It has outlived its usefulness and was absorbing a great deal of money and trained manpower from areas where they could be more usefully employed'.¹⁰⁵ On the same day, the Sydney Morning Herald editorial defended the Government's decision:

National Service, in fact, is a luxury which a country of limited resources, which must perforce operate on a tight defence budget cannot afford. Only political considerations, instanced by the pressures of such groups as the R.S.L., have preserved it so long in the face of the opposition of the Chief of the General Staff and his planning officers. Its demise will for the first time enable the Army to fulfil its proper role.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ NAA: A6059, 65/441/33, Minute, National Service – Corps Training, DPA to DMT, 6 April 1959.
¹⁰⁵ Age, editorial, 27 November 1959.
¹⁰⁶ Sydney Morning Herald, editorial, 27 November 1959.
Dissent was generally low-key. The RSSAILA Federal President, Sir George Holland, likened the £9 million annual saving derived from the suspension of National Service training to the money saved by not insuring a house or a car. The League, Holland insisted, ‘is all for mobility; for highly trained well equipped troops, for compact, hard-hitting forces which can be moved quickly to trouble spots’, and praised the Government for wanting to equip the Services with the latest military hardware.\textsuperscript{107} However, the League was also convinced that National Service training should continue, not only to meet ‘the need for a reservoir of partially trained youths, but also because its abandonment means the scrapping of the training framework at present existing in the Services, and which would be an invaluable aid should the necessity arise for training the intake of large numbers in the event of war’.\textsuperscript{108}

After the RSSAILA Western Australia State Branch hurriedly endorsed a resolution in support of the National President’s statement, the State Secretary, W. Webb, complained about the difficulty he had experienced in trying to gain some publicity.\textsuperscript{109} The National Secretary, Keith Newman replied resignedly:

I am afraid that nobody is going to get very steamed up about our protest on National Service Training. The Opposition policy has always been against N.S.T. and the Government’s decision to drop it is not likely to be made a political matter. The Services themselves are of course delighted that it has gone and most of the editorials that I have read were in favour of abolishing it. Under these circumstances the papers realise very well that there is no likelihood of any controversy being sustained consequently there has been no follow-up publicity.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{107} NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 5, RSL Press Release, G.W. Holland, 27 November 1959.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 5, Letter, W. Webb to K.C. Newman, 3 December 1959.
\textsuperscript{110} NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 5, Letter, Newman to Webb, 7 December 1959.
Therefore, when the RSSAILA 44th Annual Congress reaffirmed its support for National Service and called upon the Federal Government to reintroduce universal military training, it did so in hope rather than expectation.\textsuperscript{111}

The *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial of 30 November 1959 hailed a ‘new and honourable role for the C.M.F.’ after years of ‘muddled governmental thinking’ had created two classes of CMF soldier – the volunteer and the National Serviceman – which, it was alleged, had effectively divided the organisation.\textsuperscript{112} In stark contrast, on the same page appeared a letter from a retired Army officer, S.J. Fox, who predicted that the ‘shameful proposal’ to discontinue National Service would add to the unease felt by people who appreciated the problems of Australia’s defence.\textsuperscript{113} If compulsory military training was needed in the United States, Fox asked, then surely it was needed in Australia, which faced ‘an increasing menace of being swamped by the overpopulated Asian countries’ to the north?\textsuperscript{114} Fox wrote:

Apart from the purely realistic requirements of military necessity, one must reflect and ask how the Australian Government could ever in any future national emergency justify asking for outside aid as we did in World War II, if they so blatantly – shortsightedly – abandon their basic responsibility in the matter of self-defence.\textsuperscript{115}

Population growth in Asia concerned Australians such as F.D.F. Welch, who suggested that Australia should withdraw its support from the Colombo Plan because the provision of economic aid to Asian countries was encouraging over-population, which in turn put

\textsuperscript{111} NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1 MS6609, Box 237, Folder 3825c, Circular no. 128/59, RSSAILA 44th Annual National Congress resolutions, 16 December 1959.
\textsuperscript{112} *Sydney Morning Herald*, editorial, 30 November 1959.
\textsuperscript{113} *Sydney Morning Herald*, letters, 30 November 1959.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
pressure on living space and increased demands for immigration to Australia.\textsuperscript{116} The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Arthur Calwell, remarked wryly: 'It looks as if we’re back to the Brisbane Line'.\textsuperscript{117}

In April 1960, the Minister for Defence, Townley, presented a Cabinet submission that aimed to avoid the administrative problems that were created by the suspension of the National Service training scheme. The provisions of the \textit{National Service Act} did not permit the early discharge of trainees and an amendment was therefore needed to release all National Servicemen from the training obligation. The proposed legislation would enable National Servicemen to continue to serve as volunteers in the CMF if they so desired and would authorise administrative staff to arrange for the wholesale discharge of all other men. Townley noted: 'The use of Army manpower merely to carry out National Service discharge action that would last for a period of more than four years is uneconomical and should be avoided'.\textsuperscript{118} The Army did not object to the loss of its trained reserve. The release of Regular Army personnel from National Service training was undoubtedly considered adequate compensation. Thus, an expedient piece of legislation terminated the service of all National Servicemen on 30 June 1960. Of the 81,800 National Servicemen still serving on that date, 72,000 were in the Army, 7,300 were in the Air Force, and 2,500 were in the Navy.\textsuperscript{119}

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\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, letters, 27 November 1959.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 30 November 1959.
\textsuperscript{118} NAA: A462, 3/1, Cabinet Submission – National Service – Discharge of Trainees Who Have Not Completed Their National Service Obligations, 6 April 1960. Cabinet approved the recommendations of the Submission in Decision no. 755 of 20 April 1960 and the legislation was introduced into Parliament on 11 May 1960.
\textsuperscript{119} NAA: 5799, 69/1951, Explanatory Notes, National Service (Discharge of Trainees) Bill 1960.
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The *Sun News-Pictorial* reported optimistically that, after the suspension of the National Service training scheme, some 4,000 National Servicemen had volunteered to transfer to the CMF rather than be discharged. However, the number was insignificant, and for many CMF units, disbandment was inevitable. An attempt by the Colac Sub-branch of the RSSAILA to save its local Artillery unit reflected the pride that some communities placed in their CMF units. The 60-strong unit contained no Regular Army personnel and boasted the highest proportion of volunteers of all the units and sub-units in the division to which it belonged. Although the Colac Sub-branch argued that the unit could remain operational at little cost, as far as the Government and the Army were concerned, it was but one of six CMF units in Victoria that had to be disbanded due to the cessation of National Service training.

A brief summary of the scheme indicates that it was impressive in terms of scale, but limited in terms of military value. Throughout the duration of the scheme, the three Services inducted 224,866 National Service trainees. Of these, some 196,025 successfully completed their training. The Army carried the overwhelming burden of National Service training and also had the highest trainee attrition rate. Of the 195,647 National Servicemen who passed through its ranks, some 27,600 failed to complete their service obligation. The Air Force called up 22,277 men, of whom 21,315 completed their training, while the Navy successfully trained 6,663 National Servicemen out of a total intake of 6,942. By 31 March 1960, the cost of the National Service training scheme had exceeded £164 million, including £147.9 million spent on maintenance and maintenance.

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120 *Sun News-Pictorial*, 12 May 1960.
121 *Mufti*, May 1960.
£16.39 million invested in capital works.\textsuperscript{122}

The National Service training scheme originally promised to improve the effectiveness of the three Services, and of the Army in particular. The extent to which it did so is difficult to assess because its \textit{raison d'être} was never tested. Arguably, the scheme's most serious deficiency was the absence of a liability for overseas service for National Servicemen in the Army, although again, at no stage in the 1950s was there a need for National Servicemen to serve overseas. The Government was understandably wary of this issue. The Australian people supported National Service training as a means of defending Australia and instilling in young men social values, but a system of military training involving the possible commitment of those men to overseas conflicts was another matter entirely. The Curtin Government's decision to send conscripted men overseas during the Second World War provided no precedent because it was made at a time when there was a prospect of a Japanese invasion of the Australian mainland. After 1945, Australian defence planners always considered an invasion to be only a very remote possibility and thus were able to focus on the Middle East and later South-East Asia. As the following chapters will reveal, the problem was not National Service \textit{per se}, but the kind of National Service scheme that was implemented and the circumstances in which it operated.

Keith Howard has argued that the partial military training in the 1950s of more than 200,000 young men did little to improve Australia's defence and has claimed that the Menzies Government cynically subordinated defence to politics throughout the

\textsuperscript{122} NAA: 5799, 69/1951, National Service (Discharge of Trainees) Bill 1960, Explanatory Notes.
However, this critique tends to overlook the point that public support for National Service training deteriorated after the shift to selective military training in 1954. From that point, the continuation of the scheme was considerably less politically advantageous for the Government.

Other factors affected the development of the Army. For example, John Blaxland has identified an inevitable disparity in military efficiency between the professional Regular Army and the part-time CMF that helps to explain the ascendency of the former at the expense of the latter. Alan Ryan, meanwhile, attributes the rise of the Regular Army and the decline of the CMF more to the nature of the conflicts in which Australia became involved after 1945:

The postwar CMF was structured to provide forces for conflicts similar to the two World Wars. What actually occurred was a succession of limited wars and counterinsurgency operations. In those circumstances the CMF rapidly lost relevance whilst the regular army won the laurels of almost continual operational experience.

This effect and others, such as financial constraints, aside, for many Australians, National Service training was as much a social initiative as a defence policy and they saw nothing wrong in supporting it as such. The social benefits ascribed to National Service training ranged from the promotion of national health and fitness to the development of the character of individuals through discipline, which, in turn, delivered a benefit to the whole community. On an even higher level, many people believed that

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124 Blaxland, Organising an Army, pp. 30-62.
125 Alan Ryan, ‘Back to the Future: the One-Army Concept in a Time of Change’, in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds), A Century of Service: 100 years of the Australian Army, Army History Unit, Canberra, 2001, p. 156.
National Service training could hasten the assimilation of migrants, although few people recognised any potential for the social integration of Aborigines.

In 1951, a system of universal military training was introduced to help prepare Australia for war in three years. At the time, defence planners agreed that Australia was not in any immediate danger of attack and that the decisive battles of the future would be fought in Europe and the Middle East. Australia’s primary military responsibility when National Service training began was to help Britain to prevent the Soviet Union from seizing control of the Suez Canal and the oil fields of the Middle East. It is reasonable to conclude that universal military training was useful in preparing Australia to meet that commitment. However, in the light of Australia’s continuing strategic reorientation to South-East Asia, and despite the change in 1954 to selective military training, the efficacy of the scheme becomes more questionable.

David Lee has written that one of the reasons that Menzies warned that Australia had to prepare for war in three years was to demonstrate to Great Britain and to the United States Australia’s preparedness to accept a role in the Western anti-communist alliance, thereby enhancing Australia’s security.\textsuperscript{126} By the end of the 1950s, the efforts of the Department of External Affairs had improved Australia’s security situation through the conclusion of a series of treaties and alliances, principally ANZUS, SEATO, and the Australia-New Zealand-Malaysia security pact (ANZAM). However, in terms of defence expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product, Australia remained far behind Britain and the United States and trailed other medium powers such

\textsuperscript{126} Lee, \textit{Search for Security}, pp. 115-16.
as Canada. Consequently, when the Minister for Defence visited Washington in 1957 to investigate the standardisation of Australian Army equipment with that of the US Army, the American reception was reportedly lukewarm.\(^\text{127}\)

When Australia began to prepare for war in three years, much of the defence planning that had occurred since 1945 was discarded. Initially, however, the National Service training scheme was the only visible sign of a more vigorous Australia defence policy. The Australian public’s strong support for universal military training doubtless made it easier for the Government to base the National Service training scheme upon the principle of universal service; but thereafter, the Government was committed to a policy that was difficult to abandon, and so much more so after insisting that the best way to establish a robust defence was through universal military training.

The National Service training scheme established a reserve of partially trained troops as it was designed to do. However, in the light of the changing strategic situation, the value of that reserve is questionable. Australia’s involvement in the Korean War gave an early indication of the need to align Australian defence plans with the emerging strategic situation. The focus of defence planners switched to South-East Asia and the Army had to adapt by reorganising and redeveloping its operational techniques. The National Service training scheme lost its relevance, but the Government had invested too much, both financially and politically, to abandon it; for example, capital works expenditure between 1950-51 and 1954-55 exceeded £16 million.\(^\text{128}\) Five years only of National Service training would have represented a poor return on this outlay. By 1959,

\(^{127}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 1957.

however, the suspension of National Service training was widely accepted; selectivity had undermined the scheme’s potential to deliver social benefits and its military value had declined as Australia’s strategic reorientation towards South-East Asia continued.

Arguably, the National Service training scheme was unsuited to the international environment of the 1950s and could not keep pace with Australia’s changing strategic situation. The compromise that the Government struck between National Service, the modernisation of the Services, and Australia’s strategic reorientation, satisfied neither the Regular Army, nor the CMF, nor the Australian people. Public support for universal military training continued after the National Service training scheme was made more selective in 1957, prompting the Government to maintain the possibility of a reversion to universal military training. Ultimately, however, Australia’s strategic situation changed markedly during the 1950s, and the military commitments to Malaya and Korea were, in themselves, arguments against the continuation of the National Service training scheme.
CHAPTER FIVE

Defence imperatives and National Service

Limited or local wars are what we must expect, and it is against this kind of strategic background that we make our plans, and it is on this basis that our defence programming and policy rest.\(^1\)

Athol Townley, Minister for Defence, 15 March 1962.

This chapter and the next will establish the connection that existed between the National Service training scheme that was suspended in 1960 and the National Service scheme that commenced in 1965. In terms of both administration and public support, the former paved the way for the latter. During the 1950s, the Federal Government attempted to shore up public support by ensuring that the National Service training scheme was administered fairly. Throughout the decade, the strategic reorientation from the Middle East to South-East Asia continued until Australia became fully enmeshed in the region through a series of events that culminated in a military commitment to South Vietnam. Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War subsequently made the equitable administration of the National Service scheme crucial to the Government’s retention of public support.

From the early 1960s, the destabilising influences in South-East Asia of China and Indonesia, the start of Britain's withdrawal from the region, and pressure from the United States, were good reasons for Australia to accept greater responsibility for its own defence and for the security of the Asia-Pacific region. The Federal Government's policy of forward defence rested upon the acceptance of involvement in limited regional conflicts as a means of preventing the spread of communism. Subsequent gradual increases in the defence programme involved a continued shift in emphasis from the CMF to the Regular Army and the reintroduction of National Service.

In late 1961, Menzies declared that, after more than a decade of what he described as 'stable, sensible and responsible government', Australia was more secure than ever: 'We have powerful friends. And in a world in which the threat and terror of force are to be observed day by day, the most important thing for a small country is to have powerful friends who stand by it, and by whom it stands'. Despite these reassuring words, it seems that many Australians were not prepared to entrust their national security to intangible strategic alliances. During the early 1960s, the instability of the international environment generally, and the volatility of the South-East Asian region in particular, made planning Australia's defence a difficult business. The Australian people supported a familiar and concrete solution: a Gallup poll conducted in 1961 found that almost three-quarters of respondents were in favour of the reintroduction of some kind of system of compulsory military training.3

In November 1964, some 71 per cent of respondents to a Gallup poll approved of the Federal Government's plan to register for National Service all 20-year-old men and to call up 7,000 annually for two years' service, with a liability for overseas service. Remarkably, the highly selective nature of the scheme and the liability for overseas service that it contained did not deter public support. Within the context of Australia's strategic situation, this chapter will investigate the reasons for the public's acceptance of the National Service scheme.

A press report that focuses on a former senior military officer with a very critical view of the state of the nation's defence can usually be expected to generate controversy, and more so when the officer in question is himself a controversial figure. So it proved in February 1962, when the commander of the 8th Division, the 2nd AIF at the time of the fall of Singapore to Japanese forces twenty years earlier, retired Lieutenant-General Gordon Bennett, made the unsettling claim that Australia 'would not last 10 minutes' if attacked by an Asian power. The Asian power to which Bennett referred was Indonesia and his concern was expressed in a call for the immediate reintroduction of National Service training, for armour to be sent from Victoria to the Northern Territory, and for Australia to obtain atomic weapons from either Britain or the United States. Bennett's warning that communism might gain the ascendancy in Indonesia and threaten Australia must have seemed credible at a time of great uncertainty and instability in world affairs.

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5 Herald, 4 February 1962.
6 Ibid.
In the following month, a staunch supporter of Bennett, Sir Wilfrid Kent Hughes, restarted the National Service debate in Federal Parliament. As a response to what he described as ‘the increasing pressure of Communist infiltration, subversion and guerilla aggression in South-east Asia’, Kent Hughes called upon the Government to introduce a system of National Service based upon at least twelve months’ full-time service. Kent Hughes realised that such a scheme would require the provision of compensatory rehabilitation benefits for National Servicemen similar to those already available to Regular Army volunteers, and conceded that this would add considerably to the cost of defence.

Kent Hughes described the £200 million ceiling on Australia’s annual defence budget as a ‘mythical’ figure, and ventured that there was ‘something mysterious’ about the Government’s apparent inability to exceed it. Kent Hughes contradicted the Prime Minister when he argued that Australia was in much greater danger than it had been a decade earlier. National Service was needed to maintain parity between the Regular Army and the CMF, according to Kent Hughes, and the system of voluntary enlistment had failed and its failure had prevented the achievement of the necessary state of operational readiness. However, a reversion to the previous National Service scheme was not appropriate, he argued, because: ‘Partly-trained men are of no use in this day and age’.

Labor’s Gordon Bryant – a recently retired CMF officer – chose to ignore the marked shift that had occurred in Australia’s strategic situation when he claimed that

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the Government’s decision in 1959 to suspend National Service training represented an admission of failure. Bryant reckoned that Australia, with a population of approximately ten million, had the potential to mobilise a force of about one million troops, but conceded that this was an insignificant number compared with the size of the forces that more populous countries could assemble. As nothing could be done about this imbalance, the only appropriate course of action was to try ‘to produce a system under which, because of the appeal of the Services and their feeling of national duty, the young men of Australia will join the Services in such numbers that they will adequately fill the war establishment of the defence forces’.10 A general improvement in Army pay and conditions of service was an alternative to the reintroduction of compulsory military training that, although suggested by a member of the Opposition, would certainly have appealed to those Government members who were unenthusiastic about the reintroduction of National Service.

The Minister for Defence, Townley, agreed with Kent Hughes about the growing threat of communism in South-East Asia but rejected his proposal for the reintroduction of National Service. Townley observed that, when the National Service training scheme was planned in 1950, there was a much greater likelihood of another world war. The outbreak of war in Korea had highlighted the fragility of peace. Because the collective security arrangements of SEATO and the promise of US protection under ANZUS had yet to be negotiated, the Federal Government was obligated to expand the armed forces.11

Townley’s recollection of the strategic situation that prevailed in the early 1950s diverged from the original arguments that effectively ruled out any possibility of an invasion of Australia and instead justified the introduction of National Service training in terms of Australia’s Middle East commitment. Nevertheless, his main point was not lost: the danger of a third world war had receded during the 1950s, and during the 1960s, there was a much greater likelihood that Australia would have to commit forces to numerous small-scale South-East Asian conflicts in the ongoing fight against communism.\(^{12}\)

In January 1962, the Defence Committee noted that Australia’s strategic situation had deteriorated since 1958, which had justified an expansion of the defence programme. The Defence Committee’s report was consistent with a Cabinet submission by the Minister for External Affairs, Garfield Barwick, on 13 April 1962, in which he described a critical threat of a communist takeover of South Vietnam and Thailand and expressed similar concern about Laos, Cambodia, Malaya, Singapore, Pakistan and the Philippines.\(^{13}\) According to the Defence Committee, the susceptibility of these countries to communism constituted a threat to Australia’s strategic interests and national security. The need to counter the hostile activities of China and Indonesia therefore demanded an increase in Australia’s 1960-61 total contribution to SEATO and the Colombo Plan of £2,495,125, which was admittedly meagre, representing less than one per cent of the United States effort. As stated in the submission:

\(^{12}\) NAA: A4940, C3640, Cabinet Submission no. 552 – Australia’s Strategic Position, 6 February 1963.

\(^{13}\) NAA: A4940, C4642, Cabinet Submission no. 159 – Australian Participation in South-East Asia, 13 April 1962.
It is clearly desirable that the United States should be encouraged to take action to support Vietnam and should not have any justified grievance that its allies are not pulling their weight. Encouragement of United States interest and commitment in the mainland countries of South-east Asia has long been a major objective of Australian policy.\textsuperscript{14}

The Australian aid programme for South Vietnam was designed to fortify villages against communist insurgency and involved the provision of commodities such as barbed wire, corrugated iron, electricity generators, communications equipment, and medical supplies. Thailand, Pakistan, and the Philippines were also aid recipients and Australia was prepared to provide military and technical training to SEATO countries, to fund liaison visits of senior officers from SEATO forces, and to assist in establishing and maintaining SEATO projects.\textsuperscript{15} During the early 1960s, Australia’s policy of forward defence emphasised the provision of economic instead of military aid to countries vulnerable to communism. This situation naturally displeased those people who were convinced that Australia’s defence should be based upon a military effort aimed at guaranteeing the protection of the Australian mainland and territories. The deployment, in August 1962, of 30 military instructors who made up the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) marked the beginning of what would develop into a decade-long military involvement in that country.\textsuperscript{16}

The National Executive of the RSSAILA argued that Australia’s defence measures were inadequate for a country that, while facing a growing threat from communism itself, was becoming increasingly isolated from its allies since the start of

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
Britain's withdrawal from the region. The National Executive discovered that, of Australia's principal allies, New Zealand was the only country with lower per capita annual defence expenditure and a smaller proportion of the male labour workforce enlisted in the armed forces. The state of Australia's defence was criticised as 'based on a push-button war with little regard for manpower reserves'.

The National Executive presented a three-point defence plan, complete with costings, which involved first, an extension of cadet training to all secondary schools capable of forming a platoon: an initiative that would cost a little over £1.5 million annually. Second, a fifty per cent increase in the annual CMF allocation of £4 million that would facilitate the establishment of CMF units in towns where at least 25 active members could be enlisted: it was suggested that recruiting could be stimulated by a number of measures that included extensive publicity, the provision of leave from civilian employment for camp attendance, the exemption of CMF pay from income tax, and the establishment of interesting training programmes. Third, the reintroduction of the National Service training scheme that had been suspended two years earlier: a recommended increase in the call-up from 12,000 to 15,000 trainees was estimated to cost between £12 million and £13 million annually.

The RSSAILA later warned the Federal Government about the instability of the South-East Asian region and the need to prepare for a defence emergency. The League

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17 Mufti, June 1962.
18 Ibid. See also Appendix C Table 1: Annual per capita defence expenditure and percentage of male labour force enlisted in the Services by country in 1962.
19 Ibid. Significantly, the plan did not include a call for the return of universal compulsory military training.
worried about the brittleness of the eight CMF battle groups that were expected to support the battalion in Malaya and the two Regular Army battle groups in Australia. The National Executive renewed its call for the reintroduction of National Service, insisting that ‘in these uncertain times it is essential that this country faces the need for a reasonable reserve of trained and semi-trained man-power’.20

On 24 October 1962, Townley introduced into Parliament a Bill for a new three years defence programme that maintained the emphasis on the mobility of the fighting forces and featured graduated annual increases in the defence budget to £212.7 million in 1962-63, £218 million in 1963-64, and £220 million in 1964-65.21 Townley explained that the Government had listened to many arguments about the most appropriate level of defence expenditure and concluded that the uncertain state of international affairs warranted an expansion of its policy of ‘unceasing and effective defence preparedness’.22 Townley acknowledged the letters and the resolutions that he had received from interested individuals and organisations, but added tersely: ‘It should be remembered, however, that they do not have the advantage of the intelligence information which is available to the Government through its military advisers’.23 Undeterred, the National President of the RSSAILA, Sir Arthur Lee, subsequently described the new defence measures as ‘inadequate’ and a ‘cause for considerable disappointment’.24

20 Mufti, September 1962.
24 Mufti, November 1962.

200
In early 1963, the Defence Committee identified a significant disadvantage in Australia’s strategic alignment. Australia was following a strategy of forward defence through its participation in collective defence arrangements that contributed to the security of those South-East Asian countries that were considered most at risk of communist takeover. In so doing, Australia attracted not only the support of powerful democracies, but also the inimical attention of powerful communist regimes. The Defence Committee believed that the Soviet Union threatened Australia only indirectly through its provision of military, economic, and technological assistance to the communist states of China and North Vietnam and to Indonesia. Although deemed by the Defence Committee to be only an indirect threat to Australia also, China appeared to present the greatest danger to regional stability because of its border war with India and its sponsorship of communist movements throughout South-East Asia.25

In addition to the ongoing threat of communist expansionism, Indonesia’s territorial ambitions, which were fuelled by a mixture of ultra-nationalism and anti-colonialism, presented a particularly awkward problem for Australian defence planners to deal with. ‘Indonesia’s growth as a military power, her declared opposition to the Malaysian Federation, her hostility to colonial regimes, and her use of military power in support of diplomatic aims’ were all causes for Australian concern.26 In 1962, Indonesian forces attempted to seize West New Guinea and later in the same year on the island of Borneo launched a concerted attempt to break up the Federation of Malaysia. Robert O’Neill has noted that ‘Confrontation’ helped to raise the level of public

26 Ibid.
awareness of defence in Australia in the early 1960s. 27 The Defence Committee interpreted Indonesia’s actions as a significant threat to regional stability, and therefore to Australian security. 28

Australia had recently acceded to pressure from the United States for a greater contribution to the defence of South-East Asia. The Defence Committee recommended a further general increase in the scale of the defence programme that would facilitate an effective contribution to the security of South-East Asia and deter Indonesia from continuing its confrontation of Malaya. For Australia, an unfortunate consequence of Indonesia’s eventual takeover of West New Guinea was the creation of a shared border with eastern New Guinea. 29

Although a resort to open aggression by Indonesia was considered unlikely while the ANZUS treaty applied to the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, the Defence Committee was convinced that the development of Australia’s armed forces was necessary in order to deter an attempted Indonesian takeover through subversion. The Defence Committee noted that Indonesia could avoid outright war with Australia and the United States by employing techniques ‘such as support for local insurgency and anti-government cults, subversion, infiltration and the provision of “volunteers” in the expectation of forcing a political settlement in her favour’. 30 In the short term, Australia could expect Indonesia to pursue a policy of brinkmanship and it was estimated that the

28 For a detailed explanation of the West New Guinea dispute and Indonesia’s strategy of Confrontation see Dennis and Grey, Emergency and Confrontation, Chapter 10.
29 NAA: A4940, C3640, Defence Committee Report, Australia’s Strategic Position, 4 February 1963.
30 Ibid.
expansion of the Australian armed forces to a level adequate to constitute a deterrent would to take between three and five years to accomplish.

The Defence Committee concentrated on the pivotal role of the United States in ANZUS and SEATO and the circumstances in which these security agreements might be invoked in relation to eastern New Guinea and elsewhere. It was clear that the workability of collective security depended largely upon Australia meeting the American expectation of a military contribution to the South-East Asian region ‘commensurate with our growing resources and our direct stake in the outcome’. The United States demanded the legitimacy that Australian support gave to its pursuit of political and military objectives in South-East Asia, but Australia could not assume that the United States would provide reciprocal support. Therefore, Australia had to accept a greater share of the defence burden in South-East Asia and could reasonably anticipate an even greater weight of responsibility in the wake of Britain’s impending withdrawal from the region.

Australia had already begun to respond to this challenge. A study of the British presence in South Asia and South-East Asia by the Department of External Affairs acknowledged Australia’s defence dependency on the United States but also identified a need to contribute to the peace-keeping capability of the United Nations and to develop mutually beneficial relationships with Asian countries. The Defence Committee assessed China and Indonesia as threats that warranted immediate action:

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31 Ibid.
The present situation is full of uncertainties and as it takes three to five years to accomplish a substantial development in our defence forces, it would seem therefore prudent to take the more pessimistic assumption as a basis for defence planning, as the situation will most likely get worse, before it gets better.\textsuperscript{33}

Another problem that demanded attention was the method of defence allocation whereby the recommendations of the Minister for Defence were presented within strict financial constraints predetermined by Cabinet. This situation had created serious divisions between the three Services as they were brought into direct competition for funding.\textsuperscript{34}

Cabinet alleviated the pressure to some extent when it accepted that an increase in the scale of the defence programme was necessary and invited the Minister for Defence to examine suggestions for the provision of equipment and the expansion of the armed forces. Cabinet reaffirmed its determination to ensure the security of the Australian mainland and of eastern New Guinea by contributing to the defence of South-East Asia. Cabinet also agreed to maintain its support for the Federation of Malaysia, despite the obvious element of risk involved in relations with Indonesia.\textsuperscript{35}

Townley presented a Cabinet submission on 25 March 1963 after the Chiefs of Staff outlined the important defence projects that had been suspended and assessed the potential of the Services to realise ahead of schedule the objectives of the defence programme. Townley recommended personnel and equipment increases for the Army

\textsuperscript{33} NAA: A4940, C3640, Notes on Cabinet Submission no. 552 – Australia’s Strategic Position, 28 February 1963.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35} NAA: A4940, C3640, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 675, Submission no. 552 – Australia’s Strategic Position, 5 March 1963.
based upon the three years programme that was introduced in October 1962. These included an increase in the Regular Army personnel establishment from 24,500 to 28,000 to be achieved no later than 1967 and the recruitment of 5,000 more personnel as quickly as possible thereafter. Townley also recommended an increase in the CMF establishment from 32,500 to 35,000 personnel. Beyond an initial increase to £15.7 million in 1963-64, a one hundred per cent increase in the £10 million annual allocation for Army equipment was also sought. Townley had authorised an expanded recruiting campaign but rejected the Service chiefs’ claim that improved pay was needed to stimulate recruiting.36

Cabinet’s approval of an increase in the personnel strength of the Army was a straightforward decision. Problematic was the realisation of recruiting targets, which were influenced by ‘such factors as the number of young men reaching enlistment age, the state of the economy, the national attitude towards a strengthening of our defences, and pay and conditions of service’.37 Cabinet recognised that Australia’s population growth through immigration and natural increase was insufficient to create a larger pool of labour from which more recruits could be drawn and conceded that the plan to expand the Army was too ambitious and unlikely to succeed. Therefore, National Service once again appeared as an alternative to a continued reliance on the system of voluntary enlistment; but the scheme that the Chiefs of Staff had in mind was quite unlike the one that had operated during the 1950s.38

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
The Army envisaged a highly selective National Service scheme based upon a minimum of two years' full-time service and including a liability for overseas service. Townley was understandably reluctant to recommend such a scheme and observed: 'By employing National Service to solve a general manpower problem we would destroy much of the operational potential of the Field Force which has been developed in recent years'. Thus, the 'general manpower problem' to which the Minister for Defence referred was no closer to being solved. Advocacy by the Chiefs of Staff of National Service as a means of expanding the Regular Army is significant because it reflects an acceptance of the likelihood that future military commitments would not involve the CMF.

Although Townley's Cabinet submission provided for the possibility of an eventual increase in the strength of the CMF from 35,000 to 40,000 personnel between 1967 and 1972, the recruiting situation indicated strongly that the achievement of such an ambitious objective was highly improbable. After briefly exceeding a strength of 30,000 personnel, CMF numbers fell to just 27,410 between June 1962 and January 1963. In the light of this alarming reversal, even the more modest targeted increase from 32,500 to 35,000 personnel seemed unlikely to succeed. Townley observed that, whilst it was difficult to establish the precise reasons for the decline in CMF strength, factors such as 'domestic circumstances, the counter-attractions of civil recreation, and lack of co-operation on the part of employers' needed to be addressed. Townley's assertion

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39 Ibid.
40 For a comprehensive account of the 1960s Regular Army ascendancy and decline of the CMF see McCarthy, The Once and Future Army, chapters 5 and 6.
that the ‘expansion of the C.M.F. must be considered in relation to the strength of the Regular Army which has to provide cadres for C.M.F. units’ reflects the greater importance that the Army and the Federal Government had come to attach to the full-time force.42

During the early 1960s, arguments in favour of a resumption of National Service were quite common, although some sounded less like a call to arms and more like a mean-spirited denigration of Australian youth. For example, in March 1963, an Air Force Warrant Officer, John Rees, claimed that National Service training would put an end to the ‘violence, vandalism and larrikinism resulting from packs of youths roaming the metropolitan areas and throughout the large towns’.43 Rees proposed military training of two years’ duration for all males aged from 16 to 22 years and predicted:

We would find that the present unhealthy state of affairs would practically vanish overnight, and after two years of very firm military discipline (pre-war standard) there would come to exist in all communities, tens of thousands of young men with self respect and an appreciation for the general amenities of life in the more populated areas of our Continent.44

Rees’ vision included the establishment of military training camps throughout the remote north and the formation of labour units that would construct roads, lay railway lines, and dig reservoirs to encourage the settlement of the interior. Clearly, a plan of such magnitude would have placed an enormous strain on the Army, but Rees was adamant that ‘the uniform must be accepted and respected in all communities as the symbol of good citizenship, and not regarded with smug contempt by people, who

42 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
enjoying the privileges of freedom, deplore and begrudge defence expenditure of tax monies for the protection of the most priceless of all heritages – this – our fair land, AUSTRALIA’. 45

This was followed by a representation to the Minister for Defence by the State Secretary of the Country Women’s Association of Tasmania, Elizabeth Perkins, who enthused about the way that National Service training in the 1950s had ‘straightened out the backbone of the trainees, taught them a sound basic background of military life, discipline, use of weapons and organised team work, and enabled them to establish lasting and valuable friendships’. 46 The problems of ‘vandalism, mob action, car smashes and the like’ could be solved, Perkins argued, by introducing a system of selective service and providing additional training to those youths ‘who failed to devote their energies fairly to these opportunities’. 47 The Federal President of the Victorian Division of the Housewives’ Association, B.G. Kelly, went a step further, calling upon Townley to implement a National Service training scheme for both young men and young women. 48

Although the RSSAILA had come to prefer selective military training to universal military training, support for the latter remained strong among some returned servicemen, such as Harry Reidy, who demanded to know why the young men of Australia were being denied the ‘dignity’ of performing National Service. Reidy argued that the social benefits of National Service training had been proven during the previous

45 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
decade: ‘Some came in truculent and departed peaceful, some came in arrogant and went out with a few less feathers; but in the main, all left their period of training potentially men with a brand new attitude towards life. Surely this is as nationally important as providing homes, pills, and sops to the voter’. Another League member agreed. ‘National training makes men out of boys’, Leslie J. Hicks declared: ‘The present stupid cults of guitar strumming, long haired, pointed shoes, and of spindly-legged misfits hunting in packs, is a disgrace to Australia, and an indictment against the Government’.50

In February 1964, the RSSAILA National President, Lee, parried a complaint made by the Chief of the General Staff, Sir Ragnar Garrett, about the League’s alleged interference in defence planning. Lee highlighted the aspects of defence planning about which both parties agreed. The CGS and the League both accepted that Australia needed to establish a divisional strength Regular Army, and that the introduction of a system of compulsory military training was probably necessary in order to achieve this objective. Other common ground included the expansion of the Pacific Islands Regiment from one to three battalions, and the maintenance of the CMF, including the provision of leave from civilian employment for CMF soldiers to promote attendance at annual camps. Lee insisted that the main concern of the League was simply to convince the Federal Government that a general increase in defence expenditure was necessary. The allocation of the extra funding to specific defence projects, Lee insisted, remained the exclusive business of the nation’s military leaders. Therefore, Lee argued, expressions

49 Mufti, January 1964.
50 Mufti, February 1964.
of support for compulsory military training were not to be construed as interference in defence planning.51

Also in February 1964, Dr T.B. Millar from the Australian National University argued that, because Australia’s security was not underwritten by the United States or Great Britain, Australians were ‘primarily and ultimately’ responsible for their own defence.52 Millar supposed that China would continue to support communist movements throughout South-East Asia and expected Indonesia to maintain its opposition to Malaysia and to remain a threat to eastern New Guinea. Whilst neither China nor Indonesia was yet capable of attacking Australia, Millar warned that either or both of them could become so within a few years. Therefore, by helping to defend countries such as South Vietnam and Thailand from Chinese-sponsored communism and Malaysia and eastern New Guinea from Indonesian hegemony, Australia would be contributing to its own defence. Millar estimated that in order to do so, the operational capacity of the Army would have to be doubled and suggested that a system of compulsory military training might need to be introduced. Whilst Millar conceded that selective National Service was political dynamite, he added that, ‘even dynamite does not explode if handled carefully’.53

The following month, the Chief of the General Staff insisted that only the military requirements of the strategic situation should determine the introduction and scope of any selective military training scheme. Calls for the introduction of National Service

51 Mufti, February 1964.
53 Ibid.
based upon remote threats to the Australian mainland and territories or a desire to produce good citizens were to be ignored. The CGS considered National Service only in terms of its potential to make up the difference between the existing Regular Army strength of 22,600 troops and the approved personnel establishment of 33,000. After outlining the composition of the Army and the strategic environment in which it was operating, the CGS considered the merits of selective National Service based upon two years' full-time service.\textsuperscript{54}

A period of two years was recommended as the minimum length of service needed to ensure the viability of the scheme: approximately six months' basic and corps training and a minimum of twelve months' effective service in a unit was considered feasible, while pre-embarkation leave, movement and acclimatisation, return to Australia and discharge would occupy the remaining time. A liability for overseas service was also considered crucial to the operational efficiency of the Army, which could afford neither the time nor the cost of having to replace non-volunteers with volunteers for overseas service. Other National Service-related problems included the constant turnover of personnel that would result from the bi-annual call-up cycle and the general decline in the average age and maturity of troops that would be caused by an influx of 20-year-old National Servicemen.\textsuperscript{55}

The 20-year-old age group was selected for its greater maturity compared with the 18-year-olds called up under the previous scheme. The call-up of 20-year-olds would also avoid the problem of the age limits that prevented 18-year-olds from serving

\textsuperscript{54} NAA: A1945, 164/1/6, Army Report on Selective Service, 19 March 1964.  
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
outside Australia and 19-year-olds from entering operational areas. Men aged 20 years were also preferred for their greater likelihood of having completed educational courses and apprenticeships and of having gained work experience that would benefit the Army during their service and make their eventual return to civilian life easier. It was logical that deferment should be made available to university students and trade apprentices so as to avoid any interruption of their studies and indentures: given the selective nature of the scheme and the advantages of calling up qualified and mature men, the Army could afford to be patient. 56

Under the proposed scheme, after completing their two years' full-time service, National Servicemen would transfer to the Inactive List for a period of three years, during which they would be liable for call-up to either the Regular Army or the CMF in the event of a defence emergency. Alternatively, National Servicemen would be eligible to volunteer to join the Emergency Reserve, which would involve the payment of a bounty in return for the completion of two weeks' annual training. The Reserve initiative minimised the problem of mixing volunteers and National Servicemen in the CMF, at least until mobilisation. However, National Service carried certain detrimental effects, including 'a very adverse impact on the CMF with a consequent drop in morale and strength'. 57 The marginalisation of CMF units by a Regular Army Field Force supplemented by National Service could be expected to make the CMF appear obsolete and trigger a downturn in the rate of voluntary enlistment. In this way, National Service would drive a wedge between the Regular Army and the CMF and destroy the so-called

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.

212
The Chief of the General Staff outlined the development over two years of a 53,000-strong Regular Army, which involved the call-up of approximately 16,000 young men each year. The implementation of this proposal would require an extra 1,800 full-time commissioned officers and render the Regular Army Field Force ineffective until the scheme became fully operational. Such a situation was plainly unacceptable and deeper consideration was given to the establishment of the 33,000-strong Regular Army that Cabinet had approved in May 1963. Allowing for wastage, this involved a bi-annual call-up of 3,250 men, which represented only seven per cent of the approximately 90,000 men who were due to turn 20 in 1964. Such a scheme would create vacancies for 1,150 full-time commissioned officers below the rank of Colonel and only temporarily reduce the effectiveness of the Regular Army Field Force. It was considered that the advantages of having a full personnel establishment and the introduction of a short service commission scheme for National Servicemen would eventually overcome these problems.\textsuperscript{59}

Despite having established its utility in relation to the expansion of the Regular Army, National Service was still considered less than ideal. The CGS declared: ‘In the first instance every endeavour must be made to meet this objective by voluntary enlistments’, and from the Army’s point of view, the best way to stimulate recruiting was through a general improvement in pay and conditions of service.\textsuperscript{60} The Minister for

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
the Army, Alexander Forbes, was prepared to accept this advice. However, in the light
of the estimated delay of one year between a Cabinet decision to introduce a selective
service scheme and the first intake, Forbes considered it prudent to initiate preliminary
preparations for the introduction of National Service in anticipation of a deterioration in
the strategic environment, or should improvements to conditions of service fail to attract
volunteers in sufficient numbers. Forbes explained to the Minister for Defence, Paul
Hasluck, why he wanted to defer a final decision on National Service:

From a purely political point of view I have my doubts about the value of
introducing such a highly selective scheme which produced an Army of only
33,000. My impression is that the expectations of those who believe a
National Service scheme to be the answer to our current difficulties are much
greater. In these circumstances, to put it bluntly, we take the risk of being
severely criticized by both the anti-conscriptionists and those in favour of
conscription.  

When Hasluck’s successor, Western Australian Senator Shane Paltridge,
submitted the Army report to Cabinet on 19 May 1964, he too recommended against the
immediate introduction of a selective National Service scheme. Paltridge and the Chiefs
of Staff agreed that the Regular Army was capable of carrying out its operational tasks,
and that the introduction of National Service would only be appropriate in the event of a
defence emergency. Although Paltridge doubted that the Regular Army would achieve
its target strength of 33,000 personnel without resorting to National Service, he first
wanted to see the extent to which an improvement in pay and conditions of service
stimulated voluntary enlistment.

Ibid.
NAA: A1945, 164/1/6, Cabinet Submission no. 216 – Army Strength and Organization, 19 May 1964.
The Federal Government was clearly reluctant to resort to National Service. Expediency prompted Paltridge to recommend that preparations be made for the introduction of a selective National Service scheme in the event of the failure of the system of voluntary enlistment to fill the approved Regular Army personnel establishment.64 Forbes later set out the three stages of implementation. The first stage involved drafting the regulations needed to enact the scheme and amending the National Service Act; the second stage involved the establishment of the administrative machinery that the Department of Labour and National Service would need to conduct the registration and the ballot. The third stage involved the provision of indefinite deferment to men balloted out, married men, and lawfully recognised conscientious objectors, temporary deferment to students and apprentices, and the arrangement of interviews and medical examinations for men balloted in, their call up, reception and allocation to training units.65

The Age pointed out that, among Australia’s closest allies, universal and selective compulsory military training schemes had become less common. Canada relied upon the system of voluntary enlistment, as did Britain since ending its long-running selective service scheme in 1962. In the United States, the Army draft system was under review, while New Zealand persisted with a military training scheme that resembled the one Australia suspended in 1960. The Age claimed to understand the Federal Government’s reluctance to resort to either short-term universal military training, which during the 1950s had paid a poor return of military efficiency on a large financial investment, or

64 Ibid.
65 NAA: A1945, 164/1/6, Memorandum, Forbes to S.D. Paltridge, 19 August 1964.
long-term universal military training, which would deprive the national economy of
labour at a time of full employment. The Age also disliked the inherent unfairness of
selective military training of any duration and the unwieldy bureaucratic machinery
needed to administer it, and urged a continued reliance on the system of voluntary
enlistment.66

It is almost ironic, then, that the Age had earlier considered the rapidly
deteriorating situation in South Vietnam and favoured a positive response to an appeal
by the United States to ‘internationalise’ the three-year conflict with Viet Cong guerillas
from the communist north.67 The Age observed that, despite the commitment of 15,000
American troops, ‘it may not be possible to “win” the war in Vietnam. All that can be
hoped is that an improvement in the war would provide a better basis for a negotiated
settlement’.68 Nevertheless, the Age continued: ‘It is in Australia’s interest for America
to commit itself to the containment of the Communist thrust in Vietnam, so we must be
prepared to support her’.69

When the United States Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, met the Minister for
External Affairs, Hasluck, in Washington on 16 July 1964, he explained that the United
States wanted more countries “showing their flags” in South Vietnam.70 Rusk added
that the work of the AATTU, which in the previous month had been increased from 30
to 80 advisers, had been publicised in the United States and encouraged Americans to

66 Age, editorial, 26 May 1964.
67 Age, editorial, 12 May 1964.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 NAA: A4940, C3904, Record of Conversation, Rusk and Hasluck, 16 July 1964.
support military intervention in Vietnam. Hasluck replied that an Australian economic aid mission to South Vietnam, which he had instructed to focus on short-term measures that would help to end the conflict rather than long-term assistance, was due to deliver its report and would receive a sympathetic response from the Federal Government. Although Hasluck had managed to avoid the issue, Rusk's praise of Australia's military involvement in Vietnam seems to contain an implicit suggestion that the United States would in future expect Australia to make a greater military commitment.

The *Age* appreciated the situation: 'We are not at war, but we are not entirely at peace. Our strategic planning must provide for the defence of Australia, and it must take into account the increasing demands being made on us to support causes in Asia as our contribution to the system of defensive alliances which we have accepted as vital to our national security.'

The chances of open warfare breaking out increased greatly after North Vietnamese patrol boats reportedly attacked an American naval destroyer, the USS *Maddox*, in international waters near the Gulf of Tonkin on 2 August 1964. Retaliatory action by the US Navy on 4 August was followed on 7 August by the so-called Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which authorised the American President, Lyndon Baines Johnson, to take any action that he deemed necessary to prevent further North Vietnamese aggression. Cabinet resolved to support the United States fully, and although it was agreed that the conflict would not necessarily escalate, directed the Defence Committee to examine the implications for Australian defence planning. The Defence Committee

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72 *Age*, editorial, 11 June 1964.
was to consider the effort required to expand the armed forces in the event of a request from the United States for more Australian military assistance, and to examine the possibilities of deployment, command arrangements, and the problems of logistic support.\textsuperscript{73}

The Defence Committee subsequently summarised the strategic situation:

Australia faces the possibility of becoming involved in operations in three widely separated areas; the South East Asian mainland such as South Vietnam, in Malaysia and in Papua/New Guinea. We do not have the military resources to become seriously involved with combat forces in all three areas.\textsuperscript{74}

Therefore, the Defence Committee concluded, if the situation in South Vietnam deteriorated further and a limited war broke out, it would be necessary to call up some CMF and Reserve elements and possibly to introduce a selective National Service scheme.\textsuperscript{75}

An Army report to the Services' Manpower Review reveals that the system of voluntary enlistment was unlikely to overcome a possible shortfall of more than 3,000 Regular Army personnel against the approved objective of 28,000 by June 1967. At the same time, the CMF was below its target strength of 35,000 personnel by more than 4,000. It was considered that improved conditions of service would have a positive effect on the retention of serving personnel but would fail to attract new recruits in numbers sufficient to overcome the personnel shortfall. The Army was capable of

\textsuperscript{73} NAA: A1838, 688/27/15, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 392, Without Memorandum – Military Incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin, 10 August 1964.


\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
making an initial overseas commitment in the event of a limited war, but would struggle to find the necessary reinforcements to sustain the effort. Hence a selective National Service scheme appeared to be the only viable solution.\textsuperscript{76}

Because the Army was running to the limit of its resources, any National Service scheme could not be allowed to reduce the operational capability of the Field Force by too much or for too long. The earliest practicable date that National Service could commence was 1 July 1965, based upon an initial annual call-up of 3,000 men in four intakes of 750, increasing to a call-up of 4,350 men in the second and third years and a call-up of 6,900 men in each year thereafter.\textsuperscript{77} The plan to increase the size of the Regular Army to 37,450 provided for an effective strength of 33,000, and if a proposed divisional Field Force was to be established it would involve an annual call-up of approximately 15,000 men. The immediate effect on the Field Force of the additional staffing requirement for basic training and the establishment of an Officer Cadet Training Unit was an estimated reduction in the Army’s operational effectiveness equivalent to one infantry battalion. However, after only six months, benefits on a much greater scale would begin to be realised as the Reserve was built up.\textsuperscript{78}

The Services’ Manpower Review included a detailed plan for a series of Regular Army personnel increases from 22,700 to 28,000 by June 1967, to 29,000 by June 1968, to 33,000 by December 1969, and ultimately to 55,000 personnel, which would form a

\textsuperscript{76} NAA: A1945, 164/1/6, Chiefs of Staff Committee Agendum no. 85/1964, Services’ Manpower Review, 12 October 1964 and Services’ Manpower Summary of Conclusions, 30 September 1964.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid. See also Appendix C Table 2: National Service, Services’ Manpower Review, 30 September 1964.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. See also Appendix C Table 3: Army Reserve Strength build-up, Services’ Manpower Review, 30 September 1964.
divisional Field Force. The Army estimated that throughout the period in question, the system of voluntary enlistment would produce net annual increases of approximately 750 personnel, which would result in strengths of only 24,900 by June 1967 and 25,630 by June 1968. Although the Army accepted that an intensive recruiting campaign – employing techniques such as statements by political leaders to inform the public of the gravity of the strategic situation, recruiting tours, displays and military bands – might lead to some improvement in the manpower situation, it remained beyond the system of voluntary enlistment to attract enough recruits. On a more positive note, it was, however, still too early to assess the effect of the recent introduction of better pay and conditions of service, and the Services could look forward to the peak recruiting period from November to April.79

Although the Department of Labour and National Service did not foresee any likelihood of a downturn in the national economy that would reduce employment and assist the recruiting effort, it was reluctant to support the National Service proposal because of its extreme selectivity. The Assistant Secretary (Planning and Research), B.B. Rebbechi, described as ‘ludicrous’ the administrative effort involved relative to the scale of the proposed scheme and argued for a continued reliance on voluntary enlistment and the introduction of a two-year Regular Army engagement.80 Rebbechi demanded to know if there was any reason why an equal or even greater number of men who transferred to the Regular Army after serving three years in the Regular Army

79 Ibid.
80 NAA: A1945, 164/1/6, Teleprinter message, B.B. Rebbechi to Department of Defence Assistant Secretary, C.W. Clugston, 2 October 1964.
Supplement would not do so if a two-year term of service was made available.\textsuperscript{81}

The Department’s intransigence and the Army’s lack of enthusiasm for a proposed two-year service engagement produced a stalemate. The Army doubted that the initiative would attract volunteers in numbers adequate to compensate for the disadvantages of a one-year reduction in the three-year engagement.\textsuperscript{82} The Department of Labour and National Service failed to appreciate that the Army needed not only to recruit volunteers, but also to retain them. Since 1953, some 77 per cent of volunteers for the Regular Army Supplement had failed to re-engage after completing three years’ service. Whilst a two-year engagement might attract more recruits, it would also produce an increase in the turnover of personnel, which would add considerably to the training burden for as long as the retention rate remained low. It remained for Cabinet to break the deadlock by weighing the proposed Army build-up and the strategic situation in order to determine the extent to which a temporary reduction in the Army’s operational capability was acceptable. Cabinet also had to decide whether or not to support an expansion of the Army beyond the approved personnel strength of 33,000.\textsuperscript{83}

The Chiefs of Staff Committee was convinced that the planned Regular Army strength of 28,000 by June 1967 and 29,000 by June 1968 was adequate to meet existing military commitments, but doubted that the system of voluntary enlistment would achieve these targets. The Chiefs of Staff noted the potential of the selective service call-up to achieve the personnel target of 33,000 by December 1969 through a graduated

\textsuperscript{81} NAA: A1945, 164/1/6, Teleprinter message, Rebbechi to Clugston, 6 October 1964.
\textsuperscript{82} NAA: A1945, 164/1/6, Chiefs of Staff Committee Agendum no. 85/1964, Services’ Manpower Review, 12 October 1964.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
increase, or by 1966 through an accelerated increase. The additional cost that would be incurred, the shortage of officers and specialists that would be produced, and the imbalance in the strengths of the three Services that would result, rendered an expansion of the Regular Army beyond 33,000 personnel neither practicable nor desirable. The Chiefs of Staff based their assessment upon the pressing need for Australia to undertake Cold War tasks such as counter insurgency operations, and to provide two battle groups to SEATO plans.84

In early November 1964, an appraisal of the strategic situation from within the Prime Minister’s Department arrived at a very different conclusion: Australia’s support for Malaysia had brought it into direct conflict with Indonesia, which, in turn, made Australia’s defence of eastern New Guinea more important. Consequently: ‘An Army of 55,000 is the only thing making sense, if we take our obligation to New Guinea seriously. We cannot put all our confidence in forward defence policies either politically or militarily’.85 The selective National Service scheme that would be required to produce a 55,000-strong Army and a division in reserve in Australia was suddenly both ‘politically and technically feasible’ and the Government considered the expansion of the Army necessary to deter Indonesian ambitions of territorial expansion.86

In the meantime, the Defence Committee completed its Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy report, which detailed a further deterioration in Australia’s

84 NAA: A1945, 164/1/6, Chiefs of Staff Committee Minute no. 122/1964 – Services’ Manpower Review, 21 October 1964.
86 Ibid.
strategic situation since the last review was undertaken in February 1963. The threat posed by Indonesia had increased considerably and manifested in several different ways. The Defence Committee surmised that the danger to Australia if Indonesia turned communist or aligned itself with communist China would include the threat of war. The chances of open conflict between Australia and Indonesia would also increase if Indonesia misjudged the resolve of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve and intensified its military operations against Malaysia. Indonesian interference in Papua and New Guinea was also a possible avenue to conflict.\footnote{NAA: A4940, C3640, Defence Committee Report, Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, 15 October 1964.}

Although the Defence Committee believed that Australia could count on United States military support under the terms of ANZUS in the event of an invasion of its mainland and territories, the treaty did not apply in cases of subversion, guerrilla warfare, or other indirect acts of aggression. Nevertheless, the Federal Government's confidence in ANZUS was strong and the treaty had become central to Australia's overall system of defence; but as the Defence Committee noted:

> the readiness and scale of United States assistance will be greatly influenced by the degree and depth of Australian consultation with the United States, by support for United States policies in areas of mutual interest, and by the demonstration of Australia's willingness and capability to take effective military action both in our own defence and in the defence of the area.\footnote{Ibid.}

Australia still had to win American support to cover situations in which it was reasonable to expect ANZUS to be invoked. Where ANZUS had no clear application, Australia could only hope to receive assistance from the United States.
The Defence Committee noted the significant American military presence in South Vietnam, where the strategic outlook was bleak: ‘There is a danger that the present position may be beyond recovery. Taking the most optimistic view, a long drawn out struggle must be expected’.\(^89\) This assessment confirmed South Vietnam as an opportunity for Australia to foster the support of the United States; but a larger military commitment would demand an expansion of the armed forces that, without a resort to National Service, the Defence Committee estimated would take between five and seven years to effect.\(^90\) Evidently, if Australia was to make a significant military contribution to South Vietnam, the strength of the Regular Army had to be developed, and a National Service scheme was the only means of achieving that end. In this sense, what followed was not entirely unexpected. However, as Peter Edwards has established, the reintroduction of National Service was not determined exclusively by the situation in Vietnam.\(^91\)

On 4 November 1964, Cabinet questioned the Defence Committee’s confidence in the ability of the armed forces to deal with Indonesian aggression in Papua and New Guinea.\(^92\) Cabinet then decided to introduce a selective National Service scheme based upon the Army’s recommendations of two years’ full-time service followed by three years in the Reserve, and including a liability for overseas service. Cabinet noted the advice of the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Sir John Wilton, that it was

\(^{89}\) \textit{Ibid.}  
\(^{90}\) \textit{Ibid.}  
\(^{91}\) For a study of the strategic context within which the decision was made to reintroduce National Service see Peter Edwards, ‘Some Reflections on the Australian Government’s Commitment to the Vietnam War, in Doyle, Grey and Pierce, \textit{Australia’s Vietnam War}, pp. 3-15.  
\(^{92}\) NAA: A4940, C3640, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 592, Submission no. 493 – Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, 4 November 1964.
desirable to achieve the Regular Army target strength of 33,000 by the end of 1966 instead of the end of 1969 as originally planned. Cabinet also accepted that the operational readiness of one Regular Army battle group would be reduced for approximately eighteen months. Cabinet determined that an initial intake of 4,200 National Servicemen should commence training on 1 July 1965 and set an annual call-up from 1966 of 6,900 men. The Minister for Labour and National Service, William McMahon, informed Cabinet that, for the National Service registration to proceed, a Bill to amend the *National Service Act* in respect of the period of service, the age of registrants, and the liability for overseas service, would need to be passed before Parliament adjourned for the summer recess.  

On 10 November 1964, the Prime Minister informed Parliament of the decision to introduce a system of selective compulsory military service as part of the Defence Review, which also included a financial increase in the revised three years defence programme from £816 million to £1220 million. On the following day, McMahon explained the details of the National Service scheme. The Melbourne *Herald* published a front-page article featuring ten 19-year-old youths who were unanimously in favour of compulsory military service. Although none of the young men interviewed had volunteered to serve, none was opposed – at least in principle – to the idea of being called up. This ambivalent attitude may explain both the failure of the system of voluntary enlistment and the success of the National Service scheme.

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93 NAA: A1945, 164/1/6, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 596, Submission no. 521 – Service Manpower Review, 4 and 5 November 1964.
According to the editors of both the *Courier Mail* and the *Canberra Times*, the Defence Review was characterised by 'realism' and based upon a recognition of the threat posed by Indonesia to Malaysia and New Guinea. The editors of the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* also focused on the Prime Minister's warning of the risk of war with Indonesia if that country persisted in its attempt to destabilise the Malaysian Federation. The *Sydney Morning Herald* also argued that the only problem with the new defence measures – including the plan for selective compulsory military service – was that they did not go far enough in meeting the challenges to Australia's security emanating from South-East Asia.

Parliamentary debate commenced on 13 November 1964 when the Leader of the Opposition, Arthur Calwell, alleged that the Federal Government had mismanaged Australia's defence. Calwell drew attention to the features of the National Service scheme that the Australian people were most likely to find objectionable: the liability for overseas service, the ballot, the extreme selectivity of the scheme, and the absence of a liability for National Service of unnaturalised non-British migrants. In the light of these factors, it is difficult to see the logic in Calwell's claim that National Service was being introduced for political advantage. However, Calwell's deputy, E.G. (Gough) Whitlam (Labor, Werriwa) claimed that the Government had introduced National Service because it wanted to contest the forthcoming Senate election on the issue of defence. One may add that if the Government had indeed failed in the area of

97 *Courier Mail*, editorial, 11 November 1964; *Canberra Times*, editorial, 11 November 1964.
defence, as Calwell claimed, it surely would have tried to prevent defence from becoming a campaign issue.

On 16 November 1964, Allan Fraser (Labor, Eden-Monaro) proposed that volunteers whose applications to join the Regular Army had been rejected on educational grounds should be allowed to enlist and that the Army should educate them. The Minister for the Army, Forbes, countered that it was not possible to relax the educational standard and insisted that no applicant deemed capable of benefiting from the further education offered by the Army was rejected. Forbes added incautiously: ‘The fact is that a large proportion of the flotsam and jetsam of Australian society finds its way into recruiting offices’. Forbes conceded that selective service was unavoidably inequitable, but argued that the young men called up would be compensated for the disruption to their lives by developing ‘the qualities of self-reliance, self-discipline, initiative and the capacity to get on with all sorts of people’. For Kim Beazley (Labor, Fremantle), under the proposed National Service scheme, any social benefits were incidental: ‘The purpose of national service with conscription for overseas service is to create an army. All these stories about how some delinquent will have his long hair cut and his guitar taken away from him are so much nonsense which is just confusing the minds of the Australian people’.

102 CPD, vol. H. of R. 44, 16 November 1964, pp. 2983-84. Fraser observed that in 1963, 11,079 men applied to join the Regular Army, of whom 2,839 were accepted and 8,240 rejected for various reasons, including 1,417 on educational grounds.

103 CPD, vol. H. of R. 44, 16 November 1964, p. 2993. The intelligence and literacy tests used by the Army were designed to a pass standard that required a mental age of 12 years and an education expected of a 10-year-old.


Francis Stewart (Labor, Lang) sustained the Opposition’s attack by asking if the change in the Government’s attitude towards National Service had been prompted by a request from the United States for more military assistance in Vietnam, and demanded to know if the Government’s military advisers, too, had changed their minds.\footnote{CPD, vol. H. of R. 44, 17 November 1964, pp. 3109-11.} If not, Stewart asked jocularly, who was responsible for the decision to introduce selective military training? ‘Was it McMahon, the Master Mariner? Was it Pilot Officer Paltridge? Was it Field Marshal Menzies? Was it Frogman Holt? Who made this important decision?’\footnote{CPD, vol. H. of R. 44, 17 November 1964, p. 3111.} Ultimately, the Government’s timing proved impeccable and the Lower House passed the National Service Bill on 17 November 1964, the final sitting day of the year.\footnote{CPD, vol. H. of R. 44, 17 November 1964, p. 3134.}

An Army report prepared on 18 November 1964 considered the measures that had in recent months been taken to stimulate voluntary enlistment.\footnote{CPD, vol. H. of R. 44, 17 November 1964, p. 3111.} The disappointing results recorded in the six months since significant improvements were made in pay and conditions of service prompted the remarkably candid admission that a further pay increase was unlikely to succeed. A one hundred per cent increase in the recruiting vote and £350,000 spent on advertising during the 1963-64 financial year had produced an increase in re-engagements but attracted few new volunteers. Recruiting in the previous three years had effected only a marginal increase in the total Army strength.\footnote{NAA: A463, 1964/5143 Part 1, Notes on National Service, 18 November 1964.}

\footnote{Ibid. See also Appendix C Table 4: Regular Army enlistments and wastage from 1960-61 to 1964-65.}
The report defended the Army's entry standards as the absolute minimum if recruits were to absorb basic military training and adjust to the Army environment. While up to 20 per cent of applicants were rejected for lacking the literacy skills expected of a ten year-old, between ten and sixteen per cent more were rejected for having a mental age of less than eleven years and nine months. Forbes' unfortunate remark about the 'flotsam and jetsam of Australian society' evidently contained a modicum of truth. Disturbingly, the Army was nearing its capacity to absorb so-called minimum standard recruits, who already represented a poor economy because their unsuitability for service produced a low retention rate for that particular group. The report revealed that half of the 166 recruits in the 71-84 IQ range who were enlisted between 1958 and 1961 had left the Army, including 58 who were discharged as unsatisfactory soldiers. The Army's provision of education had produced positive results in only a minority of such men, and success ultimately depended on their level of general intelligence and desire for self-improvement.  

The Army dismissed any suggestion that the decision to introduce National Service was a political measure rather than a military requirement. The latest Defence Review had confirmed the consistent failure, since May 1963, of the system of voluntary enlistment to meet progressive personnel strength targets. The Government, in conjunction with its military advisers, had finally accepted that, 'in spite of the difficulties inherent in the transition from the voluntary to the National Service System, we have no alternative to introducing National Service if our commitments are to be

112 Ibid.
met'.

A highly selective ballot-based call-up of 20-year-olds for two years’ full-time service with a liability for overseas service was not designed to be popular, and the obligation of all 20-year-olds to register other than aliens was equally invidious. The provision of deferment too, was potentially a source of disaffection. With deferment on occupational grounds ruled out, the provision of deferment to university students to allow them to complete their degree courses and to apprentices to receive trade accreditation before being called up may have seemed somewhat unfair to men outside these categories.

Deferment was extended to men who married before call-up action was initiated: given the scheme’s selectivity, the Army did not need to contemplate calling up married men. Although the deferment of married men was an issue that had troubled the Department of Labour and National Service, before the introduction of no-fault divorce laws it was unlikely, as was claimed, to ‘encourage earlier marriage of that feckless part of our youth who would consider “ballot dodging” a sufficient incentive to marriage.’ The likelihood of being balloted in and called up was insufficient to justify the major undertaking of marriage and there were other easier avenues of escape, such as voluntary enlistment in the Citizen Forces.

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113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
116 NAA: A1945, 164/1/6, Teleprinter message, Rebbechi to Clugston, 20 October 1964.
117 CPD, vol. H. of R. 44, 17 November 1964, p. 3073. McMahon stated that from 1966 between one in seven and one in eight National Service registrants would be called up.
On the one hand, the grant of deferment to a man who had served in the CMF for a minimum of one year, on the condition that he was prepared to render efficient service for a further five years, was a measure that would improve the efficiency of the part-time force. On the other hand, the grant of deferment to a man who enlisted in the CMF after registration but before the ballot and agreed to render effective service for a minimum of six years could easily hinder it. Despite this apparent contradiction, the Government stressed that 'there should be no suggestion that young men joining the CMF in this way are “draft dodgers”, and the Army emphasised the importance of continued voluntary enlistment to both the Regular Army and the CMF. 118

Dayton McCarthy has detailed the implications of the CMF enlistment 'option', the main effect of which arguably was to relieve the Regular Army of a potential administrative burden by directing it to the CMF. 119 As an option available to National Service registrants who did not want to risk being balloted in and called up to the Regular Army, the opportunity to volunteer for service in the CMF was also an answer to the argument that the scheme was inherently unfair because of its selectivity. Federal Government ministers were thus able to suggest a resort to the option when replying to personal representations for exemption from National Service on the grounds of exceptional hardship that were occasionally made in advance of the ballots. 120 This made the administration of the scheme simpler and fairer.

119 McCarthy, The Once and Future Army, chapters 6 and 7.
120 NAA: A462, 430/2/11 Part 1. This file contains numerous examples of appeals made by parents for the exemption of their sons from National Service.
Factors including the individual’s suitability for military service, ability to attend a training depot, and vacancies in the personnel establishments of units, needed to be considered when assessing a volunteer’s application for enlistment in the CMF. These factors eventually presented problems in relation to the fair and equitable administration of the National Service scheme that will be investigated in the following chapter. The CMF was said to be ‘organised, equipped and trained so that it may operate as an integral part of the Army’. ‘It is designed’, the report stated, ‘to provide the follow-up forces to the initial readily available forces and it forms the basis for any further expansion which may be required, including home defence’.121 However, the introduction of National Service and the gradual establishment of a Regular Army Reserve would push the CMF further to the periphery of the military organisation.

It was anticipated that two National Service registrations and call-ups would take place each year, with the first registration and ballot to be held in early 1965. The Department of Labour and National Service would reactivate the same administrative machinery that had been used from early 1958 to govern the selectivity of the National Service training scheme. Those registrants balloted out would be granted indefinite deferment. Of those balloted in, about 30 per cent were expected to be found medically unfit, and after applications for deferment had been determined, the remainder would be called up.122

After the completion of two years’ full-time service in the Regular Army Supplement, National Servicemen would be required to serve a further three years in the

122 Ibid.
Regular Army Reserve, which would involve annual attendance at a two-week camp. Alternatively, National Servicemen could transfer to the Regular Army Emergency Reserve, which did not involve any additional training obligation but was for a period of four years. In the Reserve, National Servicemen would remain liable to be called up in the event of a defence emergency. National Servicemen would receive Regular Army pay and allowances, and upon discharge be entitled to reinstatement in civilian employment and have access to repatriation services.123

A survey of the letters published in the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspapers in the weeks after the announcement of the reintroduction of National Service reveals that public opinion was evenly divided. Of those people who objected to National Service, some believed that it was unjust to call up 20-year-olds who were not old enough to vote.124 Others strongly resented the selectivity of the scheme.125 The liability for overseas service did not attract immediate criticism and remained a disconnected issue until National Servicemen were sent overseas. For some people, National Service was essentially a political issue, while others considered it in terms of Australia’s strategic situation.126

The editors of the major metropolitan newspapers were generally in favour of National Service. For example, the Brisbane *Courier Mail* assured its readers that the call-up would be administered fairly, while the *Sydney Morning Herald* warned against

123 Ibid.
124 *Age*, letters, 13 November and 3 December 1964; *Sydney Morning Herald*, letters, 16 and 19 November 1964.
125 *Age*, letters, 14 November 1964.
playing party politics with defence in the approach to the Senate election in December.\textsuperscript{127} It is arguable that a greater public awareness of Australia's strategic situation was the foundation upon which the high level of public support for National Service came to be based. The following chapter will chart the course of change in Australia's strategic situation and Australian public opinion.

\textsuperscript{127} Courier Mail, editorial, 13 November 1964; Sydney Morning Herald, editorial, 13 November 1964.
CHAPTER SIX

National Service and the Vietnam War

National service conditioned people over the generations to the idea of young Australians serving. Two wars have conditioned people to believe that young Australians serve overseas. But the people have forgotten to worry why they are serving.¹

Gordon Bryant (Labor, Wills), 15 May 1968.

From the middle of the 1960s, the Labor Party tried to promote – and the Coalition Government tried to prevent – the development of a close association between the National Service scheme and the Vietnam War. While the Federal Opposition drew the two issues together, the Government refused to acknowledge a causal link. This chapter will investigate the Government’s problem of maintaining public support for National Service while encouraging the continuation of the United States military presence in South-East Asia by gradually expanding the Australian military commitment to South Vietnam. Whilst both the Vietnam War and the National Service scheme retained broad public support, a decline in the popularity of the two issues coincided.

Within the context of Australia’s strategic situation, this chapter will consider first the expansion of the military commitment to South Vietnam – from the deployment of a

Regular Army infantry battalion to the establishment of an independent task force that was sustained partly by the National Service scheme. Next, a study of public opinion will reveal a decline in support for both the National Service scheme and Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War, which prompted the Government to seek a solution for a problem that it refused to publicly acknowledge existed. In 1968, the Government tried to enforce the liability of young men for National Service more strictly by amending the *National Service Act*. A counterpoint to this largely unsuccessful attempt at legislative change is seen in the continued exclusion of Aborigines from the scheme. The difficulty of maintaining public support for National Service and the Vietnam War will be highlighted by an investigation of the Government’s short-lived acceptance of a civilian alternative to National Service in 1970. From that time, the Government tried to consolidate its existing support until December 1972, when the National Service scheme was abandoned after the election of a Labor government.

National Service recommenced when the Minister for Labour and National Service issued a notice requiring all male British subjects ordinarily resident in Australia and turning 20 years of age in the first half of 1965 to register in the two weeks before 8 February 1965. According to the Secretary of the Department, the first registration proceeded ‘remarkably smoothly’. A good indicator of the public’s initial acceptance of National Service is the level of compliance with the *National Service Act*, and based upon the experience of the administration of National Service training in the 1950s, more young men than were expected to do so registered for the birthday ballot.

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2 NAA: A463, 1964/5143 Part 1, Notes on the National Service Scheme, Bland to the Prime Minister’s Private Secretary, F.W. Jennings, 22 February 1965.
held on 10 March 1965.  

The Liberal Member for Higinbotham, Don Chipp, presided over the ballot while his colleague, the Member for Corangamite, Ewen MacKinnon, drew 96 of 181 marbles from a Tattersall’s lottery barrel. Each marble was inscribed with a number that corresponded with a birth date that determined who was balloted in. Most of the 21,777 balloted-in registrants were subsequently granted exemption or deferment. Some 2,100 men filled the mid-year intakes that the First Recruit Training Battalion, Kapooka, New South Wales and the Second Recruit Training Battalion, Puckapunyal, Victoria were programmed to receive.

Between 1965 and 1972, a total of 63,740 National Servicemen served in the Regular Army. During those years, sixteen National Service ballots were conducted – in March and September of each year. It was originally estimated that 4,200 National Servicemen in 1965 and 6,900 National Servicemen in each subsequent year would be needed to fill the approved Regular Army establishment of 37,500 personnel. On 18 August 1965, the Prime Minister, Menzies, informed Parliament that an increase in the National Service annual intake to 8,400 men was necessary from 1966 in order to achieve a revised Regular Army strength of 40,000 personnel by 1967.

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3 Ibid.
4 NAA: AP848/23, 2, National Service – Ballot Results, First Ballot – 10 March 1965 – Final Figures; NAA: A463, 1964/5143 Part 1, National Service Ballot; see also Appendix D Table 1: National Service Ballot Results 10 March 1965.
5 These statistics are sourced from NAA: MP1375/2, Summaries and evaluations of the National Service scheme from each National Service Registration Office, and are set out in Edwards, A Nation at War, pp. 355-80.
A total of 804,286 young men registered for National Service, of whom 567,238 were balloted out and 237,048 were balloted in. Exemption was granted to 3,563 men, including 553 theological students, ministers of religion or members of religious orders, 1,768 men with physical or mental disabilities, and 1,242 men who were recognised by the Courts as conscientious objectors. A total of 35,548 men were granted indefinite deferment, including 20,502 who married before call-up action was taken, 7,197 CMF volunteers, and 7,849 members of the Citizen Forces who were deemed to have fulfilled their service obligations. A total of 102,134 men were considered no longer liable to be called up, including 99,010 who were rejected for failure to meet the Army’s medical, psychological, or educational standards. Of the remainder, 2,194 men had served – or were serving – in the permanent forces, 916 men died after registering, and 14 men were gaol for refusing to obey a call-up notice.7

At the time of the National Service scheme’s suspension in December 1972, some 10,187 men were considered available for call-up – subject to the outcome of any applications for exemption or deferment. Another 21,876 men were classed as unavailable for call up, including 15,526 men who had been granted – or had applied for – deferment, 1,380 unnaturalised non-British migrants, 470 men whose exceptional hardship cases were proved, and 610 men who had been granted permission to leave Australia. Another 3,890 men were under investigation for suspected breaches of the National Service Act.8

7 Edwards, A Nation at War, pp. 355-80.
8 Ibid.
On 29 April 1965, the Prime Minister announced the Government’s decision to send an infantry battalion to South Vietnam. After the First Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) was deployed in June 1965, the Australian military contribution to South Vietnam comprised more than 1,100 troops. Menzies explained the increase in terms of the widely accepted policy of forward defence: ‘The takeover of South Vietnam would be a direct military threat to Australia and to all the countries of South and South East Asia. It must be seen as part of a threat by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans’. When Menzies announced an increase in the Australian military contribution to a battalion group through the addition of approximately 350 troops, public support for the commitment was running as high as 59 per cent.

In February 1966, Cabinet reaffirmed its support for the American military build-up in South Vietnam by reaching in-principle agreement for an even greater Australian commitment. Cabinet conceded that it was not in the best position to determine the most appropriate increase and deferred to the authority of the Defence Committee, which had previously established that an independent task force based upon two infantry battalions was the most effective military contribution that Australia could make. However, Cabinet’s willingness to authorise a bigger commitment was tempered by the observation that Australia should not be too generous because the United States could be expected to make additional requests for support. A note of caution was also sounded in the recommendation that a survey of the South-East Asian strategic situation and a

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10 Ibid.
consideration of possible short-term and long-term Australian responses should precede any increase. The Vice President of the United States, Hubert H. Humphrey, and the US ambassador-at-large for South-East Asian affairs, W. Averell Harriman, were due to visit Australia later in February. Cabinet agreed that it presented a good opportunity to assess the situation further while taking care not to give the Americans the impression that Cabinet intended to prevaricate or bargain with the Americans about force levels.\(^{12}\)

Harold Holt, who succeeded Menzies as Prime Minister in January 1966, met Humphrey and Harriman in Canberra on 19 February 1966. Humphrey told the Cabinet Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee that American public opinion towards the conflict in Vietnam favoured the hawks rather than the doves. This, he claimed, presented a problem for the owls of the US Administration who sought to achieve only limited objectives in the attempt to contain communism within the South-East Asian region. Humphrey assessed the conflict in Vietnam as a war of aggression waged by communist China, a country which he believed aimed to dominate South-East Asia and exert greater pressure on India, and which he also held responsible for upheaval in Laos and Thailand. Humphrey was cautiously optimistic of success in a war that, he conceded, the United States was fighting not for the short-term benefit of the South Vietnamese, but for long-term global security and, somewhat ironically, ‘to show Asians that aggression is not to be the accepted pattern of conduct’.\(^{13}\)

\(^{12}\) NAA: A5839, 130, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 32, Submission no. 23 – South Vietnam – Possible Australian Military Assistance, 15 February 1966.

\(^{13}\) NAA: A5839, XM1 vol. 1, Cabinet Minute, Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Decision no. 25(FAD), Without Memorandum – Talks with Vice-President Humphrey and Governor Harriman, 19 February 1966.
Holt doubtless recognised the importance of public support for the war in Australia. In 1965, almost two-thirds of Australians were in favour of the American military presence in South Vietnam and believed that, without it, Thailand and Malaysia would succumb to communism, while more than two-thirds believed that Australia would eventually be threatened by China if the United States withdrew its forces from the Asian region. Although Humphrey stated during the course of discussions that he had not come to Australia to ask for anything, Cabinet later referred to the ‘representation made by the United States, including at high political levels, of the advantages of an increase in the Australian contribution as a follow up to the increase made by the United States in its military strength in Vietnam’.  

Cabinet noted that a greater military commitment would require the National Service annual call-up of 8,400 men to be maintained indefinitely. At the time, this did not present a problem because the Government knew that public support for the enlarged call-up stood at almost 70 per cent. More National Servicemen were needed to replace the existing battalion with an independent task force made up of a command headquarters, two infantry battalions, a Special Air Service squadron, combat and logistic support units, and eight Iroquois helicopters. Including the AATTV and the flight of RAAF Caribou aircraft that were already operating in South Vietnam, from  

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14 AGP/APOP nos 1820 – 1835, March – June 1965. In October 1964, the explosion of a Chinese nuclear device again raised the spectre of a global catastrophe, which was averted only narrowly two years earlier during the Cuban Missile Crisis.
15 NAA: A5839, XM1 vol. 1, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 60, Submission no. 23 – South Vietnam – Possible Australian Military Assistance, 2 March 1966.
17 AGP/APOP, nos 1852 – 1871, September – December 1965. Of 2,000 respondents, 69 per cent favoured, and 23 per cent opposed, an increase in the annual National Service call-up from 6,900 to 8,400 men.
April 1966 the Australian commitment numbered approximately 4,500 personnel.\textsuperscript{18}

Cabinet considered Australia’s increased military commitment to South Vietnam to be the largest possible if an ability to defend eastern New Guinea was to be maintained without having to resort to full-scale mobilisation. The provision of a nationally identifiable task force was intended to encourage the United States to maintain its commitment to South-East Asian regional security. Cabinet accepted the view of the Defence Committee that raising a task force for service in South Vietnam also presented the Army with a valuable opportunity to prepare for possible SEATO commitments within an independent operational environment. Cabinet therefore agreed to seek a formal request from the South Vietnamese Government for an increase in the Australian military contribution.\textsuperscript{19}

For the Federal Government, the importance of the fair and equitable administration of the National Service scheme increased after it decided that National Servicemen would serve in Vietnam. In May 1966, the Minister for the Army, Malcolm Fraser, submitted to Cabinet a plan that was designed to provide all young men liable for National Service with the opportunity to join the CMF rather than accept the risk of being balloted in and called up to the Regular Army. To men living in remote areas, and to others whose employment prevented them from exercising the CMF option because they were unable to attend regular parades, Fraser’s plan offered a solution.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} NAA: A5839, 130, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 60, Submission no. 23 – South Vietnam – Possible Australian Military Assistance, 2 March 1966.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
The establishment of one new CMF battalion or sub-unit in each Command district, with the headquarters and Regular Army cadre staff located in the State capital cities, was proposed to cater for men who were unable to attend night and weekend parades and were thus unable to join the CMF. Fraser suggested that enlistment in the special units should be open to men who belonged to one of several categories. They included men residing beyond a 25-mile radius of a CMF depot, men such as night shift workers whose working hours were irregular, and itinerant workers, including shearsers, fencers and dam diggers. Other categories included some self-employed men and possibly men who had been granted exemption from National Service on the grounds of exceptional hardship.\textsuperscript{21}

The special CMF units would avoid the inconvenience of night parades by providing members with between 33 and 60 days' annual training consisting of 28-day annual camps, fourteen-day courses, and bivouacs of up to eighteen days' duration. Fraser admitted that it was not possible to forecast accurately the number of volunteers for the new units, the number of Regular Army cadre staff needed, or the total cost of the scheme. However, based upon a net annual intake of 1,000 men, it was expected that, by the time the scheme became operational, about 5,000 men would be undergoing training. Based upon average CMF per capita expenditure and including an allowance for additional costs such as extra travel fares, estimates for the scheme ranged from $1 million in the first year to $4 million in the fifth and subsequent years.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
Fraser noted that only about two-thirds of the approved CMF cadre staff establishment of 1,250 personnel was filled and acknowledged that the establishment of special units would exert even greater pressure on 'an establishment already under strength for which there is no complete relief in the foreseeable future'. The Minister for the Army also admitted that his proposal would create an additional administrative burden for the Department of Labour and National Service, which would need to ensure that men who were able to serve in existing CMF units did not unfairly exploit the scheme. Fraser concluded, however, that it would 'remove any complaint that some men are unfairly treated and in effect discriminated against'.

A representative of the Prime Minister's Department recognised the Army's problem of providing more cadre staff and running parallel CMF training programmes, but was unsympathetic: 'If the CMF is of any use to the Army, then obviously the Army will have to put up with the difficulty and do the best they can'. Care would need to be taken when assessing the eligibility of volunteers for enlistment in the special units, 'so that in seeking to achieve fairness for one group the great bulk of National Service registrants are not to feel aggrieved'. This was an important point 'if the character of the CMF is to be maintained at the highest – or putting it another way, if it is not to become better known as a haven for those avoiding their National Service responsibilities'. When Cabinet approved the establishment of the special CMF units it adopted as its justification Fraser's rather dubious advice that the initiative had been

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23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
developed to meet military requirements and was not simply a means of extending the CMF option to all National Service registrants. Cabinet endorsed the proposal on the condition that the Department of Labour and National Service would permit the enlistment only of men whose circumstances made it impossible for them to join established CMF units. 28

On the first anniversary of the introduction of National Service, the Minister for Labour and National Service released statistics that detailed the operation of the scheme to 30 April 1966. Bury explained the requirement for National Service in terms of the need for Australia to respond to regional instability and of the failure of the system of voluntary enlistment during a prolonged period of economic prosperity. The Minister claimed that, although the introduction of pay increases and improved conditions of service for the Regular Army in May 1964 had proved only marginally successful in attracting new recruits, it had contributed to the retention of many officers, non-commissioned officers and specialists who were needed to run the National Service scheme. 29

During the first twelve months of the scheme's operation, a total of 122,581 registrants were involved in the three registrations of men who turned 20 between 30 June 1965 and 30 June 1966. In all, 73,370 men had been balloted out and 49,211 had been balloted in. Some 8,739 registrants had already been called up and enlisted in the Army and another 9,351 men were considered available for call-up in either of the two

remaining intakes that were planned for 1966. Included in the three classes of men exempt from National Service were 156 theological students, ministers of religion, or members of religious orders, 238 men who were found to have a prescribed physical or mental disability, and 131 men who had satisfied the Courts that they held conscientious beliefs that did not allow them to perform any kind of military service. Of the men who had been granted indefinite deferment or whose claims for indefinite deferment were being considered, 3,619 had married before call-up action was initiated and 2,772 had exercised the option of joining the Citizen Forces. 30

Of the men who were balloted in, 9,501 were granted indefinite deferment after failing to meet the Army’s medical, educational, or psychological standards, 215 had enlisted in the Permanent Forces, and 47 had died after registering. Deferment had been granted to 12,510 students and apprentices, 1,011 men were classed as temporarily unfit for military service, 501 applications for deferment had been made on the grounds of exceptional hardship, 238 men had been granted permission to leave Australia, and 182 men were under investigation by the Department of Labour and National Service for suspected breaches of the National Service Act. 31

Bury stressed that the National Service scheme had to be considered not only in terms of Australia’s military commitment to South Vietnam, but within a much broader strategic context:

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
That national servicemen will serve in Vietnam is incidental to Australia’s commitment to this area of operations. They will also serve in Malaysia, Borneo, Australia and if required in New Guinea – in fact in any area where the Army is committed. Their commitment is not as national servicemen but as members of the Australian Army.^[32]

It was important that the Government explained the role of National Service in the nation’s defence because most Australians opposed the decision to send National Servicemen to Vietnam.[^33] However, by the end of April 1966, the proportion of people who believed that National Servicemen should remain in Australia had fallen to 49 per cent and the proportion who favoured sending them to Vietnam had risen to 38 per cent, while thirteen per cent were undecided.[^34] Nevertheless, the decision to send National Servicemen to Vietnam was a fateful one because it established a direct link between the National Service scheme and the Vietnam War. However, it did not immediately affect public support for the scheme, which in July 1966 was recorded at 68 per cent.[^35]

Recruiting returns reveal the Army’s National Service dependency: the *Sun News-Pictorial* reported that, as at 31 March 1967, the total strength of the full-time forces was 75,046, including 15,795 Navy, 39,187 Army, and 20,064 Air Force personnel. Of a 2,496-strong personnel increase that occurred in the two preceding months, 2,262 were National Servicemen.[^36]

On 22 December 1966, the Federal Government announced its decision to raise the level of the Australian military commitment to South Vietnam to 6,000 troops by

[^32]: Ibid.
[^33]: AGP/APOP, nos 1884 – 1899, February – April 1966, 57 per cent wanted National Servicemen to remain in Australia, 32 per cent approved sending them to Vietnam and eleven per cent were undecided.
sending a squadron of Canberra bombers and by making available for operations with the US Navy a destroyer, HMAS *Hobart*.\(^{37}\) A reassessment of the provision of Australian non-military aid to South Vietnam followed, in which the Minister for External Affairs, Hasluck, quoted part of US President Johnson’s State of the Union speech delivered to Congress on 10 January 1967: ‘I wish I could report to you that the conflict is almost over. This I cannot do. We face more cost, more loss and more agony for the end is not yet. I cannot promise you that it will come this year or the next. Our adversary still believes he can go on fighting longer than we and our allies are prepared to do so’.\(^{38}\) The President’s support for the continued prosecution of a war of attrition against North Vietnam gave Australia what Hasluck described as ‘the framework for our own effort’.\(^{39}\) The Australian task force was thus committed indefinitely to the conflict.

Ian Hancock has identified 1967 as a pivotal year in Australian politics:

By late 1967 the Coalition government was clearly in trouble. Gough Whitlam, who had replaced Calwell as the leader of the opposition in February of that year, had established an ascendancy over Holt who, as the year progressed, seemed to lose his customary equanimity. The Vietnam War, the vote-winner of 1966, became a political albatross during 1967.\(^{40}\)

Holt’s death in late 1967 is part of a gradual reversal of fortunes for a Government that, only twelve months earlier, was re-elected easily after the Labor Party campaigned on a

\(^{37}\) NAA: A4940, C4641, Cabinet Submission no. 52 – Non-military aid to Vietnam, 1 February 1967.

\(^{38}\) Ibid.

\(^{39}\) NAA: A4940, C4641, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 40, Submission no. 52 – Non-military aid to Vietnam, 1 February 1967. To 30 June 1966, Australian aid to Vietnam totalled $5,745,000 under the Colombo Plan, $4,480,000 under SEATO economic aid and $343,000 for emergency relief.

\(^{40}\) Hancock, *John Gorton*, p. 123.
policy of immediate Australian withdrawal from Vietnam.\textsuperscript{41} Although the Coalition managed to record another election victory under John Gorton in October 1969, in which the Labor Party advocated a phased Australian withdrawal from Vietnam, 1967 marked the beginning of a decline in public support for both National Service and the Vietnam War that continued until the Coalition was voted from office under the leadership of William McMahon in December 1972.\textsuperscript{42} After 1967, the Government tried to project publicly an image of composure; privately, however, concerns were regularly expressed about the fusion of public opposition to National Service and to the war.

Peter Edwards has argued that the growth of dissent in Australia from 1967 was not attributable to the course of Australia’s war in Vietnam, but instead took its lead from the reaction in the United States to that country’s much greater social and economic burden that was a consequence of its much larger military commitment.\textsuperscript{43} However, Australians could count their own cost of an involvement in Vietnam that was partly sustained by the National Service scheme, of which the liability for overseas service Jeffrey Grey sees as an issue that was more contentious than the war itself.\textsuperscript{44} The pattern of public support and opposition that emerged is one that doubtless concerned the Government because it proved that the Australian people were responding to the two


\textsuperscript{43} Edwards, \textit{A Nation at War}, p. 159.


249
issues in similar ways. Public support for Australia's involvement in Vietnam reached 62 per cent in May 1967.\textsuperscript{45} By April 1969, however, support had fallen to 48 per cent.\textsuperscript{46} A decline in public support for National Service was less dramatic but still significant; it fell from 65 per cent in December 1968 to 55 per cent in April 1970.\textsuperscript{47} Public opinion regarding the Vietnam War and the National Service scheme was closely connected and spiralled downwards.

Opposition to, and support for, the Vietnam War and National Service was multidimensional. Whilst it follows that opponents of the war opposed Australian involvement, they did not necessarily oppose the National Service scheme, just as opponents of the National Service scheme did not necessarily oppose Australian involvement in the war. Whilst the results of public opinion polls cannot be broken down entirely, one of the specific factors that would have influenced people's attitudes was the growing number of casualties. During the twelve months to the end of March 1968, the number of National Servicemen killed in action in Vietnam more than doubled to 64.\textsuperscript{48} By April 1969, the number had almost doubled again to 123, which represented 46 per cent of 266 fatal casualties since May 1966, when Errol Noack became the first National Serviceman to be killed in the conflict.\textsuperscript{49} On 15 March 1967, the \textit{Sun News-Pictorial} reported 105 Australian fatal casualties since 1962, including 27 Regular Army volunteers and 30 National Servicemen in the previous ten months. The newspaper noted that the death rate among National Servicemen – who represented only

\begin{footnotes}
\item[48] \textit{Sun News-Pictorial}, 29 March 1968.
\item[49] \textit{Sun News-Pictorial}, 16 April 1969.
\end{footnotes}
approximately one-third of the task force – was higher than that among Regular Army personnel, but did not attempt to identify the reason for this discrepancy.\textsuperscript{50}

The Minister for the Army, Fraser, later announced that, although National Servicemen constituted only about one-third of the task force, they represented up to half of the front-line troops.\textsuperscript{51} The two-year National Service obligation was shorter than the three or six-year engagements of Regular Army volunteers, and hence National Servicemen were more likely to be employed in the front line as riflemen than to serve in specialist employment categories involving extended periods of training.\textsuperscript{52} Although Fraser’s explanation was entirely rational, it is unlikely to have alleviated the public’s reservations about the use of National Servicemen in Vietnam. Cabinet might not have identified the original newspaper article with an emerging body of organised opposition to Australia’s involvement in Vietnam, which it described as ‘carefully planned and in the nature of “psychological warfare”’; but it was unhelpful to the Government’s cause nonetheless.\textsuperscript{53}

In September 1967, the Cabinet Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, after waiting to see how the strategic situation in Malaysia and Singapore developed, discussed an appeal from the United States to its allies for more military support in South Vietnam. The Committee based its deliberations on the premise that – as the United States’ principal non-Asian ally – Australia’s response would influence the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item 50 \textit{Sun News-Pictorial}, 15 March 1967.
\item 51 \textit{Sun News-Pictorial}, 5 April 1967.
\item 52 \textit{Sun News-Pictorial}, 26 June 1967.
\item 53 NAA: A5842, 296, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 504, Without Memorandum – Campaigns against Australia’s Commitment in Vietnam, 15 August 1967.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
future scale of the American effort. The Committee resolved that, ‘as a matter of national responsibility, Australia should take the opportunity to strengthen still more its defence alliance with the United States as and when it can’. In agreeing that ‘a response by Australia which did not include substantial ground forces would be unsatisfying to the United States and would not serve our defence policy purposes’, the Committee hoped that sending a third Australian infantry battalion to South Vietnam would help to bring the war to an end.

The projected annual cost of a third infantry battalion was approximately $16 million and the Commander of Australian forces in Vietnam had also requested a tank squadron and other support, which was estimated to cost an additional $4 million each year. An anticipated increase in the defence budget forecast from $1.118 billion in 1967-68 to $1.346 billion in 1968-69 was intended to cover the purchase of F111 aircraft, but did not provide for the extra battalion, the tank squadron and echelon support, or unforeseeable operational costs in Vietnam. However, the importance of the commitment was not lost on the Government’s military advisers, who described Vietnam as ‘the necessary forward defensive position in South-East Asia’ and concluded that, ‘at least until the Vietnam war finishes, no new contribution to Malaysia and Singapore is likely to be required’.

The increased military commitment was made at a time when public support for both the Vietnam War and the National Service scheme had begun to recede. The

54 NAA: A5842, 296, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 563 (FAD), Without Memorandum – Contribution of Additional Force to Vietnam, 6 September 1967.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
Government resolved to address the growing problem of non-compliance with the *National Service Act* by introducing into Parliament amending legislation that was evidently designed to consolidate public support for the National Service scheme. The Minister for Labour and National Service, Bury, was preoccupied with three main problems. First, detecting and dealing with National Service defaulters. Second, the question of whether or not civilian service should be made available to conscientious objectors as an alternative to National Service. Third, a loophole in the *National Service Act* whereby volunteers who enlisted in the permanent forces and were subsequently discharged incurred no residual liability for National Service regardless of their length of service. Another issue, to be dealt with in the following chapter, related to the problem that the requirement to take an oath upon enlistment in the Citizen Forces presented to unnaturalised migrants who wished to retain their alien status and serve in the Citizen Forces as an alternative to National Service.57

How, Bury asked Cabinet, was his Department to deal with National Service defaulters? Under Section 51 of the *National Service Act*, men who failed to answer a call-up notice or who refused to render service after being called up were, upon conviction, liable for a $100 fine. They then were either released on a bond after agreeing to comply with a fresh call-up notice or were committed to the custody of the Army.58 Such a fate befell William White, who was committed to military detention after the Courts refused to grant him total exemption from National Service as a conscientious objector. Peter Edwards has concluded that White’s highly publicised and

57 NAA: A4940, C4117, Cabinet Submission no. 454 – Amendment of National Service Legislation, 1 September 1967.
ultimately successful quest for official recognition as a conscientious objector helped to politicise the issue of conscription on a scale comparable with the Vietnam War. Bury observed that, for the Government:

The problem is how to deal with men who, having refused to avail themselves of the conscientious objection provisions of the Act or having had their claims for exemption on conscientious objection grounds rejected, arrogate to themselves to decide that they are entitled to exemption. In short, these men set themselves above the law.

Bury and Fraser agreed that the Army should no longer have to take defaulters into custody and attempt to train them: non-compliance with the National Service Act, they argued, should be a civil, not a military offence, and an appropriate solution was needed. Bury was influenced by a suggestion made by a deputation from the Australian Quaker Peace Committee and the Federal Pacifist Council of Australia that an alternative to civil imprisonment be provided for National Service defaulters. Bury proposed that the penalty for failure to comply with a call-up notice should be a two-year gaol term unless the defaulter was prepared to obey a second call-up notice or agreed to accept a fine of up to $200 and perform approved civilian work for a period of three years.

Bury envisaged a system of low-paid work of an arduous nature in remote areas in the employment of the Commonwealth or its agencies and approved by the Minister for Labour and National Service. Any failure to perform the work would be considered a breach of bond and incur gaol for the remainder of the three-year term. Bury conceded

59 Edwards, A Nation at War, pp. 130-33.
60 NAA: A4940, C4117, Cabinet Submission no. 454 – Amendment of National Service Legislation, 1 September 1967.
61 Ibid.
that the number of defaulters would be few, and although the Department of the Territories was opposed to sending them to work in Papua and New Guinea, the Australian Council of Trade Unions had indicated that it might be prepared support the plan.\textsuperscript{62} In fact, the Minister for the Territories, Claude Barnes, objected vehemently to the idea of sending National Service defaulters to either Papua and New Guinea or the Northern Territory. Barnes worried that the people of the Northern Territory would resent the plan and:

Moreover the majority of defaulters might be expected to be at best somewhat resentful and perhaps actively dissident. I think it most undesirable in principle to have expatriates who may be aggrieved or disaffected, and possibly quite vocal, working at unskilled labouring tasks among comparatively unsophisticated Papuans and New Guineans.\textsuperscript{63}

Barnes was also concerned that the image of the Northern Territory would be tarnished if defaulters were sent there. The Minister was particularly anxious to avoid a possible saturation of the local labour market after a recent State and Federal conference on aboriginal welfare had identified the problem of providing suitable and sufficient employment for Aborigines in remote areas.\textsuperscript{64}

Whilst Bury rejected as ‘impracticable and inappropriate’ the option of civilian service for all National Service registrants, he asked whether or not a system of voluntary civilian service should be made available to conscientious objectors who were granted either a partial or a total exemption from National Service.\textsuperscript{65} Although Bury did

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{62} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{63} NAA: A4940, C4117, Letter, C.E. Barnes to Bury, 15 September 1967.
\item \textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{65} NAA: A4940, C4117, Cabinet Submission no. 454 – Amendment of National Service Legislation, 1 September 1967.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
not think that conscientious objectors should be made to perform the same kinds of arduous work as defaulters, he insisted that it should, nevertheless, cause 'some upset to a man's normal life' for a period of two years. Bury ventured that what he described as 'community pressures' might develop 'so that it became the practice for those exempted to volunteer', and that the Courts might then become less inclined to grant total exemption from National Service if civilian service could be performed as an alternative.

Bury also considered a civilian alternative to National Service to be a reasonable compromise for those men who applied for total exemption from military service but were granted only a partial exemption. The initiative was intended to reduce the number of defaulters and at the same time solve an administrative problem: the Army would no longer have to train and employ men in non-combatant roles. The possibility of an Army-administered civilian labour corps was examined and ruled out. The possibilities for civilian service extended to the Northern Territory and as far afield as Papua and New Guinea, Vietnam, and Malaysia. The proposal contained the potential for employment by both the Commonwealth and its agencies and benevolent organisations such as the Society of Friends, the Salvation Army, and other approved organisations administering voluntary aid programmes.

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66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid. Bury also recommended a relaxation of the regulations governing conscientious objection whereby National Servicemen who applied for total or partial exemption had to prove that he formed his beliefs after being called up. Bury proposed an amendment to Section 29A of the National Service Act that would allow an applicant who was able to demonstrate the development of beliefs formed before being called up to be recognised as a conscientious objector.
The loophole in the *National Service Act* that concerned Bury elevated the Government's obsession with the equitable administration of the National Service scheme to a new level. A man who voluntarily enlisted in one of the Services after being called up for National Service was not liable for any further service, regardless of whether or not he rendered a minimum of two years' service and regardless of the reason for his discharge. Bury proposed that the *National Service Act* be amended to 'preclude the possibility of this anomaly being exploited by men seeking to evade their national service obligations'.\(^6^9\) It seems unlikely that men would have set out to exploit this loophole, however, because volunteers for the Regular Army had to enlist for a minimum of three years. It is reasonable to suggest that discharge before the expiration of the engagement on either medical or administrative grounds would in most cases have rendered a man either unable or unsuitable to perform any residual service.

Officers of the Department of Labour and National Service were hindered in their attempts to detect defaulters by Section 52 of the *National Service Act*, which limited their authority to ask questions and to seek information about the liability of a person to register for, or render, National Service. Assistance in this endeavour was forthcoming only through the unofficial co-operation of most educational institutions, which supplied enrolment details that could be cross-referenced with National Service registration records. Bury sought an extension of the power to investigate possible cases of non-compliance with the *National Service Act*, including the power to examine university student records for names, addresses, and dates of birth.\(^7^0\)

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\(^6^9\) *Ibid.*  
\(^7^0\) *Ibid.*
Bury observed that, whilst most universities had co-operated, ‘several universities have declined to do so and my Department would not be surprised if some others follow suit’, not because they were opposed to the access of their records for the detection of defaulters, but because they were concerned about the ramifications of breaches of privacy. According to the Minister, the wider powers that he sought for his Department to detect and investigate more thoroughly possible breaches of the National Service Act were justified because ‘it is particularly in the university student field that we cannot afford to have defaulters with their fellows aware that they are going undetected ...’.

On 28 September 1967, Cabinet decided that, with a Senate election due at the end of the year, it did not want to risk generating controversy by introducing into Parliament a series of amendments to the National Service Act. The Government evidently did not accept that the extent of National Service non-compliance was serious enough to warrant the introduction of a civilian alternative that could be portrayed by the Opposition as an admission of the scheme’s failings and as a compromise of the scheme’s integrity.

The Minister for Labour and National Service subsequently informed the Prime Minister that, although his Department had been aware for many months of men who had either failed to register or refused to obey call-up notices, no steps had been taken to prosecute them. In anticipation of amending legislation that would have required

71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 NAA: A4940, C4117, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 598, Submission no. 454 – Amendment of National Service Legislation, 28 September 1967.

258
employers only to notify the Department of suspected breaches of the *National Service Act*, employers had been assured that they would not be prosecuted if they continued to employ National Service defaulters. Without the necessary amendments to the *National Service Act*, the Department could refrain from prosecuting defaulters but could not prevent employers from dismissing them, which invited the possibility of adverse publicity and criticism of the Department for its failure to enforce the law properly.\(^\text{74}\)

Bury revealed that the Department had also failed to act against fifteen men whose applications for exemption from National Service as conscientious objectors had been refused by the Courts and who had subsequently ignored their call-up notices. A conundrum now existed: on the one hand, the Department could expect bad publicity for failing to prosecute the men; if, on the other hand, the men were prosecuted and convicted, it was the Army that could expect to receive the bad publicity as it would be responsible for taking the men into custody.\(^\text{75}\)

Bury also referred to the problem of men avoiding their National Service obligations by travelling overseas, often to New Zealand, without first seeking permission from the Department. The Minister concluded that, because his Department did not possess the necessary powers to detect and investigate suspected defaulters, the absence of legislation will be an embarrassment and there is always a risk of adverse publicity and public controversy. We have been able, and doubtless can continue, to postpone action in a number of directions but the embarrassment increases as time goes

\(^{75}\) Ibid.
Bury's revelations made the case for amending the *National Service Act* more compelling than it had originally appeared.

In May 1968, the Federal Government attempted to remove the obstacles that prevented a more efficient administration of the National Service scheme. In Parliament, the Minister for Labour and National Service observed that, since the National Service scheme began, some 326,000 men had registered, of whom 27,000 had been called up, and another 10,000 had exercised the option to serve in the Citizen Forces. Bury observed that, whilst most young men and their families accepted the obligations of National Service and remained co-operative from the time of their medical examination to their call up, and for the duration of their military service, a small minority were 'seeking to evade, or are defaulting in, their obligations at one or more of these stages'.

Bury explained the problem of detecting defaulters. Although officers of the Department of Labour and National Service were empowered to ask questions about a person’s liability to register or to render service, the *National Service Act* did not authorise them to request information about a man’s place of residence or employment, which could be used to locate him for the purpose of clarifying his National Service obligations. The *National Service Act* was also restrictive because it authorised officers to enquire only about the liability of specific individuals and did not permit questions to be asked that might establish the existence of a man unknown to the Department. Bury sought the power to require institutions to provide information that could be used by the

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Department to ensure that ‘all those liable to register either currently or in the past have done so’. 78 Bury noted that some institutions had already agreed to requests to examine records and claimed that the legal authority he sought would not only assist his Department, but would also protect the interests of those co-operative institutions. 79

Bury also addressed the prescribed penalties for breaches of the National Service Act. The penalty of $100 for failure to register was to be doubled and men convicted of the offence who then refused to register would be deemed to have registered, while the lodgement of a fictitious registration and the provision of false or misleading statements were to be made offences that would also attract a $200 fine. 80 A man who failed to attend for, or refused to submit to, a medical examination would forthwith incur a $200 fine and then be compelled to either enter into a recognisance to submit to a medical examination, or be held in custody for up to seven days, during which he could reconsider his position. If he remained unco-operative, call-up action would be initiated, and if the man failed to obey his call-up notice, he would be prosecuted. 81 The Army was relieved of the responsibility for the custody of defaulters who would now face two years’ civil imprisonment with ‘the normal remissions for good behaviour as provided in the various States’. 82

Other measures that were introduced related to the recovery of fines and the liability for residual service of men called up for National Service after having rendered

a period of service in the permanent forces. Those men who had rendered less than fifteen months' service would be required to render a period of residual service that would aggregate the two-year National Service liability. Men who had rendered fifteen months' service or more would incur no additional liability because the Army did not consider the enlistment a man for less than nine months to be worthwhile. For the benefit of unnaturalised migrants who wished to retain their alien status and not risk becoming stateless, the requirement to take an oath upon enlistment in the Citizen Forces was to be removed. To avoid the problem of the Courts having to re-hear exceptional hardship cases for which temporary deferment could be granted for a maximum of twelve months at a time, a provision was made for the discretionary grant of indefinite deferment after two years.83

Bury also proposed that overseas carriers should not issue tickets for overseas travel to men in the National Service age group who were not authorised by the Department of Labour and National Service to travel overseas. Bury conceded that it would take some time to arrange discussions with representatives of the airlines and the shipping companies, without whose co-operation the initiative could not work. The amending legislation would also make all classes of employees subject to the National Service Act in relation to the obligation of employers to notify the Department of Labour and National Service of suspected cases of default.84

The range of the proposed legislation reflects the potential scale of the problem of default and Bury's casual remark that 'the opportunity is being taken to tidy up a

number of minor procedural issues which have been encountered in the administration of national service' was far from justified.85 The *Australian* newspaper’s description of ‘new powers reminiscent of wartime’ that the proposed legislation would give the Federal Government, and a report by the *Sun News-Pictorial* that the Government was likely to be forced to revise its legislation in order to secure the support of the anti-communist Democratic Labor Party in the Senate, foreshadowed the controversy that followed.86

In Parliament on 15 May 1968, the Labor Party initiated an extensive debate that encompassed a broad range of topics directly and indirectly related to the National Service scheme. Conscientious objection, civil liberties and the responsibilities of citizenship, the problems of administering a highly selective National Service scheme, and the possibility of a civilian alternative were all canvassed. Questions were also raised about Australia’s immediate defence needs, potential threats, and the value of Australia’s strategic alliance with the United States. Australian history was even invoked in an attempt to define compulsory military training and conscription. The succession of Labor Party speakers was intent on developing a close relationship between the National Service scheme and Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Lance Barnard (Labor, Bass), declared the Labor Party’s opposition to the National Service scheme and ‘to conscription for Vietnam or anywhere else outside Australian territory except in time of declared war’. 87

86 *Australian*, 2 May 1968; *Sun News-Pictorial*, 13 May 1968.  
Barnard vowed to oppose clauses 21 and 22 of the amending legislation, relating to the provision of information by individuals, educational and other institutions about a man’s liability to register and serve.\textsuperscript{88} Also rejected were clauses 24 and 25, imposing obligations upon parents and guardians and employers, and clause 26, relating to the notification of suspected defaulters by employers and the prevention of unauthorised overseas travel by shipping companies and airlines.\textsuperscript{89} The Labor Party’s refusal to support the Bill was based upon what Barnard described as the introduction of a number of ‘extremely coercive requirements designed to incite informing and pimping’.\textsuperscript{90}

Arthur Calwell (Labor, Melbourne) enunciated most passionately the ideological position that the Labor Party espoused:

\begin{quote}
I admit that the Labor Party is paying a heavy price for its opposition to the filthy, bloody war in Vietnam, but it is a price worth paying. We must continue to uphold our principles and fight and lose, if necessary, rather than become a party of warmongers and sycophantic, unquestioning followers of the United States.\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

The total number of Australian casualties in Vietnam had exceeded one thousand, including 189 fatalities, Calwell observed.\textsuperscript{92}

The Government recognised that it was in serious trouble. It had already, without bothering to inform the Opposition, removed from its amending legislation the provisions relating to close relatives of men liable for National Service, and at the same time imposed limits on the information that others could be required to give. The

Government decided that the immediate family of a man liable for National Service would not be penalised for refusing to disclose his whereabouts and nor would doctors, legal practitioners, and clergymen be required to divulge such information if it were to breach a professional confidence. However, the Government still intended to require educational institutions to provide information.\(^93\) The editor of the Melbourne *Herald* was satisfied with the modified Bill:

> While the result is undoubtedly a new, restrictive measure, it appears a justified attempt to ensure that a selfish few do not unfairly avoid duties and risks that others must share. The existing rights of genuine conscientious objectors are not impaired. In its revised form, the legislation seems to fit its purpose without creating objectionable precedents.\(^94\)

The editor of the *Age*, however, argued that the relaxation of the proposed legislation did not go far enough. As the Bill stood, not only would educational institutions and employers still be required to supply information: so too would the members of a man’s extended family, including aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins. The *Age* also objected to the provision of a summary sentence of two years’ imprisonment – without the option of a trial by jury – for a man found guilty of disobeying a call-up notice for a second time.\(^95\) In spite of these reservations, the newspaper’s political correspondent in Canberra hailed a victory for public opinion: ‘Under direct public pressure and the raised voices of the people’s spokesman – the press and the politicians – the often-implacable machinery of Government yielded to demands to drop some of the more obnoxious provisions of its new National Service

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\(^93\) *Age*, 16 May 1968.
\(^94\) *Herald*, 16 May 1968.
\(^95\) *Age*, editorial, 17 May 1968.
But the controversy had yet to run its full course.

A number of educational institutions united in their opposition to the legislation. The staff and students of La Trobe University were among the first to protest. The *Sun News-Pictorial* published a letter that it received from an independent group of seven members of the Technical Teachers' Association of Victoria who declared:

> We have spent a lifetime building that relationship of trust so essential between teacher and pupil which this legislation would destroy. We hope any teacher of 'draft age' youths will reject the degrading role of an informer. The relationship between teacher and student should be as confidential as between doctor and patient, lawyer and client, or priest and parishioner.

The Government was expected to yield more ground after the vice-chancellors of La Trobe, Monash University, and the University of Melbourne, in a telegram to the Minister for Labour and National Service, objected strongly to the proposal that officers of the Department should have unfettered access to students' records. The Government, nevertheless, remained determined that the universities would at least be required to respond to specific written enquiries about suspected defaulters. The University of Adelaide Council and the Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association subsequently brought additional pressure to bear on the Government by joining the protest.

On 28 May 1968, Labor's Gordon Bryant moved an amendment to the *National Service Act* allowing conscientious objection to a particular war to be recognised by the

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96 *Age*, 18 May 1968.
97 *Age*, 18 May 1968.
98 *Sun News-Pictorial*, letters, 21 May 1968.
100 *Sun News-Pictorial*, 25 May 1968.
Courts as a legitimate basis for exemption from National Service. The Leader of the Opposition, Whitlam, supported the motion, claiming that:

The circumstances which exist today are obviously very different from those which applied when the National Service Act was first passed in 1951 and amended in 1953 and 1957, and even when it was further amended in 1964. As has already been pointed out, there can be very great differences in attitude towards one war and another war.

The Labor Party raised the conscientious objector issue in an attempt to strengthen the association between what it regarded as an immoral war in Vietnam and an unfair National Service scheme. Whitlam sustained the attack by calling for an alternative to military service, the grant of provisional conscientious objector status to claimants until their cases were determined, the right to a trial by jury for National Service defaulters, and a maximum penalty of two years' imprisonment for breaches of the National Service Act.

On the following day, the Government passed a series of amendments that diluted the Bill further, but as the Australian newspaper reported, the intention to compel individuals to provide Department of Labour and National Service officers with information about defaulters remained. A meeting of the Melbourne University Staff Association subsequently adopted two resolutions opposing the contentious amendment and the Registrar of the University of Sydney discussed openly the possibility of


challenging the amending legislation in the High Court. Later, the Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University, Sir John Crawford, tried to defuse the situation when he told a student meeting that, whilst the amendment could potentially create a dilemma for the universities, he was unaware of any attempt by officers of the Department of Labour and National Service to solicit information about students from administrative staff. Implicit in this observation is a distinction between the legal and the effective powers provided by the National Service Act. Although the Department of Labour and National Service might have possessed the legal authority to coerce individuals in the course of its investigations, the expected public reaction effectively rendered that authority useless. As one parliamentary observer wrote at the time: ‘Ministers say that the requirement of individuals to provide information was in the National Service Act of 1951 but that no prosecutions were ever made. Surely no prosecutions will be launched after the controversy of the past few weeks?’

Despite this ambiguous outcome, Victorian Senator Frank McManus claimed kudos for the Democratic Labor Party and the Senate for forcing changes to the amending legislation. McManus at the same time attacked his former colleagues in the Labor Party: ‘The original Bill had objectionable features, although it was never the pimping, police-state Bill, many hysterical critics claimed’. Nevertheless, the attempt to amend the National Service Act was certainly ill-conceived, highly inflammatory, and arguably unnecessary, because in terms of numbers, non-compliance had not been a

105 Age, 4 June and 8 June 1968.
106 Australian, 13 June 1968.
107 Age, 15 June 1968.
108 Herald, 18 June 1968.
serious problem. As the Government's own statistics reveal, by the end of June 1968, a total of 330,900 men had registered for National Service, whilst there had been only 1,044 suspected breaches of the *National Service Act*.\textsuperscript{109}

National Service default had, however, come to be widely recognised as a form of protest that belonged to a broad movement for social change; but as Peter Edwards has observed: ‘The Government had failed to realise that most Australians now associated conscription with Vietnam, and this with riots and rebellions around the world by protestors for whom the war had become the principal symbol of the established order’\textsuperscript{110}. Hence the provisions of the amending legislation that were originally tabled, which were designed to consolidate public support for the National Service scheme, were not initially viewed from within the Government as antagonistic.

Although the Federal Government remained convinced that strict compliance with the *National Service Act* was fundamental to the integrity of the National Service scheme, the concept of equity through inclusiveness was not applied to Aborigines. The inadequacy of the *National Service Act* in relation to Aborigines, conflicting State and Commonwealth laws, and a general reluctance to address the liability of Aborigines for National Service, combined to create what Ann-Mari Jordens has accurately described as ‘an administrative nightmare’\textsuperscript{111}.

\textsuperscript{110} Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 219.
On 7 May 1965, the Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, Bland, commented to the Secretary of the Prime Minister’s Department on an enquiry from the Aboriginal Advancement Council of Western Australia regarding the reasons for the exclusion of Aborigines from the National Service scheme. Bland suggested that the reply should first point out that under the *National Service Act*, ‘aboriginal natives of Australia’, as a broadly defined group, remained exempt from the liability to register for National Service. The *National Service Act* continued to recognise as an ‘aboriginal native of Australia’ a full-blooded aboriginal native of Australia, a half-caste aboriginal native of Australia or a person with an admixture of aboriginal blood greater than a half-caste, or a person with an admixture of aboriginal blood and living as an aboriginal native or amongst Aborigines.\(^{112}\)

Bland stated that ‘there is no foundation for the suggestion that the Government intends to discriminate against Aborigines by reason of their not being required to register or that it should be inferred that they are not suitable for service’, and acknowledged that ‘Aborigines have served with distinction in the Australian Military Forces’.\(^{113}\) However, the exclusion of Aborigines from the National Service scheme was inconsistent with the Government’s policy of integrating Aborigines into what Bland saw fit to describe as the ‘normal community’.\(^{114}\) Bland explained that the liability of ‘primitive or tribalised Aborigines’ for National Service was ‘impracticable’, would create hardship, and: ‘Moreover, many of them may have difficulty in speaking English,

\(^{112}\) NAA: A463, 1962/3685 Part 1, Bland’s draft reply to Aboriginal Advancement Council of Western Australia, 7 May 1965.
\(^{113}\) Ibid.
\(^{114}\) Ibid.
or understanding it, and as a result, would have difficulty in comprehending or performing the duties of military service'.

Bland noted that the *National Service Act* had been amended in 1964 to enable ‘defined classes of aboriginal natives to be required to register’ and gave an assurance that the question of precisely which classes of Aborigines were to be defined was receiving due consideration. The Minister for Labour and National Service, William McMahon, later indicated the relatively low importance that his Department attached to the issue when he explained that the ‘pressure of work more directly related to the re-introduction of national service has been so great that it has not yet been possible to determine the extent to which the ranks of those presently exempted can be reduced’. In the meantime, wrote Bland, ‘Aborigines may volunteer for national service and, if they do so, their applications would be considered, along with those of other volunteers for national service’. Bland’s correspondence contains no hint of understanding the Aboriginal Advancement Council’s concern that Aborigines were being discriminated against for the very reason that in order to become liable for National Service they had to volunteer.

The *National Service Act* defined aboriginality very loosely and this may have caused the Government to prevaricate. The issue resurfaced briefly when the report of a conference held in Adelaide in July 1965, which involved Commonwealth and State

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115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
authorities responsible for aboriginal welfare, was finally tabled in Federal Parliament. The conference had recommended that Aborigines should be required to register for National Service, and identified a role for aboriginal welfare authorities in determining the suitability of individuals for military training.\textsuperscript{119}

The issue subsided until July 1967, when the Western Australian Liberal Party annual conference reportedly called upon the Federal Government to make Aborigines liable for National Service.\textsuperscript{120} According to the Melbourne \textit{Herald}, the Government wanted to make Aborigines liable for National Service but was unable to do so because many aboriginal births were not recorded. Consequently, Aborigines could not be included in the birthday ballot because it was not possible to establish dates of birth upon which the ballot system was based.\textsuperscript{121}

The absence of adequate records and the broad definition of aboriginality contained in the \textit{National Service Act} sometimes made it difficult to determine a man's liability for National Service, as the Director of the South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs, C.J. Millar, explained to his federal counterpart, B.G. Dexter, in March 1969. From discussions with officers of his Department, National Service authorities, and Aborigines, Millar concluded that there was 'no clear understanding of the subject'.\textsuperscript{122} Millar objected to receiving requests from the Department of Labour and National Service for advice about whether or not individual Aborigines should be required to register for National Service or be prosecuted for failure to do so, and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Australian}, 11 December 1965.
  \item \textit{Australian}, 4 July 1967.
  \item \textit{Herald}, 4 July 1967.
\end{itemize}
suggested that a federal investigation be conducted to clarify the situation.\textsuperscript{123}

The Federal Government never made a co-ordinated attempt to address the liability of Aborigines for National Service. The inconsistent application of the \textit{National Service Act} to Aborigines culminated in a prosecution in which Western Australian and Commonwealth law collided. When a 22-year-old part-Aborigine, Mervyn Eades, was fined for having failed to register for National Service, his case attracted widespread publicity.\textsuperscript{124} As three-eighths aboriginal, Eades was deemed to be an Aborigine under the laws of the State of Western Australia. However, under the laws of the Commonwealth of Australia, and in accordance with the definition contained in the \textit{National Service Act}, Eades needed to be at least half aboriginal or to be living as an Aborigine or amongst Aborigines, to be considered exempt from National Service. The Albany Court of Petty Sessions found that Eades was liable for National Service because he lived in a conventional home among white people, owned a car, dressed well, and had a satisfactory command of English, all of which made him, in the words of the Magistrate, H.J. Ryan, ‘acceptable to the white community’ and liable for National Service.\textsuperscript{125} The editor of the \textit{Australian} criticised the judgement: ‘The law that says that Mr Mervyn Eades, of Western Australia, is black is overruled by the law that says he is white. The law that says he does not have to do national service is subservient to the law that says he does. There is no getting away from it: there are times when the

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Sun News-Pictorial}, 14 December 1971.
law can be a terrible ass’.\textsuperscript{126}

In a letter to the Director of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, the Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, Philip Cook, stated clearly that the Government had no intention of making Aborigines liable for National Service by removing references to Aborigines from the \textit{National Service Act}. Any amendment would have to be debated in Parliament and the Government was not prepared to expose itself to more attacks from the Opposition. Cook revealed that the Minister for Labour and National Service had, in early 1970, considered in detail a number of possible amendments to the \textit{National Service Act}, including the question of Aborigines, after both Commonwealth and State ministers for aboriginal affairs had called for the removal of discriminatory references to Aborigines.\textsuperscript{127}

No action was taken for a number of reasons. The Government wanted to avoid the embarrassing accusation that it had ‘reached the stage where it was even calling up Aborigines to fight in Vietnam’ and did not want to encourage the Vietnam War and aboriginal protest movements to unite.\textsuperscript{128} The Government also recognised that an extension of the liability for National Service to all Aborigines would demand acceptance of Aborigines into the wider community, which could lead to social complications. From the Government’s viewpoint, whilst it was reasonable to allow Aborigines to volunteer for National Service, it was absurd to make tribal or nomadic Aborigines liable. The Government was deterred by the problem of birth dates and

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Australian}, editorial, 16 December 1971.
\textsuperscript{127} NAA: A2354, 1968/1, Letter, Cook to Dexter, 3 March 1972.
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Ibid.}
anticipated that an ‘overwhelming majority’ of Aborigines would not, in any case, meet the Army’s medical and educational standards. Consequently, the exercise of making Aborigines liable for National Service ‘would be quite wasteful of administrative resources and unrealistic’.130

To support his assertion that the National Service Act discriminated not against, but in favour of, Aborigines, Cook cited the demand by some aboriginal groups for the exclusion even of part-Aborigines from the National Service scheme. The association between National Service and the Vietnam War was sufficiently strong to ensure that the Government did not raise the issue of the liability of Aborigines for National Service.131 In spite of Dexter’s firm belief that references to Aborigines should be removed from the National Service Act, and despite his belated insistence that the problems outlined by Cook were not insuperable, the opportunity to resolve the issue passed.132 J.E. Cooper, a Senior Research Officer from the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, made an understatement: ‘We appear to be going backward rather than forward in the removal of the sections exempting some Aborigines from liability for national service’.133

On 27 February 1969, the Deputy Leader of the Federal Opposition, Barnard, introduced into Parliament a Bill that provided for three things. They were: a civilian alternative to National Service, the recognition of conscientious objection to a particular

129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
war as a basis for exemption from National Service, and the determination of conscientious objector applications by Commissioners for Conscientious Objectors instead of by the Courts.\textsuperscript{134} Bury rejected these proposals as too complicated and neither practicable nor conducive to the fair administration of the National Service scheme.\textsuperscript{135} The Government was, however, eventually forced to reconsider its position.

In January 1970, the Minister for Labour and National Service, Billy Snedden, recommended that Cabinet approve civilian work as an alternative to military service for men convicted of failing to obey a call-up notice. Snedden conceded that public opposition to the National Service scheme had increased considerably in 1969 because it had increasingly come to be identified with Australian involvement in the Vietnam War, which was also losing public support. Snedden advised that, although the organised core of opposition to National Service was estimated to comprise only 50 to 100 people, they had managed to attract a broad base of support, including students, academics, clergymen, trade unionists, and some state and federal members of the Australian Labor Party. Opponents of National Service and the war had organised meetings and demonstrations, adopted protest resolutions, incited men to breach the \textit{National Service Act}, aided and abetted those who did, and protested against the offices of the Department of Labour and National Service, abusing and harassing its officers.\textsuperscript{136}

Snedden believed that, whilst the Vietnam War was a major focus of dissenters, their principal target was the National Service scheme: 'Even if Australian troops were

\textsuperscript{136} NAA: A5882, CO19 Part 2, Cabinet Submission no. 85 – Review of the National Service Scheme, 9 January 1970.
no longer involved in Vietnam there would still be a hard core opposed to national service; they are opposed to conscription per se’. Although the protest movement’s activities were wide-ranging, Snedden did not believe that it had produced a significant increase in the rate of non-compliance with the *National Service Act*. The total of 482,000 men who had registered for National Service since the scheme’s inception far exceeded the 88 men who had been convicted of failing to obey a call-up notice, the average of sixteen men who failed to attend for a medical examination each year, and the four men who had been imprisoned for two years, two of whom had already been released. However, fourteen men were facing prosecution by the end of the year, and it was possible that up to 50 men would eventually be gaol. This was problematic because: ‘Virtually every protestor liable for national service is wrongly labelled in the press as a “conscientious objector”’ and therefore could potentially attract undeserved public sympathy.

Snedden’s proposal was designed to deny National Service defaulters the benefit of that sympathy by offering men convicted of failure to obey a call-up notice an option of military service or approved civilian work in lieu of the prescribed penalty of two years’ gaol. In order to minimise the attraction of the civilian alternative to military service, both for men due to be called up and for those already serving, the plan incorporated several disincentives, including the dislocation of a man’s normal life without entitlement to reinstatement or re-establishment benefits, and in the event of unsatisfactory performance, a provision for imprisonment for the balance of the


277
recommended service obligation of two-and-a-half years. 139

Cabinet eventually approved Snedden’s proposal for a civilian alternative to National Service. 140 The Government had only recently been re-elected and could therefore afford to accept a civilian alternative to National Service. Indeed, it was a shrewd political decision. The Government’s electoral majority at the October 1969 poll was reduced from 40 to only seven seats and the introduction of an alternative to the prescribed penalties for breaches of the National Service Act was advisable. In an earlier Gallup Poll, nearly half of the respondents indicated that men who refused to register for National Service should serve for two years in the Army as non-combatants, nearly a quarter favoured two years’ work on special civilian projects, while almost one in five supported no penalty. Only five per cent were in favour of two years’ gaol. 141

Dissent does not appear to have influenced the Government’s decision to approve a civilian alternative to National Service, but the commencement of a phased withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam might have. On 22 April 1970, the Prime Minister, Gorton, informed Parliament that Cabinet had decided to withdraw one of the three Australian battalions and some support personnel from Vietnam. The Eighth Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (8 RAR) was due to complete its tour of duty in November and would not be replaced. 142 The announcement of an Australian withdrawal had been anticipated since June 1969, when the US President, Richard

139 Ibid.
Nixon, announced an initial withdrawal of 25,000 of the more than half a million American troops in Vietnam, even though Gorton stated at the time that a reduction in the Australian force would not automatically follow. In December 1969, Gorton announced in a radio and television broadcast to the nation that the Government accepted in principle a reduction in the Australian force in Vietnam. At the same time, Nixon had decided to withdraw an additional 50,000 American troops by the middle of April 1970, bringing the total number to 110,000.

Even though it did not address the underlying problem of National Service default, for the Government, the attractiveness of a civilian alternative to National Service might have increased on 21 April 1970, when breaches of the *National Service Act* committed between the beginning of September 1969 and the end of February 1970 were tabled in the Senate. During those six months, convictions were recorded in 117 cases of failure to register, seven cases of failure to notify a change of address, five cases of leaving Australia without permission, ten cases of failure to attend for a medical examination, and one case of failure to obey a call-up notice. In addition, 76 cases were listed for hearing. As these figures show, nearly all offences were committed by men who were yet to be called up; the growing number of offences would inevitably involve more cases of failure to disobey a call-up notice, which was the problem that the civilian alternative to National Service was designed to solve.

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143 *Sydney Morning Herald* 10 June 1969.
144 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 December 1969.
The editor of the *Age* hailed the Government’s decision as ‘an important and welcome change of principle’: ‘It recognises the futility, still more the injustice, of gaoling non-compliers who have deep-rooted philosophical or moral objections to army service. The Government has conceded what it refused previously to concede – that non-compliers are not criminals and do not deserve to be treated as such’. The *Age* went on to argue that there was no valid reason why the period of civilian service should be any longer than the two-year obligation for military service, and that neither should it involve menial work. It urged the Government to liberalise the *National Service Act* in relation to conscientious objection and to provide for objection to a particular war. In calling for the organisation of a conference involving all interested parties, the National President of the RSL, Lee, agreed that, whilst National Service needed to continue, the introduction of a civilian alternative was essential. Disappointment must have been widespread then, when less than a week later, Cabinet rescinded its decision to introduce a civilian alternative and at the same time reaffirmed its refusal to recognise conscientious objection to a particular war as a legitimate basis for exemption from National Service.

This policy reversal appears to have been prompted by the logic that a civilian alternative to National Service would undermine the integrity of the scheme. The acceptance of a civilian alternative might also have seemed to contradict the Government’s argument that National Service default did not constitute a major

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146 *Age*, editorial, 29 May 1970.
147 Ibid.
problem. As Snedden explained in a press statement in August 1970, since the inception of the National Service scheme, 99.8 per cent of men required to render service had done so.\textsuperscript{150} To that point, a total of 43,061 men had been called up and enlisted in the Army and one-fifth of one per cent of that number equated to fewer than 100 men.\textsuperscript{151} The numerically significant problem was to be found in the previous year’s prosecutions for breaches of the \textit{National Service Act} by men who were yet to be called up, including 262 cases of failure to register and 23 cases of failure to attend for a medical examination.\textsuperscript{152}

Significantly, the civilian alternative to National Service was not only accepted but also rejected at a time when public opposition to National Service and the Vietnam War was highly visible. Organised protest in the form of the Vietnam Moratorium campaign had concerned the Government for some time. In Parliament in April 1969, the Attorney-General, Thomas Hughes (Liberal, Berowra), had beseeched the Australian people not become involved in a protest movement that championed ‘the withdrawal of Australian and all other foreign troops from Vietnam and the repeal of the National Service Act’.\textsuperscript{153}

Ultimately, in May and in September 1970 and in June 1971, a total of at least 100,000 people attended Moratorium demonstrations in Australian cities. Had the decision to introduce a civilian alternative to National Service not been rescinded,

\textsuperscript{150} NAA: A5882, CO19 Part 2, Department of Labour and National Service Press Statement, 25 August 1970.

\textsuperscript{151} NAA: A5882, CO19 Part 2, National Service Summary of Registrants as at 30 June 1970.

\textsuperscript{152} NAA: A5882, CO19 Part 2, Department of Labour and National Service Press Statement, 25 August 1970.

public pressure might well have been credited with a significant victory. The sequence of events, however, indicates that the Government was not in a magnanimous mood. For Jeffrey Grey, the Moratoriums were not catalysts for social change, but rather reflections of changes that were already taking place in Australia and in other Western nations that would later give rise to the women’s movement of the 1970s. Australian society was undergoing a gradual transformation to which the Labor Party was much more closely attuned than the Government.

On 19 August 1971, Barnard had hoped to exert more pressure on the Federal Government by reintroducing into Parliament, in unchanged form, the National Service Bill from 1969 that called for the introduction of a civilian alternative to National Service and wider provisions for conscientious objection. However, an announcement by the Prime Minister on the previous day effectively rendered Barnard’s proposed legislation superfluous. McMahon informed Parliament of Cabinet’s decision to withdraw the remaining Australian troops from Vietnam before the end of the year and to reduce the size of the Regular Army from 44,000 to 40,000 personnel by reducing the full-time National Service obligation from two years to eighteen months. As there was to be no change in the total five-year National Service obligation, the Reserve service component was increased from three to three-and-a-half years, while the required term of voluntary CMF service as an alternative to National Service was reduced from six to five years.

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The *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial of 19 August 1971 welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement, which signalled an end to what it described as 'perhaps the most difficult and certainly the most controversial military operation this country has undertaken'. The newspaper applauded the decision to maintain the Regular Army organisation based upon nine infantry battalions and accepted that National Service was still needed, but criticised the six-month reduction in the length of full-time National Service because it involved a reduction in the amount of effective service that National Servicemen would render, thereby reducing the operational efficiency of the Army. However, as the Government was intent on effecting an immediate reduction in the personnel strength of the Regular Army, it had no option but to curtail the service obligation.

Cabinet's decision to reduce the National Service obligation to eighteen months provides some strong evidence of the causal relationship that had come to be seen between the National Service scheme and the Vietnam War, a relationship that the Government still refused to acknowledge publicly. On 26 July 1971, Cabinet considered a reduction in the period of National Service in relation to the withdrawal from Vietnam. Nevertheless, the Minister for Labour and National Service, Phillip Lynch, later argued that the continuation of the National Service scheme proved that the scheme had not been introduced to support the military commitment to Vietnam. Lynch insisted that the reduction in the National Service obligation and the withdrawal from

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Vietnam was coincidental.\textsuperscript{160} It is true that the National Service scheme was not introduced and maintained only because of Vietnam. However, Lynch’s additional observations – that National Service was reintroduced in 1964 but it was not until 1966 that the first National Servicemen were sent to Vietnam, and that only one-third of all National Servicemen called up served in Vietnam – were an unconvincing attempt to deny any causal connection between the two.\textsuperscript{161}

Publicly, the Minister for Labour and National Service presented the National Service default statistics in a positive light. From the beginning of 1968 to the end of June 1972, 9,013 men had been automatically considered for call-up after failing to register voluntarily at the required time, while another 1,625 men had been prosecuted after openly refusing to register or after being detected after failing to register. Lynch stated that the vast majority of men who were found in breach of the \textit{National Service Act} through failure to register offered no further resistance: only thirteen men had proved so obstinate that they were gaoled for failure to obey a call-up notice. Lynch concluded his assessment by declaring that the statistics reflected ‘the level of acceptance of national service among the young men affected’.\textsuperscript{162}

In contrast to this public account, Lynch confided in the Prime Minister three specific needs. The first was to increase the effort to detect men who were attempting to evade their National Service obligations. The second was to expedite the investigation and prosecution of cases. The third was to counter active opposition to the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{CPD}, vol. H. of R. 73, 9 September 1971, p. 1004.  \\
\textsuperscript{161} \textit{Ibid.}  \\
\textsuperscript{162} NAA: A5882, CO19 Part 2, Department of Labour and National Service News Release, National Service Scheme 1971-72, 3 September 1972.
\end{flushleft}
administration of the National Service scheme. Lynch complained that the unavailability of students’ records was impeding the effort to detect National Service defaulters.\textsuperscript{163} Lynch enclosed a report on National Service default that referred to a group of some 250 ‘recalcitrants’ who constituted the ‘vocal and hard-core opposition to national service’, and a group of between 8,000 and 10,000 ‘evaders’, who were ‘by far the most numerous but equally the most silent’\textsuperscript{164} While recalcitrants championed the repeal of the \textit{National Service Act} in open defiance of the Government, evaders presented a problem for the Government through their stealth and numbers.\textsuperscript{165}

Peter Edwards has written that ‘the “recalcitrants” continued to exert an influence on public debate out of proportion to their numbers’.\textsuperscript{166} This observation touches upon a crucial point to which the Government seemed oblivious: whilst it was inevitable that a proportion of men should become evaders, in their increasing numbers, they and the recalcitrants belonged to the protest movement and were a symptom of social change. An intelligence report compiled by the Commonwealth Police Officer in Charge of the Victoria District, A.T. Jackson, outlined the dimensions of resistance to the \textit{National Service Act}. In early 1972, Jackson told the Commonwealth Police Force Commissioner, J.M. Davis, that the unpopularity of National Service had manifested in small university and political groups for two years before the foundation of the Draft Resisters’ Union in 1970.\textsuperscript{167}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{163} NAA: A5882, CO19 Part 2, Letter, Lynch to McMahon, 4 October 1971.
\item\textsuperscript{164} NAA: A5882, CO19 Part 2, Enclosed report, National Service Default, Lynch to McMahon, 4 October 1971.
\item\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{166} Edwards, \textit{A Nation at War}, p. 312.
\end{itemize}
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Jackson listed a dozen groups that gravitated to the Draft Resisters’ Union, which also enjoyed the support of the industrial unions and of many people affiliated with the churches. The various groups included Students for Democratic Society (SDS), the Radical Action Movement (RAM), the Worker Student Alliance (WSA), the Socialist Youth Alliance (SYA), Save Our Sons (SOS), the Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament (CICD), the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), the Moratorium Co-ordinating Committee, the Free New Guinea Association, the South Africa Apartheid Movement, the Free Bangla Desh Movement, and aboriginal organisations. Jackson believed that organised dissent was a problem that ran much deeper than opposition to National Service: ‘It would be true to say that if, for any reason, the National Service Act was no longer a contentious piece of legislation the activities of the various groups and individuals would be turned to any other topical subject, or a new situation created in relation to an innocuous matter.’\(^{168}\) The diverse groups and individuals within the groups were united in their opposition to the National Service scheme and to the prosecution of the Vietnam War. Because the objectives of the anti-conscription, anti-war movement and the policies of the Federal Government were irreconcilable, the only viable course of action open to the Government was to attempt to consolidate its existing public support.

In the approach to the 1972 federal election, both the Minister for Defence, David Fairbairn, and the Minister for Labour and National Service warned that if the Labor Party formed government and abolished the National Service scheme, the Army would descend into chaos: it would lose one-third of its total strength and half of its Field

\(^{168}\) \textit{Ibid.}
However, it was by now difficult to sustain a credible argument based upon the continued need for National Service. The Government had already abbreviated the scheme and the repatriation of the last Australian infantry battalion in Vietnam was imminent. With no other overseas military commitments, to many people, National Service was no longer necessary.

The Labor Party’s intentions in relation to National Service had been known for a long time and the election outcome effectively ended the scheme. When Lance Barnard delivered the 1970 John Curtin Memorial Lecture, he spoke at length about the Vietnam War, describing it as ‘the most enduring and intractable military venture in Australia’s history’. While advocating a withdrawal of Australian troops as quickly as possible, Barnard ridiculed the Government for its handling of the protracted conflict: ‘It has taken Menzies, Holt and Gorton seven years to get no positive result other than hundreds of casualties from the most despised and wretched war in Australia’s history’.

Barnard condemned the National Service Act as ‘completely wrong’, and described it as ‘repugnant to every aspect of Labor philosophy’, while declaring that the next Labor government would not hesitate to repeal it. As has already been established, Barnard was wrong to claim that the National Service Act in the form that it

171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
had taken was introduced only to help support Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War. However, for many of the Government’s detractors, it did not matter; for them, the abolition of the National Service scheme and the withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam were equally important joint objectives.

Barnard predicted in 1970 that, even if all National Servicemen were brought back to Australia, opposition to the National Service scheme would continue for as long as Australia was involved in the Vietnam War and the National Service Act disallowed conscientious objection to the war. According to Barnard, opposition to the National Service scheme was attributable to the Vietnam War and opposition to the war was attributable to the scheme. Therefore, without both abolishing the scheme and abandoning the war, the Government could not hope to satisfy its opponents. In this light, the attempt in 1968 to amend the National Service Act, the reversal of the decision to introduce a civilian alternative to National Service in 1970, and even the avoidance of debate through the continued exclusion of Aborigines from the scheme, are part of an attempt by the Government to cut its losses and consolidate its existing public support.

Jeffrey Grey has argued that throughout Australia’s involvement in Vietnam the anti-war movement failed to influence defence decision-making and that American policy held sway over the Federal Government instead. It is possible to extend this argument by concluding that the policy of forward defence could not succeed without

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173 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
175 Doyle, Grey and Pierce, Australia’s Vietnam War, pp. 62-63.
the military backing of the United States and therefore involved a sacrifice of initiative in Australian defence planning. In this sense, the Australian military commitment to South Vietnam was determined by the course of American involvement, and because the Australian effort was partly sustained by National Service, it was impossible to abandon the scheme, regardless of the political consequences of retaining it.

However, the Federal Government never seemed to have too much cause for concern. The basis of public support for the National Service scheme remained fairly solid in June 1971: when respondents to a Gallup Poll were asked whether or not the call-up should continue, some 53 per cent replied that it should continue, 37 per cent said that it should cease, and ten per cent were undecided.176 Indeed, a poll conducted later in the year suggested that the public’s strong preference for universal instead of selective military training remained the Government’s biggest problem. Of 69 per cent of respondents who favoured compulsory military training based upon a service obligation ranging from six months to two years, 56 per cent supported training all 20-year-olds, while only ten per cent approved the existing scheme’s average call-up of one in twelve men.177

Australia’s participation in the Vietnam War spanned a decade and involved 2,825 Navy, 42,700 Army, and 4,443 Air Force personnel, with 520 fatal casualties, including approximately 200 National Servicemen, and 2,398 non-fatal casualties.178 On 30 May 1973 it fell to Barnard, as the Minister for Defence, to introduce into Parliament the

177 AGP/APOP nos 2292 – 2294, September – October 1971.
National Service Termination Bill.\textsuperscript{179} When the Bill was subsequently returned from the Senate without amendment, the \textit{National Service Act} was retained, and would be for twenty years. The National Service scheme, however, was consigned to history.\textsuperscript{180}


CHAPTER SEVEN

The liability of unnaturalised non-British migrants for National Service

It is only right that these young men who come to make their homes in Australia should have the obligation and the privilege of learning to bear arms. New Australians form an increasing proportion of our population, and it would be folly to ignore them as a potential source of military reinforcement.

Melbourne Herald, editorial, 27 April 1954.

In Australia after the Second World War, population growth was considered essential to national survival. The architects of the large-scale post-war immigration programme aimed to populate Australia in order to promote economic development, and in so doing, to enhance national security. Australia’s wartime experience had lent credence to the popular catchcry, ‘populate or perish’, and consequently, the Federal Government’s immigration, economic, and defence policies became inextricably intertwined. The social implications of mass migration from continental Europe were obvious, as was the potential of non-British migrants to assist Australia’s economic development. In terms of defence, however, the introduction of National Service training in 1951 revealed a problem that was hitherto unimportant. Under international law, non-British migrants who had yet to become naturalised Australian citizens could not be called up for National Service training without the consent of their governments.
This clash of Australian immigration and defence policy generated public pressure that forced the Federal Government to initiate a concerted diplomatic effort with the aim of making unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for National Service training. During the 1950s, protracted negotiations between the Australian Government and numerous foreign governments ultimately proved fruitless. However, a second attempt that was launched soon after the reintroduction of National Service in 1964 yielded relatively quick success and unnaturalised non-British migrants were made liable for call-up from 1967.

That their liability was the result of a unilateral decision taken by Federal Government is significant. After 1945, Australia quickly became dependent upon immigration for economic development and, as a corollary, for defence. During the 1950s, the Government was therefore reluctant to jeopardise the immigration programme by making unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for National Service training against the wishes of source country governments. It is arguable that the undemanding nature of the National Service training scheme and the change from universal to selective military training in 1954 diminished the issue of migrants’ liability and thereby contained public pressure. In the 1960s, however, the kind of National Service scheme that was implemented made the liability of non-British migrants a fundamental imperative. Regardless of the inherent risk that decisive action presented to Australia’s immigration programme, the Federal Government simply could not afford to test the patience of the Australian public by entering into another round of protracted negotiations with foreign governments.
Throughout the period, the Federal Government was supported in this endeavour by a majority of Australians for three main reasons: the first was a determination to harness all available manpower for the armed forces; the second was a desire to ensure that National Service was administered fairly; the third was a belief in the potential of National Service to promote the assimilation of non-British migrants. This chapter will begin by considering the aims and the effects of the post-war immigration programme. Upon this foundation, a detailed examination of the process that culminated in the liability of non-British migrants for National Service may be better appreciated.

Brian Murphy has written that Australia’s post-war immigration programme ‘showed a remarkable shift, not only in immigration thinking, but in the national view of where Australia was placed in the international order’.¹ As Chapter One of this thesis has established, at the end of the Second World War many Australians believed that, in terms of defence, their country was not very well placed at all. In 1953, the Minister for Immigration, Holt, observed that the Second World War ‘dispelled the fog which had obscured more widespread recognition of our urgent need for a rapid increase in population’, and convinced ‘the great mass of Australians that they must either populate and develop their vast continent or accept the probability of having it taken from them’.²

After 1945, large-scale immigration came to be widely accepted as an integral part of a solution to the problem of national security. The immigration programme was designed to produce significant and rapid population increase, and in turn, to expand the

national economy. A bigger population and a larger economy was expected to provide the men and the materiel that the armed forces needed. The onset of the Cold War subsequently accentuated the importance of the process. The initial public response to the prospect of non-British migration was remarkably positive. A 1946 Gallup poll revealed that restricted migration from continental Europe was approved by more than 90 per cent of Australians. Dutch, Swedish, and French migrants were preferred, followed by Poles and Germans, Greeks, Russians, Yugoslavs and Italians. The Australian people’s endorsement of non-British migration is significant because it was expressed at a time of considerable uncertainty in domestic affairs. In 1946, there existed an acute housing shortage and demobilised men had only begun to re-enter the civilian workforce.

In April 1947, Mufti analysed the official statistics that revealed the nationalities represented in the previous year’s migrant intake, and of the racial balance achieved commented, ‘that three-fourths of the immigrants have been British should put the brake on those people who are forever shouting about too many continental immigrants and not enough British. Calwell seems to have answered his critics fairly well’. The early immigration figures reflect the strong preference for British migrants: of the 18,217 migrants who arrived in Australia in 1946, just 4,048 were non-British. Mufti later wrote excitedly about the nearly 32,000 migrants who had settled in Australia during 1947 and of the almost 70,000 more who were expected to arrive in 1948.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{3}}\text{ AGP/APOP, nos 345 – 354, May – June 1946.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{4}}\text{ Mufti, April 1947.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{ Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{6}}\text{ Mufti, June 1948.}\]
In 1947, 31,765 people migrated to Australia, and 65,739 followed in 1948. In that year, Australians became more circumspect about immigration generally. While just over half of all respondents to a Gallup poll were in favour of unrestricted British migration, almost as many favoured a restricted total annual migrant intake, at least until the building industry recovered from its war-induced slump. Given that the international situation at the time was very unstable, this attitude appears to reflect concerns about the possible adverse social effects of large-scale migration rather than doubts about the value of immigration to the economy and to defence.

The RSSAILA leadership never lost sight of the benefits that the post-war immigration programme was expected to deliver, and the Federal President, Millhouse, encouraged all Australians to extend an unreserved welcome to migrants. In terms of national security, the decision to increase Australia’s population was generally thought to be a good one, and for the League, immigration and defence were closely connected issues. Of course, the League’s attitude towards migration from continental Europe did not alter its preference for British migrants. Indeed, the arrival of non-British migrants in significant numbers became a catalyst for the RSSAILA’s sponsorship of British migrants.

The League advocated a general increase in the annual migrant intake and was prepared to undertake the relatively more difficult task of attracting British migrants to Australia while the Federal Government concentrated on non-British migration.  

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9 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 202, 3116c, Part 2, RSSAILA 33rd Annual Report and Balance Sheet 1948.
time to switch over from a too-drastic checking of alien immigration to an all-out move
to bring the British here. It is time for the pro-British to do something themselves’,
*Mufti* declared in 1948.\(^{10}\) In the following year, *Reveille* called upon people outside the
League to sponsor British migrants.\(^{11}\) ‘There is not much time. Every day that slips by
without a further step is a day lost. The League is embarked on its first big national
postwar venture, and it cannot afford to fail’, *Mufti* added.\(^{12}\)

In 1949, 167,727 migrants arrived in Australia. Then came another 174,540 in
1950.\(^{13}\) Most Australians seemed to accept that population increase was necessary for
economic development and defence; but, as the immigration programme gathered
momentum, some questions needed to be answered. For example, how many migrants
were ultimately to be admitted to Australia and how would the Australian community
manage to absorb them? In January 1950, the first in a series of annual Citizenship
Conventions was held in Canberra to consider immigration-related problems. Delegates
to the Convention included representatives of the Commonwealth and State
governments, the churches, trade unions and employer groups, the media, and a
multitude of community volunteer organisations. They agreed to establish a Good
Neighbour movement that would operate through federally funded Good Neighbour
Councils and New Settlers’ Leagues. Good Neighbour movement parent bodies were
subsequently established in each State to co-ordinate voluntary activities designed to

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\(^{10}\) *Mufti*, July 1948.

\(^{11}\) *Reveille*, July 1949.

\(^{12}\) *Mufti*, July 1949. A detailed account of the first group of assisted migrants sponsored by the League
appears in the October and November editions of *Reveille* and *Mufti*. A total of 550 migrants, consisting
of 377 British ex-servicemen and their families, departed Liverpool aboard the RSSAILA migrant ship
*M.V. Somerseshire* on 19 August and arrived in Sydney on 6 October 1949.

encourage the assimilation of migrants, which was defined as ‘their economic, social and cultural integration into the Australian community’.\textsuperscript{14} Ann-Mari Jordens has pointed out that, after 1945, successive federal governments were eager to expedite the assimilation and naturalisation of migrants because ‘the acceptance of Australian citizenship by aliens was seen as the only quantifiable indicator of the government’s success in settling migrants – as the endpoint of the settlement process’.\textsuperscript{15}

In 1951, the RSSAILA 36th Annual Congress attempted to establish an official immigration policy of its own. Congress agreed that a ‘vigorous’ immigration policy was ‘essential’ to Australia’s economic development and defence capability, and that the liability of British subjects for National Service training should be extended to so-called New Australians. Non-British migrants were expected to meet certain conditions. Congress urged the Federal Government to screen prospective migrants very carefully in order to prevent the admission of the kinds of people who might try to destabilise Australia’s liberal democracy – political extremists ‘holding Nazi, Fascist or Communistic sympathies’.\textsuperscript{16} The Minister for Immigration was also urged to take ‘all possible steps to ensure that New Australians acquire a working knowledge of the English language during their first two years’ residence in Australia’.\textsuperscript{17}

After 132,542 migrants settled in Australia in 1951 and 127,824 more arrived in 1952, rising inflation forced the Government to cut the 1953 migrant intake to 74,915, which Holt described as ‘a “breather”, during a period of temporary economic

\textsuperscript{14} Holt et al, \textit{Australia and the Migrant}, pp. 183-184.
\textsuperscript{15} Jordens, \textit{Alien to citizen}, pp. 2-3.
\textsuperscript{16} NLA Manuscript Section, RSL, Series 1, MS6609, Box 237, Folder 3819c, RSSAILA 36th Annual Congress held at Adelaide, 29 October – 1 November 1951.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid}.
difficulty'. The Minister for Immigration maintained that Australia should be able to absorb at least 100,000 migrants annually, and in referring to a restive Asian region reiterated the argument that immigration was necessary for defence:

Pass to-day through the countries of Asia which lie to our north, and note the conditions under which literally hundreds of millions are living there. Sense the electrically charged atmosphere created by rabid nationalism with its smouldering resentment of the European. Visualise as a real possibility, within our own lifetime, an Asia dominated by Communist cliques.

Holt seemed satisfied that the Australian people’s acceptance of large-scale immigration had elevated the issue above party politics, but he conceded that it would be folly of the Government to ignore their preference for British migrants and their demand for the maintenance of a white Australia. However, Australians could not afford to apply too many restrictions to the immigration programme if, as Holt warned, the number of people willing to migrate to Australia was likely to diminish gradually. Australia needed migrants, and migrants would become increasingly difficult to attract as Britain and the countries of continental Europe continued to recover from the war. Holt noted that the state of the domestic economy would have a significant bearing on the willingness of migrants to settle in Australia, but that ultimately, the ability of the Australian community to absorb migrants would need to determine the number of non-British migrants to be admitted.

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18 Holt et al, Australia and the Migrant, p. 7.
21 Holt et al, Australia and the Migrant, p. 7.
A demographer from the Australian National University, W.D. Borrie, argued that, whilst large-scale immigration would expand the nation's economy, a bigger economy would not necessarily produce greater wealth. Australia's role in collective security arrangements would be enhanced not by a larger population, but by harnessing more effectively the resources that were needed for defence production. According to Borrie, economic conditions would ultimately determine the level of public support for large-scale immigration, which would translate into political pressure and dictate the future course of the immigration programme. Borrie insisted that Australians should attempt to ensure the success of the immigration programme by beginning to develop an appreciation of the problem of migrant assimilation. In the early 1950s, Australians began to realise that the assimilation of migrants of many different nationalities demanded a concerted effort.

The main effect of the immigration programme can be summarised in the following way. In 1947, of 743,200 overseas-born permanent residents, 158,300 hailed from countries other than the United Kingdom, Ireland, and New Zealand. By 1954, 578,200 of the 1,285,800 migrants who had settled in Australia were from countries other than those named. In the seven years since the launch of the immigration programme, the proportion of foreign permanent residents had more than doubled. Such a remarkable demographic shift within such a short space of time created a dilemma for both the people and the Government. Certainly, most people continued to accept that

24 In 1947, Australia's population numbered 7,579,400; of these, 90.1 per cent (6,835,200) were Australian-born. By 1954, the population had reached 8,986,500 and the percentage of Australian-born had declined to 86.6 per cent (7,700,100). 'Australia Now - Population international migration', in Australian Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Bb75d35c0ef86d904c256b350010b3f9?OpenDocument>
Australia needed substantial and rapid population increase, but the more migrants received, the larger the question of their assimilation loomed. Against this backdrop, a connection was made between the assimilation of migrants and their liability for National Service training.

The origins of the attempt to make unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for National Service training can be traced back to 1942. Early in that year, the War Cabinet contemplated calling up to the Army the approximately 20,000 alien males aged between 18 and 40 years residing in Australia at that time. Central to the War Cabinet’s survey of available manpower was an observation by the Minister for the Army, Francis Forde: ‘It would seem reasonable that aliens including refugees should, in return for the protection which they have received and for the economic and social opportunities which in time of peace they have enjoyed, be liable to some extent to contribute to this country’s war effort’.\(^{25}\)

Forde proposed that the citizens of allied countries, and refugees, regardless of nationality, should be given the opportunity to volunteer for service in the Australian armed forces, and that those who failed to do so should become liable for call-up to labour units that would be tasked to perform war-related work.\(^{26}\) The War Cabinet considered Australia’s mobilisation to be a part of the collective Allied war effort and expected the citizens of allied countries living in Australia to contribute. In the 1950s, the proposal to call up unnaturalised non-British migrants for National Service training was consistent with Forde’s recommendation.

\(^{25}\) NAA: A981, Def 5 Part 1, War Cabinet Agendum, Military Service for Aliens, 10 January 1942.

\(^{26}\) Ibid.
In October 1950, W.K. Fisher, the Honorary Secretary of the King Branch of the Australian Labor Party, complained to the Prime Minister that none of the unnaturalised non-British migrants who had settled in Australia after the war would be liable for National Service training. Fisher explained the dissatisfaction of the King Branch membership:

They feel, Sir, that it is most inequitable that any government should call up for compulsory military training Australian citizens, while New Australians who have emigrated to this country to enjoy the advantages of Australian residence and citizenship are, to our knowledge at all events, notshouldering the responsibilities of citizenship with regard to military training.  \(^{27}\)

Certainly, there appeared to be no reason why non-British migrants should not contribute to the defence of Australia. As one contributor to *Mufti* pointed out: ‘Every migrant who arrives in this country comes from a compulsion area – to not only the luxury of uncontrolled living, but to a freedom from having to help to safeguard his new country. Somebody is to do it for him’.  \(^{28}\)

On 2 October 1950, the Army’s Principal Administrative Officers Committee (Personnel) examined the issue of military service for aliens. The Committee considered whether or not aliens should be included in the National Service call-up in peacetime and also whether or not they should be made liable for military service in wartime. The Committee considered this broader question because the potential liability of aliens for National Service training applied to young men only. For the Services, the liability of all aliens for wartime military service was perhaps more important than their limited liability in peacetime. The approximate figure of 160,000 non-British migrants of 16

\(^{27}\) NAA: A816, 44/301/158, Letter, Fisher to Menzies, 8 October 1950.  
\(^{28}\) *Mufti*, November 1950.
years of age or older living in Australia on 30 June 1950 was expected to increase to 427,000 by 1953. The corresponding estimates of 18-year-olds ranged from 1,940 in 1950 to 4,200 in 1953. Whereas these relatively small numbers of non-British migrants would be subject to the National Service call up, the Services were interested in the total migrant demographic as a source of manpower that could potentially be harnessed in a defence emergency. 29

The Committee concluded that unnaturalised migrants should be required to accept their share of responsibility for the defence of Australia and perform National Service training, which would also promote their assimilation. However, the Committee also recommended that migrants should not be called up until they had lived in Australia for at least twelve months, so that when called up, they would be familiar with the Australian way of life and have a grasp of the English language adequate to absorb military instruction. The Committee agreed that a twelve-month deferment was the only concession that should be granted to migrants and that they should be required to undertake the same training and to achieve the same standards as Australian youths. The Committee recommended that, in the event of a major war, aliens should be treated as they had been during the Second World War, which would thus permit the Services to conscript unnaturalised migrants and so avoid having to rely upon them to volunteer. 30

The enlistment of British subjects not substantially of European descent was another matter entirely, and the Military Board had earlier recommended that, whilst they should remain liable for National Service training, they should be granted an exemption

30 Ibid.
from call-up.\textsuperscript{31}

The full-time Services remained reluctant to enlist unnaturalised non-British volunteers. In 1953, Calwell expressed his frustration with this attitude and echoed a popular sentiment in declaring that ‘migrants should have the same opportunity and the same obligation to serve as the native-born’\textsuperscript{32}. In the early 1950s, neither the Navy nor the Air Force was prepared to enlist unnaturalised non-British migrants, while the Army accepted only those who met the usual medical and psychological standards and who had lived in Australia for at least twelve months, declared an intention to apply for naturalisation, and received a security clearance. These conditions evidently contributed to a very high rate of attrition among the 305 aliens who, in New South Wales between 1950 and 1954, had volunteered to serve in the Regular Army. By September 1954, 272 of the men had withdrawn their applications or been rejected, 29 applications had yet to be finalised, and only four of the men had been enlisted. Many applicants were rejected either because it was not possible to carry out security checks on those men from the so-called ‘Iron Curtain’ countries of the Soviet bloc, or because they were not adequately proficient in the English language.\textsuperscript{33} In July 1955, only 62 unnaturalised non-British migrants were serving in the Regular Army.\textsuperscript{34} Calwell argued for change:

\textsuperscript{31} NAA: MP742/1, 323/20/459, Minutes of Military Board Meeting held on 20 September 1950.
\textsuperscript{32} Holt et al, \textit{Australia and the Migrant}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{33} NAA: A5954, 1523/3, Enlistment of Migrants, Comments by the Service Departments and the Director of Recruiting on Resolutions nos 40 and 51 adopted by the Citizenship Convention held at Canberra, 26 - 29 January 1954.
\textsuperscript{34} NAA: A5954, 1523/3, Letter, Director of Recruiting, R. Kendall to McBride, 11 July 1955.
The fears that are held by sections of our armed services about the loyalty of some foreign-born people are reasonable enough, but in America National Service in the armed forces is based on residence and not on nationality. Australia's Defence Act might well be based on the American pattern and those who are in the respective age groups should have the same opportunity to serve as the native-born.³⁵

Under the *Nationality and Citizenship Act*, persons of non-British descent who had served in units under British command during the Second World War were entitled to count up to four years' service towards their five-year residential qualification period for naturalisation.³⁶ In 1953, the Principal Administrative Officers Committee (Personnel) observed that, for the purpose of qualifying for naturalisation, every month of voluntary full-time service in the Permanent Forces was counted as two months' normal residence. In a similar vein, the *Nationality and Citizenship Act* was amended in November 1952 to permit unnaturalised migrants who volunteered for overseas service to count every four weeks' service in the Citizen Forces as five weeks' normal residence. The link between military service and the assimilation of migrants was strengthened further when the Committee concluded that the same concession should be made available to unnaturalised non-British migrants called up for National Service training, but only if they volunteered for overseas service, as any man who did not would be 'giving no more than the required service to his new country'.³⁷

When Harold Holt introduced the National Service Bill into Federal Parliament on 21 November 1950, he referred explicitly to the potential of National Service training to

promote the assimilation of migrants, declaring: ‘The Government feels strongly that migrants coming to this country with the intention of making it their home should, equally with Australians and other British subjects in Australia, make their contribution to the country’s defence preparations and be liable for training’. However, Holt conceded that certain obstacles stood in the way of an extension of the National Service training obligation to unnaturalised non-British migrants: the conventions of international law did not permit the citizens of one country to render service in the armed forces of another. In some cases, foreigners who enlisted in the armed forces of another country would forfeit their citizenship; however, Holt reasoned that, for the many stateless aliens who were included in the post-war migrant intake, this situation was unlikely to present any serious difficulty.

The extension of the liability for National Service training was complicated by the number of source countries that Australia’s post-war immigration programme drew from. The complexities of international law also help to explain the amount of time that elapsed before the Government converted its principle of unnaturalised non-British migrants’ liability for National Service into a proposal. As the Solicitor-General saw the problem: ‘There is a rule of international law which prevents the imposition upon resident aliens of an obligation to serve in the armed forces of the country in which they reside, unless the State to which they belong consents to waive this ordinarily recognised exemption’.

39 Ibid.
Citizens of Ireland, meanwhile, occupied a special position. The Solicitor-General, Professor Kenneth Bailey, advised the Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, William Funnell, that, as Irish citizens were not British subjects, they were under no obligation to register for National Service training, and neither did the *Nationality and Citizenship Act* define Irish citizens as aliens. Bailey suggested that the Department of Labour and National Service, in conjunction with the Department of Immigration and the Department of External Affairs, pursue the matter with the Ambassador for Ireland.\(^41\)

At a meeting held on 18 and 19 December 1953, Cabinet accepted the recommendation made in a joint submission by Holt and McBride that the Minister for Labour and National Service should be authorised to call up aliens for National Service. Pressure on the Government was beginning to build because the number of non-British migrants of eligible age had naturally increased since the commencement of National Service training and the Defence Committee had already ruled out any proposal to increase the annual trainee intake to accommodate the surplus of young men considered available for training. In 1951, there were approximately 1,000 18-year-old male non-British migrants living in Australia; two years later, the number of such youths to have turned 18 since 1951 was about 5,700.\(^42\)

Within the Cabinet submission, migrants who had arrived in Australia under the post-war immigration programme were put into one of five categories. The first

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\(^{42}\) NAA: B142, SC59/26, Cabinet Decision no. 900, Submission no. 565 – National Service – Extension to Aliens, 18 – 19 December 1953.
included the countries with which Australia had normal diplomatic relations and a migration agreement: these were Italy, the Netherlands, and West Germany. The second category was made up of the countries with which Australia had normal diplomatic relations only: Austria, France, Belgium, Sweden Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Yugoslavia, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, the United States of America, Ireland, China, and Japan. The third category consisted of the Iron Curtain countries of the Soviet Union, Ukraine, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Roumania, Bulgaria, and Albania. The Baltic States of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia comprised the fourth category, while the fifth was reserved for stateless persons.43

Holt and McBride argued that, to seek the views of the governments of every country with which Australia had normal diplomatic relations about the intention to call up their citizens for military training would be to invite trouble. To do so involved too great a risk that the various foreign governments would each attach a range of different conditions to their replies, and in so doing, make the Australian Government’s position untenable. There was also a chance that some governments would be slow to respond, frustrating the attempt to make unnaturalised migrants liable for National Service training. Worse still was the possibility that some governments would formally protest. The Federal Government faced the danger of being hamstrung by diplomacy.44

During the course of negotiations for migration agreements with Italy and the Netherlands, Australia had signalled its intention to make migrants from those countries liable for National Service training. The Netherlands Government did not object,

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
provided only those Dutch citizens who had resided in Australia for at least twelve months and intended to make Australia their permanent home, would be called up. The Italian Government was less receptive to the idea, fearing that setting a formal precedent would compromise its position if other foreign governments presented similar proposals. Nevertheless, the Italian Government intimated that it would not object to the Australian Government’s proposal if it received a number of assurances. The Italian Government requested that the obligation for military service would apply only to Italian citizens who turned 18 years of age in Australia, that Italians would not be required to register for National Service until they had lived in Australia for at least twelve months, and that an exemption would be granted to any Italian citizen who declared that he did not intend to settle permanently in Australia. The Italian Government also indicated that it expected the acquiescence of the Australian Government in case of any future proposal on its part to make foreigners residing in Italy liable for military service. The conditions that the governments of Italy and the Netherlands devised did not seem to present any obstacle to the liability for National Service training of the citizens of those countries.  

Of the countries with which Australia had normal diplomatic relations only, it was surmised that the United States Government would not protest if its citizens were called up for military training in Australia, provided that the conditions of service were no more onerous than those imposed upon Australians living in the United States. Apart from Italy and the Netherlands, citizens of West Germany, Greece, Yugoslavia, and China were the only others thought to be living in Australia in substantial numbers. The

45 Ibid.
latter two countries did not present any problem. Australian immigration policy did not recognise Chinese citizens as ordinarily resident in Australia and so they were not liable for National Service training, while the Yugoslav Government was unlikely to object to the call-up proposal because Australian citizens considered also to be Yugoslav citizens had reportedly been called up for military service in that country.\textsuperscript{46}

The British Foreign Office supported the assumption that it would be pointless to seek the consent of Iron Curtain countries, and the US State Department advised that it had received no complaints through diplomatic channels regarding its inclusion in the draft of the citizens of Soviet bloc countries. Holt and McBride concluded that protests from the governments of countries with which Australia had normal diplomatic relations were unlikely, and that any protests from either Iron Curtain countries or the Baltic States – which Australia did not recognise as part of the Soviet Union – could be safely ignored. The status of stateless aliens and refugees did not present any obstacle to the plan to make them liable for military service.\textsuperscript{47}

As a means of ensuring that aliens had lived in Australia for at least twelve months before being called up, Cabinet agreed that migrant youths should be required to register for National Service one year later than Australian youths of the same age. In an effort to administer the scheme fairly, and perhaps in order to prevent the possible manifestation within the Australian community of resentment towards unnaturalised non-British migrants as a result of a perception that they had avoided the obligation that other young men shared, Cabinet decided to apply the liability for National Service

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
training retrospectively. This involved an intention to call up at once the estimated 3,500 alien youths who turned 18 between 1951 and 1952.48

Cabinet was prepared to give aliens the opportunity to declare their intention not to make a permanent home in Australia and to apply for permission to leave Australia within a period of twelve months. However, if after twelve months the alien was still living in Australia, call-up action would be taken. Furthermore, if an alien was found to have made a false declaration or failed to register for National Service in order to avoid being called up and later applied for Australian citizenship, it was agreed that his ‘attitude should be specially examined ... to determine whether he has subsequently given proof of a better appreciation of his responsibilities to this country’.49 Furthermore, no one was to be allowed to evade the National Service call-up by feigning incomprehension of the English language.50

In April 1954, Holt announced that all non-British subjects and British subjects by naturalisation who had turned 18 between 1 November 1950 and 31 August 1953 would be required to register for National Service training during the registration programmed for 18 May 1954.51 The Melbourne Herald reasonably assumed that diplomatic negotiations had been successfully concluded and described the Government’s decision as ‘wise and realistic’, while eagerly looking forward to the call-up of New Australians.52

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
52 Herald, editorial, 27 April 1954.
Evidently, the Department of Labour and National Service expected that as many non-British subjects as possible would be included in the following National Service intake. However, Cabinet's deliberations and Holt's announcement heralded a false dawn. Unnaturalised non-British migrants were required to register, but no call-up action was taken. Correspondence in August 1954 between Henry Bland and the Secretary of the Department of Immigration, Tasman Heyes, reveals that, whilst some 2,851 aliens registered for National Service, none were called up because: 'The conditions relating to the call up of these New Australians are still the subject of discussions between the Commonwealth Government and the Governments of countries whose nationals might be affected'.

In late 1954, the RSSAILA Federal Executive urged Holt to take action that would compel all migrants aged 18 years or under upon their arrival in Australia to perform National Service training as soon as possible after they became naturalised. Holt replied that the Government was not prepared to wait for migrants to acquire Australian citizenship:

The Government's intention is, subject to the requirements of international law, to extend national service to all persons ordinarily resident in Australia within the age limits defined by the National Service Act irrespective of nationality. If this is found to be practicable, the object of your League's resolution will be attained in a different way. If it is not, the Government will certainly give full consideration to the League's suggestion.

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53 NAA: MP491/1, 55/764, Minute, Bland to the Regional Directors, 20 April 1954.
54 NAA: MP1368/1, 54/2284, Memorandum, Bland to T.H.E. Heyes, 12 August 1954.
55 NLA Manuscript Section, RSL Series 1, MS6609, Box 192, Folder 2954c, Part 3, Letter, Holt to Neagle, 31 December 1953.
The positive tenor of the Minister's reply belied the Government's reluctance to act. The introduction of provisions for geographical and occupational deferment, which changed the basis of the National Service training scheme from the principle of universal to selective service, perhaps spared Holt a more intensive interrogation. However, the resort to selective military training did not permit the Government to relax in its endeavour to effect the call-up of unnaturalised migrants. As the subsequent course of events indicates, the Government appreciated that the change to a system of selective military training made the satisfactory resolution of the liability of unnaturalised non-British migrants for National Service even more important. Again, the Government tried to maintain public support for National Service by applying greater emphasis to the fair and equitable administration of the selective National Service training scheme.

In February 1955, the Army's Principal Administrative Officers Committee (Personnel) considered a suggestion made by the Greek Embassy that Greek citizens who had completed a period of military training in Greece before migrating to Australia should be granted an exemption from National Service training. The Committee gave three main reasons for rejecting this proposal. First, given different organisations, equipments, doctrines and languages, foreign military service could not be considered an acceptable substitute for military service in Australia. Second, because previous Australian military service was not recognised as a basis for exemption from National Service training, it would be inequitable to recognise previous foreign military service.

Third, the Committee argued, the ‘increased rate of assimilation which should accrue and the increased value of an alien as a reservist’ exceeded the practical disadvantages presented by language and security problems. 57 The advent of selective military training had confirmed ‘no actual need to train the relatively few aliens involved’, but the Principal Administrative Officers Committee nevertheless insisted that the liability for National Service training should be introduced within the context of a possible deterioration in Australia’s strategic situation. 58 The Committee firmly supported the view held by many Australians that aliens should be prepared to accept not only the benefits, but also the responsibilities of Australian citizenship.

The Defence Committee did not disagree entirely that unnaturalised non-British migrants with foreign military experience should still be liable for National Service training. It did, however, develop a counter-argument that was based upon the abandonment of the principle of universal service. Bland’s advice that the number of aliens to have performed military service in their countries of origin was insignificant supported the premise that their exemption from National Service training would be of no military consequence. The Defence Committee conceded that, although military service in another country could not be considered a substitute for Australian military service, it ‘would nevertheless be of some value in the event of mobilisation’ and therefore, it would make more sense to give training to men with no military experience. 59 These were valid points, especially given that the National Service

57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
training scheme had been designed to produce a reserve of partially trained troops and the plan for mobilisation provided for advanced training of National Servicemen. On 29 March 1955, the Minister for Defence, McBride, endorsed the Defence Committee’s conclusion that, ‘as long as National Service training is not on a universal basis, there would be no Service objection to the indefinite deferment of training of aliens who have completed a satisfactory period of military service in their own country of origin’. 60

By late 1955, the number of unnaturalised migrants who had turned 18 since the commencement of National Service training had reached 11,600. Of these, 8,480 migrant youths had been required to register for National Service training, but only 4,333 had done so. 61 Those young men who had failed to register might not have seen any real purpose when it was becoming increasingly apparent that they would not be called up for National Service training. After all, eighteen months had elapsed since the Minister for Labour and National Service had announced the requirement of non-British migrants to register. While diplomatic negotiations between the Federal Government and foreign governments continued, the number of migrant youths eligible for National Service training continued to grow and the likelihood of their call-up became increasingly remote.

The First Assistant Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, Philip Cook, expressed his frustration with the slow rate of progress when he told Bland that ‘it may be argued that there is little point in continuing to require aliens to register

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60 NAA: A5954, 1523/3, Registration of Aliens for National Service.
if in fact there is no serious intention of ever calling them up’.

Whilst it was not politically viable for the Government to excuse migrants from registering for National Service training, Cook described an almost unworkable situation that had developed during the course of diplomatic negotiations: ‘Of the nineteen countries we did consult, we are only reasonably in the clear with three. We have assumed that seven have no objections, or if they have will not in fact object, the position of three countries is undetermined, and six have objected’.

Cook outlined two options that were available to the Federal Government if it decided to seize the initiative and finally settle the issue. It could treat the migrants of various nationalities according to the prevailing state of diplomacy between Australia and their countries of origin, and thereby create a discriminatory regime that the Government was understandably anxious to avoid. Alternatively, it could abandon diplomacy and proceed with the call-up, in which case the problems of locating migrant youths and establishing their residential status, processing their claims for exemption and deferment, determining their English language proficiency, and assessing their security status, would all need to be addressed. The administrative burden was one that Cook was extremely reluctant to accept.

In April 1956, a draft Cabinet submission prepared by the Department of Labour and National Service revealed the diplomatic developments that had occurred during the previous two-and-a-half years. A total of nineteen foreign governments had been

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63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
approached and only the governments of West Germany and the Netherlands were prepared to countenance the call-up of their citizens, subject to certain assurances. The Greek Government had proposed that if Greek subjects were called up they should be entitled to early naturalisation, but this had been categorically rejected by the Federal Government. The governments of Belgium, Israel, the United States, Finland, Lebanon, Norway, and Syria were presumed to have no objections to the call-up of their citizens, who collectively represented 28.4 per cent of the 4,333 aliens who had so far registered for National Service. Citizens of the Soviet Union and its satellites accounted for 35.2 per cent, while 4.5 per cent were citizens of countries whose representation in Australia was so small that diplomatic approaches were considered unnecessary. The remaining 31.9 per cent of alien registrants were citizens of countries with which Australia was still engaged in diplomatic negotiations.65

The positions of the Austrian, French, and Italian governments were undetermined. Objections had been raised by the governments of Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia. The government of Denmark was also considered to have objected in view of the 1869 Declaration between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and Denmark regarding Exemption from Forced Loans and Compulsory Military Service, to which Australia had succeeded. The 1855 Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Reciprocal Establishment between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and Switzerland similarly prevented Australia from calling up citizens of Switzerland. The Yugoslav Government claimed –

mistakenly, the Australian Government thought – that the provisions of a 1927 Anglo-Yugoslav treaty made its citizens exempt too. The French Government had drafted a bilateral agreement that would make Australian citizens living in France and French citizens living in Australia exempt from military service. Meanwhile, the Portuguese Government wanted to negotiate a similar agreement with the Federal Government. For its part, the Swedish Government pointed out that foreigners living in Sweden were not liable for military service according to Swedish law, and requested a reciprocal arrangement for Swedish citizens living in Australia.66

Whether the enactment of domestic policy would breach the accepted principles of international law remained unclear. According to the draft submission, there was no reason not to proceed with the call up aliens ordinarily resident in Australia, regardless of any objections from foreign governments:

There is no proposal to call into the Australian armed forces anyone who demonstrates effectively that he is not ordinarily resident in Australia and has no intention of making his home here. In other words, it is not proposed to call up people who are in a full and real sense the nationals of another country; the proposal is concerned with those who may in a “legal” sense be nationals of another country but who are known or may legitimately be presumed to be seeking absorption into the Australian community and to become Australian citizens.67

Furthermore, exemption from National Service training for migrants of any nationality involved the risk of hindering their assimilation by generating resentment among the migrants of other nationalities and within the wider Australian community. Hence the exemption of the citizens of Switzerland and Denmark was cautiously accepted; it was

66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
advisable to avoid establishing a precedent that might encourage the governments of other countries to claim that their laws provided exemption from military service for their citizens and to request, as France and Portugal had already done, a bilateral agreement. 68

The Secretary of the Department of Immigration, Heyes, subsequently revealed that his Department’s main concern was ‘to see that the calling up of aliens does not adversely affect the selection of migrants under our migration agreements with such European countries as have signified their objection to the proposal or have as yet not clarified their attitude’. 69 Australia’s reliance upon immigration compelled the Federal Government to consider together the issues of immigration and defence. The Government’s reluctance to proceed with the call-up of unnaturalised migrants without the acquiescence of the governments of the countries upon whose co-operation Australia depended is understandable. In Australia, immigration and defence policy had become thoroughly enmeshed.

On 3 October 1957, Cook notified Bland that the outcome of diplomatic negotiations had made discrimination between the various nationalities unavoidable if unnaturalised non-British migrants were to be called up for National Service training. 70 The Federal Government was unable to repudiate its treaty obligations in relation to citizens of Switzerland and Denmark. Nor could it ignore the formal requests for reciprocal agreements made by the French and Portuguese governments. Cook

68 Ibid.
69 NAA: B142, SC59/26, Minute, National Service by Aliens, Heyes to Bland, 10 May 1956.
70 NAA: B142, SC59/26, Minute, Call up of Aliens for National Service, Cook to Bland, 3 October 1957.
maintained that the liability of unnaturalised migrants for National Service training had become a prominent issue because of support for universal military training, and that as the scheme had come to be based upon selective service, the Government might as well abort the attempt to call up aliens. After all: ‘As far as the Services are concerned, the problem has become not that of obtaining more National Service trainees but that of very substantially reducing the numbers available’.  

Cook warned that the risks involved in calling up the citizens of the countries whose governments had not been consulted and the citizens of those countries whose governments had registered objections needed to be weighed carefully, especially given that exceptions – in the form of Swiss and Danes – had already been established. In any case, Cook argued, after initial deferments and exemptions had been granted, approximately only 200 aliens would become available for training each year, and even that small number would be reduced further by the English language requirement and security assessments. Cook believed that the administrative burden created by the attempt to call up aliens was difficult to justify and conceded that the Department of Labour and National Service was almost powerless to enforce the requirement of aliens to register for National Service training. The Department lacked the administrative controls needed to monitor the movements of itinerant migrant youths. Cook suggested that granting all alien registrants indefinite deferment and inviting them to volunteer for National Service training would circumvent the problem of calling up the citizens of the countries whose governments had objected. Given the highly selective nature of the scheme, it was possible, he claimed, that ‘by these means we would get as many alien

71 Ibid.
National Service trainees as we would if we were to treat them as normal call ups subject to ballot and other deferment procedures’. 72

Doubtless to the chagrin of his colleagues, Keith Wilson (Liberal, Sturt) had recently reminded the Federal Parliament of the issue of non-British migrants’ liability for National Service while calling for the restoration of universal military training:

The Government should realize that this scheme has been one of the most valuable avenues for the assimilation of migrants. What better way is there to assimilate young migrants than to put them into national service training camps where, shoulder to shoulder with natural-born Australians, they will learn discipline and engage in healthy exercise, and at the same time, become thoroughly and efficiently trained? 73

Wilson’s entreaty did not, however, prevent his Party’s leadership from heeding Cook’s advice and abandoning the plan devised some seven years earlier. On 5 November 1957, Cabinet decided that, whilst the registration of aliens and diplomatic negotiations should continue, no further action should be taken to call up unnaturalised migrants for National Service training. 74 After the changes to the defence programme that were announced by the Prime Minister on 4 April 1957, which produced a highly selective National Service training scheme, the practical disadvantages involved in calling up non-British migrant youths far outweighed the advantages.

By May 1959, both the Italian and Greek governments had finally acquiesced to the call-up of their citizens for military training. Only the French Government’s position remained undetermined, while the governments of Portugal, Spain, Sweden,

72 Ibid.
74 NAA: B142, SC59/26, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 1068 (GA), Submission no. 904 – National Service – Extension to Aliens, 5 November 1957.
Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and Denmark maintained objections, although the citizens of these countries represented only 6.7 per cent of the 8,057 non-British migrant youths who had registered for National Service training. After applying the results of the ballots that had already been held, the number of men who would have been considered available for training was reduced by 5,703 to 2,354, and it was expected that after the determination of entitlements to exemption and deferment, approximately only 1,100 would have been actually called up. In each subsequent year, unnaturalised migrant youths were expected to make up only about 250 of the 12,000-strong annual intake. However, these permutations remained purely hypothetical.

Bland sensed that the opportunity to proceed with the call-up of non-British migrants had finally arrived, or that it would have had the suspension of the National Service training scheme not been imminent. Bland observed: ‘It would, however, be foolish in the extreme, after all the diplomatic exchanges and blandishments, to proceed to call up aliens only to find that within a short space of time new developments had occurred which caused an end to be put to this’. Bland claimed to be ‘fortified’ by the fact that the cost to the Department of Labour and National Service of registering aliens had been insignificant compared to the total administrative costs incurred in the registration process. Of the Department’s vote of £162,000 for 1958-59, the cost of registering aliens was estimated to be £1,150 plus a proportion of associated costs totalling £4,730.

75 Ibid.
76 NAA: B142, SC59/26, Minute, National Service – Aliens, Bland to McMahon, 18 May 1959.
77 Ibid.
In late 1962, Richard Casey researched Australia's post-war immigration programme and discovered that between October 1945 and July 1962, some 1,839,451 migrants had settled in Australia, of whom 898,509 were British.\(^7\) In a speech delivered to the 1963 Conference of Commonwealth Societies in London, Casey reportedly expressed the view that Australia preferred migrants from Britain to those from continental Europe, to whom 'the Commonwealth meant nothing, the Queen meant nothing and the Imperial link meant nothing'.\(^7\) Casey bemoaned the British Labour Government's lack of support for the migration of its citizens to Australia and complained about the absence in Britain of what he termed 'Commonwealth-mindedness'.\(^8\) Britain's Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, George Thomson, replied caustically that countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada could demonstrate their Commonwealth-mindedness by accepting West Indian migrants.\(^8\)

Casey subsequently wrote an article for the London *Financial Times* in which he conceded that Australia's affection for Britain was unrequited: Australians thought far more about Britain than Britons thought about Australia. According to Casey, political, economic, and cultural connections combined to make Australia 'uncritically loyal to the British Crown and to the United Kingdom as the leader of the Commonwealth'.\(^8\) Casey went on to describe how Australia and Britain had begun to drift apart as British interests in the Asia-Pacific region became fewer and Australia cemented its

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\(^7\) *Herald*, 26 June 1962.
\(^8\) Ibid.
relationship with the United States. Although Casey maintained that it did not diminish Australia's relationship with Britain, by the early 1960s, the United States had replaced Britain as Australia's most important strategic ally.\textsuperscript{83}

Trade figures reflect the decline in the traditional relationship between Australia and Britain. In 1954-55, some 37 per cent of Australian exports went to Britain and 45 per cent of Australian imports were British commodities. By 1960-61, the figures had fallen to 24 per cent and 31 per cent respectively.\textsuperscript{84} Trade between the two countries waned noticeably during the latter half of the 1950s, but the Secretary of the Department of Immigration, Peter Heydon, was still able to observe that the emphasis of the assisted migration scheme reflected Australia's view of British migration as 'the cornerstone of its immigration programme'.\textsuperscript{85} Casey made no secret of the Australian people's preference for British migrants and declared: 'In spite of some dilution by reason of nearly a million migrants from Europe, the Australian people are still predominantly of British stock'.\textsuperscript{86}

Upon the occasion of the reintroduction of National Service in 1964, the Federal Government's intentions in relation to the liability of unnaturalised non-British migrants were unclear. The day after the Prime Minister delivered the Defence Review in Parliament on 10 November 1964, he stated: 'The fact in relation to aliens is that we do not propose to apply to them, they still being aliens, any compulsory conscription except that they will register and, if called up, they will, on establishing that they are

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} London \textit{Financial Times}, 7 May 1962.
aliens and therefore owing no allegiance to this country, be indefinitely deferred.\textsuperscript{87} When the Minister for Labour and National Service, McMahon, introduced into Parliament the National Service Bill later on the same day, he stated cryptically: ‘The provisions regarding registration continue to extend to aliens, and subject to the rules of international law and the practices which govern the comity of nations, we propose to make those, who have chosen this country as their home, liable to service. For the time being it is not intended to require aliens to register.’ \textsuperscript{88}

The Opposition was quick to exert pressure on the Government. On 16 November 1964, Frederick Daly (Labor, Grayndler) demanded to know why unnaturalised migrants were not to be made liable for National Service.\textsuperscript{89} Clyde Cameron (Labor, Hindmarsh) added: ‘There are 200,000 aliens in this country who will not be required to register for national service training because they are not naturalised Australians. So we have a ridiculous situation in which boys born in this country will be conscripted to fight in defence of the 200,000 aliens who will not be required to register or serve until they have become naturalised’.\textsuperscript{90} Gilbert Duthie (Labor, Wilmot) predicted that the favourable treatment of aliens would prove a major disincentive to naturalisation.\textsuperscript{91} On the following day, J.F. (Jim) Cairns (Labor, Yarra) declared that it was unjust not to make unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for call-up.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{CPD}, vol. H. of R. 44, 16 November 1964, p. 3009.
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{CPD}, vol. H. of R. 44, 16 November 1964, p. 3052.
The Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, Bland, anticipated that the Federal Government would again need to initiate diplomatic negotiations in an effort to persuade the various foreign governments to agree to the call-up of their citizens living in Australia. In the United States, an unnaturalised migrant became liable for selective service and had either to register within six months of his arrival, or to decline to do so, in which case he would be disqualified from US citizenship. If he registered for the draft and subsequently evaded call-up by leaving the country, he would be prohibited from re-entering the United States. Australia, however, was too heavily dependent upon immigration to consider the introduction of such coercive measures. ‘Clearly’, Bland declared, ‘this sort of practice hardly suits our book’.  

Bland believed that the diplomatic progress made in the 1950s was no longer relevant. Two years’ full-time service in the Army with a liability for overseas service was a very different proposition to military training of 140 days without a liability for overseas service. Therefore, it was no longer certain that the governments that had not previously objected would again refrain from doing so. Bland anticipated ‘lengthy negotiations as before with countries with nationals resident here’ and observed that: ‘It will undoubtedly take some considerable time to arrive at any conclusions and come to any policy decisions’. However, the Federal Government did not have time for protracted diplomatic negotiations: given the nature of the new National Service scheme, the public was unlikely to tolerate for long the exclusion of persons based upon

94 Ibid.
nationality.

This was expressed in February 1965, when the Prime Minister met a deputation from the RSL. Bland had anticipated the League’s line of enquiry, with more than half the notes he prepared for Menzies addressing the issue of the liability of unnaturalised non-British migrants for National Service. Bland explained that no action could be taken to register non-British subjects for National Service until what he described as ‘problems in the international sphere’ had been overcome. Registration implied liability for call-up and strong diplomatic protests could therefore be expected if the Federal Government required aliens to register. Bland again advised that diplomatic negotiations would take ‘considerable time’.

Bland was evidently very conscious of the problems that were encountered in the 1950s attempt to make aliens liable for National Service training. Bland challenged the public’s ‘tendency to imagine that failure to call-up aliens means that all new Australians will escape military service’, pointing out that because most migrants were British subjects, most migrants were liable for National Service, and noting that many non-British youths had automatically become British subjects when their parents became naturalised. The liability for National Service of the sons of naturalised migrants should have been unremarkable, but as Bland’s comment reveals, they were still seen in some quarters as ‘New Australians’. Bland even questioned the importance of making unnaturalised migrants liable for National Service, given the probability that

96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
some 20-year-old aliens would make unsuitable recruits because of language difficulties and security considerations. Bland saw little prospect of a timely solution, which perhaps explains why the Government did not attempt to publicise the 32 unnaturalised migrants who had volunteered for National Service.\textsuperscript{99}

In Parliament on 16 March 1966, the Prime Minister, Holt, responded to an enquiry from the Opposition regarding the liability of unnaturalised migrants for National Service by assuring the House that the Department of External Affairs and the Department of Labour and National Service had the issue under consideration.\textsuperscript{100} Labor’s Frederick Daly described as ‘scandalous’ the situation whereby Australians were being called up for National Service while migrants were not.\textsuperscript{101} Two weeks later, a decision to make unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for National Service was made during a joint meeting of the Government parties on 30 March 1966, and a leak enabled Arthur Calwell to bring it to the notice of Parliament on the following day.\textsuperscript{102} Holt then declared that, if practicable, migrants who indicated their intention to settle permanently in Australia should be liable for National Service.\textsuperscript{103}

On 1 April 1966, the Minister for Labour and National Service briefed Cabinet on the progress that his Department had made in extending to aliens the liability for National Service. Bury explained that no action had been taken because the Minister for External Affairs, Hasluck, had judged that diplomatic negotiations should not be

\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{100} \textit{CPD}, vol. H. of R. 50, 16 March 1966, p. 274.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Ibid.}
initiated until Cabinet had considered the issue specifically, despite a general understanding of the Government's intention having already been established. Bury noted that the Government had been widely criticised for its failure to make aliens liable for National Service and admitted that international law had routinely been used as an excuse for the slow progress made in the field of diplomacy.  

Bury explained the reason for the Federal Government's reluctance to proceed with the call-up of unnaturalised migrants without the consent of foreign governments: 'When the 1951 legislation was enacted we were doing our utmost to attract migrants from Europe'. Although the scale of the Australian immigration programme had been reduced, stable relations with foreign governments remained important: 'While these days we are no longer in the thick of discussions with European Governments over migration agreements we have no less a need for their friendly regard for us if we are to continue to have their favourable attitudes to migration to Australia'.

The number of male aliens due to turn 20 years of age in 1966 was estimated to be 4,500, which equated to approximately five per cent of the National Service registration. Therefore, if aliens were required to register and were called up at the same rate as Australians, they would constitute about 400 of the 8,400 annual intake. This figure would be reduced after students, who were not regarded as ordinarily resident in Australia, were excluded, and after allowances were made for registrants.

105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 See Appendix E Table 1: Estimate of male aliens in Australia turning 20 years of age in 1966.
whose command of the English language was inadequate and for those who presented an unacceptable security risk. 108

Whilst Australia relied upon the goodwill of European governments, continued inaction was politically unacceptable. The issue was an uncomfortable one not only for the Government, but also for the unnaturalised migrants who risked the derision of the wider Australian community. Bury recommended that, so as not to provoke potentially embarrassing reactions, the relevant foreign governments should be consulted before requiring aliens to register for National Service. Bury expected the diplomatic process to be no less protracted than it had been in the 1950s and recommended that the Government continue to use international law as an excuse to deflect public criticism. The Minister observed that: ‘In fact, the impression has already been conveyed to critics that these consultations are already in progress’. 109 Bury concluded his submission on a cautionary note: if Cabinet intended to proceed immediately with the registration and call-up of aliens, an inter-departmental committee should first be convened to determine the full implications of such action. 110

Three days later, on 4 April 1966, Cabinet endorsed a policy that aliens who had chosen Australia as their home should be liable for National Service. Cabinet decided that the registration and call-up of aliens ordinarily resident in Australia should proceed immediately, without first consulting foreign governments. Under the terms of existing treaty arrangements, only the citizens of Denmark and Switzerland were to be

108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
exempted. Cabinet directed that a committee to deal with the implications of the decision be formed by representatives from the departments of Labour and National Service, External Affairs, Defence, Immigration, the Treasury, as well as the Attorney-General’s Department and the Prime Minister’s Department.\footnote{NAA: A5839, 130, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 151, Submission no. 117 – National Service – Extension to Aliens, 4 April 1966.}

Public protests against the impending liability of unnaturalised migrants for National Service were few. The Italian language newspaper, \textit{La Fiamma}, claimed to have received letters from alarmed Italian parents and young bachelors living in Australia, and presented several questions in asserting a confident belief that the Government would ultimately grant exemption to unnaturalised non-British migrants:

First, what will be the fighting enthusiasm and the efficiency of the migrants who have not sworn allegiance to Australia? How will these conscripts, many of whom cannot even speak English, be received by their comrades in arms? To which extent can they be trusted, if they have to fight for a country which is not yet legally theirs, if they have to fight against an Asian country which is completely strange to them? How can they be expected to risk their lives?\footnote{NAA: A446, 1964/47376, Italian to English translation of article published in \textit{La Fiamma}, 9 April 1966.}

\textit{La Fiamma} was indifferent to the ‘grave social and political upsets’ that it acknowledged could result from the continued exclusion of unnaturalised migrants from National Service, arguing that ‘these are problems which the Government could and should have avoided in advance’.\footnote{Ibid.} Instead, in the manner that it questioned the integrity of the birthday ballot system, \textit{La Fiamma} risked the hostility of the majority of Australians in favour of the National Service scheme: ‘Finally, it is difficult to imagine that the Australian recruitment system of chance and of drawing numbers, which makes
this system based on the element of risk which invites a recourse to privilege, trickery and subterfuge, could count as a moral command on a migrant'.

The Prime Minister later received a resolution adopted by a meeting of the Italian-Australian Labor Council in Melbourne, which expressed concern about the intention of the Government 'to call for military service young migrants who came to Australia only to work and not to be drafted in any branch of the armed forces for eventual overseas duty'. However, the Government knew that such an attitude was at odds with public opinion. A Gallup poll confirmed that an unusually large majority approved the Government's decision. No less than 89 per cent of respondents expressed the view that unnaturalised non-British migrant youths who had decided to settle permanently in Australia should be made liable for National Service, whilst only eight per cent disagreed.

In June 1966, the inter-departmental Committee reported on the proposed registration and call-up of non-British subjects. The Committee recommended that both British and non-British unnaturalised migrants should not be called up until they had lived in Australia for at least two years, and that they should be given the opportunity to leave the country before being called up. The Committee also established that aliens called up for National Service should be entitled to the same benefits as Australians, including compensation for service-related death or injury, repatriation, re-

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114 Ibid.
establishment, and housing benefits.\textsuperscript{117}

The Committee identified accelerated naturalisation as an incentive that could be offered to those migrants called up. In order to qualify for naturalisation, applicants had to be at least 21 years of age, of sound mind and good character, have an adequate knowledge of the English language and of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship, have five years' residence, and an intention to reside permanently in Australia. The Committee recommended that non-British migrants should be entitled to apply for naturalisation immediately upon receipt of a call-up notice, be considered to have satisfied the residential qualifying condition after completing three months' service, and be eligible to receive the invalid and the widow's pension in appropriate circumstances.\textsuperscript{118}

In order to confirm the status of non-British migrants as ordinarily resident in Australia, and also as a means of introducing a consensual aspect to the process, the Committee agreed that aliens should not be called up until they had lived in Australia for at least two years and that they should be given the opportunity to leave the country. The Committee found that delaying the call-up of unnaturally non-British migrants until they reached the age of 21 would give them the opportunity as adults to make a choice of citizenship, and at the same time ensure compliance with international law. These conditions did not present any significant problem because three-quarters of the approximately 4,000 male unnaturally non-British migrants living in Australia and

\textsuperscript{117} NAA: A446, 1970/95530, Inter-departmental Committee on Registration and Call-up of non-British subjects for National Service, 8 June 1966.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
due to turn 20 in 1966 had already been in the country for more than two years, and most of the remainder would have been so before call-up action began. Because young men were required to register in the half-year in which they turned 20, most were 21 years-old, or about to turn 21, at the time of call-up.

The Committee also considered that the condition of two years’ residency in Australia would minimise the likelihood of the Army having to reject men because of inadequate English language proficiency, and would also prevent the Army’s standard from becoming a disincentive for migrants to learn English. The Committee recommended that security checks on unnaturalised migrants balloted in should be conducted immediately in an effort to avoid either delays in their call-up or the possibility of having to initiate discharge action against those subsequently found to present an unacceptable security risk.\textsuperscript{119}

The option of voluntary CMF service was eventually made available to unnaturalised migrants who qualified after twelve months’ residence in Australia. The requirement to provide evidence of an intention to apply for naturalisation and the need to take an oath of allegiance upon enlistment in the Citizen Forces initially presented a problem to unnaturalised migrants who wished to retain their alien status. In September 1967, Cabinet agreed to eliminate the need to take an oath as a condition of enlistment in the Citizen Forces.\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid.} The Nationality and Citizenship Bill (1967) provided for the proposed changes to the residential qualification for aliens called up for National Service and was introduced into Parliament by Billy Snedden on 23 February 1967: CPD, vol. H. of R. 54, 23 February 1967, pp. 116-17.

\textsuperscript{120} NAA: A4940, C4117, Cabinet Minute, Decision no. 598, Submission no. 454 – Amendment of National Service Legislation, 28 September 1967.
Unnaturalised non-British migrants were finally required to register for National Service from the first registration period of 1967. Of the reactions of foreign governments, only the Soviet Union’s chargé d’affaires questioned the legality of making Soviet citizens liable for National Service. As previously discussed, exemption was granted to citizens of Switzerland and Denmark. The United Kingdom had also concluded diplomatic agreements with Argentina – the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation (1825), Morocco – the General Treaty (1856), Peru – the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation (1850), and Venezuela – the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation (1825). The benefit of the doubt was initially given to Venezuela, which had previously renounced its commercial treaty obligations, and to Morocco, which had achieved its independence from France in 1956. Ultimately, however, it appears that the provisions of these treaties in relation to exemption from call-up were disregarded.

The Brisbane Courier Mail editorial of 20 July 1966 argued that the exemption of unnaturalised non-British migrants from National Service would have segregated the Australian community and have implied that the foreign-born were untrustworthy, unimportant, and unprepared to accept civic responsibilities. In the following month,

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121 NAA: A446, 1970/95534, Department of Labour and National Service News Release, 8 August 1968. The numbers migrants who became liable for National Service in 1967 is set out according to nationality in Appendix E Table 2: Table of Male Aliens born between 1.1.1947 and 30.6.1947 included in registers of Aliens maintained in States and Mainland Territories of Australia.


124 NAA: A5882, CO19 Part 2, Cabinet Office Memorandum, I.E. Hutchinson to P.H. Bailey, 23 February 1970. Hutchinson advised Bailey that, in accordance with Cabinet Decision no. 151 of 4 April 1966: ‘The only foreign nationals who are excluded from registration and call-up are nationals of Denmark and Switzerland’.

125 Courier Mail, editorial, 20 July 1966.
the Melbourne *Herald* expressed a similar sentiment, declaring: ‘All who choose to make their permanent home in Australia and seek to share the advantages of life here should accept their share of national responsibilities’.\(^{126}\) Reports of disaffection within the Italian community provoked an angry response from a correspondent to the *Courier Mail*, who under the *nom de plume*, “Third Generation Australian”, wrote:

> So Italian migrants suddenly become Italian nationals when they are expected to repay Australia a little of what she gives them. The remedy is very simple. Many Italian ships call at Australian ports; Italian nationals can be returned to their own nation. If they think for one moment that Australians are going to have our young lads keep Australia safe for Italians, or any migrant for that matter, they have another thought coming. I have spoken to many Australians on this matter and their answer is that migrants should do their bit or get out.\(^{127}\)

According to Ann-Mari Jordens, for unnaturalised non-British migrants: ‘The introduction of conscription for aliens in 1967 during the Vietnam War conferred on them what was generally perceived to be one of the major responsibilities of citizenship, whether or not they wanted to become naturalised’.\(^{128}\) However, this situation was arguably inevitable. After the launch of the post-war immigration programme, the establishment of a workable definition of citizenship became increasingly problematic. The scale of the immigration programme blurred the boundaries between citizens and non-citizens who had chosen to settle in Australia. A professor of international law at the University of Adelaide, D.P. O’Connell, was quoted at the time as saying: ‘The basis of the obligation to military service is defence of the community of which one forms part. Nationality as such is a much less relevant consideration than permanence of

\(^{126}\) *Herald*, editorial, 10 August 1966.
\(^{127}\) *Courier Mail*, letters, 11 August 1966.
\(^{128}\) Jordens, *Alien to citizen*, p. 175.
After 1945, the defence of the Australian community was a major consideration of people in favour of large-scale immigration and of National Service. Population growth was seen as the key to economic development and to a greater availability of manpower for the armed forces. The arrival in Australia of increasing numbers of migrants from continental Europe ensured that the liability of unnaturalised non-British migrants for National Service would become a significant issue. It did so in three main respects: the effective harnessing of all available manpower for defence, the fair and equitable administration of National Service, and the potential of National Service to promote the assimilation of non-British migrants. These were important considerations for the armed forces, successive federal governments, and the Australian people. The liability of unnaturalised non-British migrants for National Service is an issue that reveals clearly the political and social implications of Australian immigration and defence policy during the 1950s and 1960s.

129 Advertiser, 10 August 1966.
This thesis has demonstrated that the historical significance of National Service extends far beyond defence. Both as a concept and as a reality, National Service contains equally important political and social implications. Between 1945 and 1972, the armed forces, successive federal governments, and the Australian people interacted through the issue of National Service, which incorporated military, political, and social aspects that together provide a better understanding of Australia’s history.

After the Second World War, the Chifley Federal Labor Government tried to reconcile the public’s demand for rapid demobilisation and their concern about defence while attempting to reorganise the armed forces. In 1947, the Military Board included a recommendation for the introduction of National Service in its plan for a Post-War Army. At the time, a majority of people favoured the introduction of a system of compulsory military training for its potential to produce more soldiers, better citizens, or both. The Government’s decision to proscribe compulsory military training, the onset of the Cold War, and resultant public concerns about communism ensured that compulsory military training became an important campaign issue in the approach to the 1949 federal election.

Planning for National Service training commenced immediately after the election of the Menzies-led Liberal-Country Party Coalition Government. The outbreak of war
in Korea and Australia’s ongoing commitment to the defence of Malaya were evidence of a deteriorating international strategic environment and of the imminent danger that communism posed to the Western democracies. The Government justified the introduction of a system of universal military training in 1951 by warning of the need for Australia to prepare for a third world war in three years. The Government’s subsequent reluctance to change to a system of selective military training can best be understood in terms of public opinion. Universal military training commanded strong public support because it promised to deliver defence and social benefits, whilst selective military training was generally disliked for being fundamentally inequitable.

A downturn in the national economy forced the Federal Government in 1953 to impose a limit on the National Service annual trainee intake and to reduce the training obligation. In the following year, a formal change to selective military training was effected when the Government deferred to military advice and introduced provisions for locality and occupational deferment. While abandoning the principle of universal service, the Government also resolved to enforce more rigorously the *National Service Act* in an effort to administer as fairly as possible the inherently unfair system of selective military training. In this way, the Government attempted to maintain public support for National Service by enforcing more rigidly the selective liability for call-up and by attempting to make unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for National Service training.

By 1957, Australia’s strategic reorientation from the Middle East to South-East Asia had produced a new focus on the operational capability of the three Services. Consequently, National Service training was discontinued in the Navy and the Air
Force, and the Army’s annual National Service intake was limited to 12,000 trainees, governed by a birthday ballot system of random selection. The Government subsequently renewed its effort to apply more strictly the provisions of the *National Service Act* in a bid to retain public support for the National Service training scheme. However, the changes rendered the National Service training scheme unacceptably selective for a significant proportion of people. During the 1950s, public support for National Service training receded as the dimensions of the scheme were reduced and many people were thoroughly disillusioned with the scheme at the time of its suspension in 1960.

Nevertheless, public support for National Service remained strong, and in the early 1960s, a shift in public opinion occurred to the extent that in 1964 a majority accepted the introduction of a highly selective National Service scheme based upon two years’ full-time service and including a liability for overseas service. The public generally accepted that universal military training was no longer appropriate to Australia’s strategic situation. Encouraged by the United States, and in response to Britain’s impending withdrawal from South-East Asia, Australia had resolved to accept greater responsibility for regional security. The subsequent expansion of Australia’s military commitment to South Vietnam, which included National Servicemen, established an association between the National Service scheme and the Vietnam War.

From late 1967, Australian public opinion regarding these two issues together followed a downward spiral, which created a problem that the Government was powerless to resolve. As an ally of the United States, Australia was fully committed to the protracted conflict in Vietnam, which therefore necessitated the indefinite
continuation of the National Service scheme. The decision to make unnaturalised non-British migrants liable for National Service from 1967 indicates that the Government intended to turn to its advantage the fair administration of National Service, much as it had done in the 1950s. In 1968, the Government again tried to shore up support for the National Service scheme by tightening the provisions of the *National Service Act* through a series of legislative amendments. However, the Government had badly misread the public mood: the legislation was considered so oppressive that most of it was either withdrawn or rendered practically useless.

Opposition to the National Service scheme can be traced specifically to the liability for overseas service. However, by the time this had become apparent, it was too late: the Coalition had committed to an inflexible ideological position and the Labor Party had occupied and developed a position of its own that was much more closely attuned to the public mood. The Government had failed to understand, or refused to accept, that growing public anxiety about the escalating war in Vietnam had necessitated a liberalisation of provisions for conscientious objection to National Service and their extension to the war in Vietnam. Instead, the Government tried to consolidate its existing basis of support, which explains its reluctance to introduce amendments to the scheme that might have relieved the mounting political and social pressure exerted by the Labor Party and a broad-based protest movement.

After the federal Coalition retained office in 1969 with a vastly reduced electoral majority, it could not afford to lose any further support if it was to have any chance of winning the next election. Despite the significant political inroads that the Labor Party was making, which produced a degree of uncertainty that is discernible in the short-
lived acceptance in 1970 of a civilian alternative to National Service, the Government maintained its position on National Service and the Vietnam War until December 1972, when the Australian people delivered their verdict. Ultimately, the Coalition Government proved adept at responding to changes in Australia's strategic situation, but was not attuned to the significant changes taking place in Australian society that gave rise to the protest movement.

In several respects, the National Service training scheme of the 1950s paved the way for the National Service scheme of the 1960s. The history of National Service in Australia between 1945 and 1972 reflects a steady course in defence planning during a period of significant change in Australia's strategic situation and of social change, which together influenced attitudes towards National Service. In the process of negotiation that followed, society determined the acceptability or otherwise of National Service; the armed forces determined its practicability; and Federal Government attempted to establish common ground between the two.

The history of National Service in Australia in this period reveals that, in spite of consistently high levels of public support for National Service, the relationship between the armed forces, successive federal governments, and the Australian people was one of considerable complexity. In Australia to the present day, clarion calls for the reintroduction of National Service are commonplace: they relate to either universal or selective military training and involve a desire to promote defence, improve society, or both. Implicit in such calls is an expectation that the Services can and should readily alter the bases of their organisations to accommodate National Service, and should again perform what may fairly be termed 'military manoeuvres'.

341
APPENDICES

Appendix A
Summary of annual National Service intakes before and after 1 March 1951. 343

Appendix B
Table 1
Summary of variations in the National Service training scheme annual intakes. 344

Table 2
Australian Defence Expenditure expressed as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 1945-46 to 1973-74. 345

Appendix C
Table 1
Annual per capita defence expenditure and percentage of male labour force enlisted in the Services by country in 1962. 346

Table 2
National Service, Services' Manpower Review, 30 September 1964. 347

Table 3
Army Reserve Strength build-up, Services' Manpower Review, 30 September 1964. 348

Table 4
Regular Army enlistments and wastage from 1960-61 to 1964-65. 349

Appendix D
Table 1
National Service Ballot Results 10 March 1965. 350

Table 2
Full-time Australian Defence Force Personnel from 1959-60 to 1973-74. 351

Appendix E
Table 1
Estimate of male aliens in Australia turning 20 years of age in 1966. 352

Table 2
Table of Male Aliens born between 1.1.1947 and 31.12.1947 included in registers of Aliens maintained in States and Mainland Territories of Australia. 353

Appendix F
Ministers, Chiefs of Staff and Senior Public Servants. 355
Appendix A

Summary of annual National Service intakes before and after 1 March 1951.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1951 Before</th>
<th>1951 After</th>
<th>1952 Before</th>
<th>1952 After</th>
<th>1953 Before</th>
<th>1953 After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>29,250</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>29,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,750</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>4,750</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>10,250</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>15,250</td>
<td>38,250</td>
<td>18,750</td>
<td>40,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B

Table 1

Summary of variations in the National Service training scheme annual intakes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>29,250</td>
<td>29,250</td>
<td>29,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>8,750</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>3,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>35,450</td>
<td>33,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NAA: A816, 44/301/185, Notes on Cabinet Agendum, National Service, 9 November 1953.
Appendix B

Table 2

Australian Defence Expenditure expressed as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 1945-46 to 1973-74.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>GDP %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-53</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953-54</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
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<td>1958-59</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<td>1959-60</td>
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<td>1961-62</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<td>1962-63</td>
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<td>1964-65</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<td>1965-66</td>
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<td>1966-67</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<td>1967-68</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<td>1968-69</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969-70</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-72</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ‘Defence expenditure over the century’, in Australian Bureau of Statistics,
Appendix C

Table 1

Annual per capita defence expenditure and percentage of male labour force enlisted in the Services by country in 1962.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Annual per capita defence expenditure (£A)</th>
<th>Percentage of male labour force enlisted in the Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>128/-</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>41/-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>40/-</td>
<td>7.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>36/10</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>20/-</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>15/-</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Muftii, June 1962.
# Appendix C

## Table 2


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Annual Call up</th>
<th>Effective Army</th>
<th>Selective Service Training Units</th>
<th>Total Army</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965/66</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>25,317</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>26,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966/67</td>
<td>4,350</td>
<td>28,707</td>
<td>2,643</td>
<td>31,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967/68</td>
<td>4,350</td>
<td>30,500</td>
<td>4,450</td>
<td>34,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968/69</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>31,800</td>
<td>4,450</td>
<td>36,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969/70</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>4,450</td>
<td>37,450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix C

Table 3

Army Reserve Strength build-up, Services’ Manpower Review, 30 September 1964.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reserve Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 December 1967</td>
<td>1,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June 1968</td>
<td>3,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June 1969</td>
<td>7,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June 1970</td>
<td>11,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June 1971</td>
<td>14,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June 1972</td>
<td>15,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June 1973</td>
<td>17,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix C

Table 4

Regular Army enlistments and wastage from 1960-61 to 1964-65.

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<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Enlistments</th>
<th>Wastage</th>
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<td>1963-64</td>
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<td>1,760</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964-65 (July to October)</td>
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### Table 1

National Service Ballot Results 10 March 1965.

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<th>Balloted in (incl. %)</th>
<th>Balloted out</th>
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<td>8,298 (53.3%)</td>
<td>7,265</td>
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<td>10,936</td>
<td>5,815 (53.2%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>6,409</td>
<td>3,349 (52.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.A.</td>
<td>3,907</td>
<td>2,104 (53.9%)</td>
<td>1,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.A.</td>
<td>2,208</td>
<td>1,487 (52.9%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1,338</td>
<td>724 (54.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>40,961</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,777 (53.2%)</strong></td>
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</table>

Appendix D

Table 2


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<th>Financial Year</th>
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<th>National Servicemen</th>
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Appendix E

Table 1

Estimate of male aliens in Australia turning 20 years of age in 1966.

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Total 4,582

Source: NAA: A446/158, 70/95528.
Appendix E

Table 2

Table of Male Aliens born between 1.1.1947 and 30.6.1947 included in registers of Aliens maintained in States and Mainland Territories of Australia.

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Totals 1,353 1,318 284 145 130 34 20 493 3,333
Table of Male Aliens born between 1.7.1947 and 31.12.1947 included in registers of Aliens maintained in States and Mainland Territories of Australia.

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Totals: 1,010 1,065 255 129 82 29 17 39 2,625

*Figures shown in brackets indicate number of non-European aliens included in total figure for that nationality.

Appendix F

Ministers, Chiefs of Staff and senior Public Servants.

**Prime Ministers**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prime Ministers</th>
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<td>John Curtin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Francis Forde</td>
<td>6 July 1945</td>
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<tr>
<td>J.B. (Ben) Chifley</td>
<td>13 July 1945</td>
<td>19 December 1949</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Menzies</td>
<td>19 December 1949</td>
<td>26 January 1966</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harold Holt</td>
<td>26 January 1966</td>
<td>19 December 1967</td>
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<tr>
<td>John McEwen</td>
<td>19 December 1967</td>
<td>10 January 1968</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Gorton</td>
<td>10 January 1968</td>
<td>10 March 1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>William McMahon</td>
<td>10 March 1971</td>
<td>5 December 1972</td>
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<tr>
<td>E.G. (Gough) Whitlam</td>
<td>5 December 1972</td>
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**Leaders of the Opposition**

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<td>23 September 1943</td>
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<td>H.V. Evatt</td>
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<td>Arthur Calwell</td>
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**Ministers for Defence**

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<td>John Dedman</td>
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<td>Eric Harrison</td>
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<td>Sir Philip McBride</td>
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<td>Senator Shane Paltridge</td>
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<td>Malcolm Fraser</td>
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<td>John Gorton</td>
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<td>David Fairbairn</td>
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<td>William McMahon</td>
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### Chiefs of the General Staff

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<td>Lieutenant-General Vernon Sturdee</td>
<td>1 March 1946</td>
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<td>Lieutenant-General Sir Sydney Rowell</td>
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<td>Lieutenant-General Sir Ragnar Garrett</td>
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<td>Lieutenant-General Sir Reginald Pollard</td>
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<td>Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Daly</td>
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### Secretaries of the Department of Defence

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<td>Sir Henry Bland</td>
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<td>2 March 1970</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allan McKnight</td>
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<td>October 1940</td>
<td>March 1946</td>
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<td>William Funnell</td>
<td>March 1946</td>
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<td>Sir Henry Bland</td>
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<td>6 November 1961</td>
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*Cabinet Office*

A5842 Second Holt Ministry – Cabinet files, 1966 –

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*Commonwealth Investigations Service / Commissioner, Commonwealth Police Force*

A1533 Correspondence files, 1953 –

*Department of Air*

A705 Correspondence files, 1922 – 1960

*Department of Defence (including Department of the Army)*

A1945 Correspondence files, 1957 – 1974

A1946 Correspondence files, 1967 – 1973

A663 Correspondence files, 1940 – 1957

A816 Correspondence files, 1935 – 1958

A5799 Defence Committee agenda, 1932 –

A5954 ‘The Shedden Collection’, 1901 – 1971

A6059 Correspondence files, 1925 – 1966

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MP742/1 General and civil staff correspondence files and Army personnel files, 1943 – 1951
MP927/1 General and civil staff correspondence files and Army personnel files, 1952 – 1962

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A981 Correspondence files, 1927 – 1942
A1838 Correspondence files, 1948 – 1989

Department of Immigration
A445 Correspondence files, 1951 – 1955
A446 Correspondence files, 1953 –

Department of Labour and National Service
B142 Correspondence files, 1953 –
B494 Correspondence files, 1953 – 1994
AP848/23 Correspondence files re National Service, 1965 – 1972
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M1458 General correspondence from various political organisations and representative groups, 1945 – 1949
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A463 Correspondence files, 1956 –
A1209 Correspondence files, 1 January 1957 –
A4940  Menzies and Holt Ministries, Cabinet files, 1958 – 1967
A5842  McMahon Ministries, Cabinet files, 1966 –

Secretary to Cabinet / Cabinet Secretariat

A4638  Fourth Menzies Ministry, Cabinet files, 1949 – 1951
A4909  Fifth Menzies Ministry, Cabinet files, 1951 – 1954
A4910  Fifth and Sixth Menzies Ministries, Cabinet files, 1954 – 1958
A4940  Menzies and Holt Ministries, Cabinet files, 1958 – 1967
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