From Burden to Benefit: Italian and German Prisoners of War in Western Australia, 1943-1946

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts in History with Honours, 2020.
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains, as its main content, work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Peter McMullan
29 May 2020
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ABSTRACT

During the Second World War, Australia faced an extreme manpower shortage due to the requirements of its armed services, munitions production and agriculture. The federal government, having tried other sources of labour, was eventually forced to utilise Italian and German prisoners of war (POWs), interned in Australia, as additional workers. The option to employ POWs was allowed by the 1929 Geneva Convention, provided that this labour was not used for war purposes. The limited scholarly work available on POW employees in Australia deals predominantly with the eastern states. I analyse the decision to use almost 4000 Italian and German prisoners, transferred from POW camps in the eastern states and overseas, in Western Australia. I also show how the system worked in practice, and analyse the economic significance of the scheme. Western Australia’s greatest need for labour was in farm work and firewood supply. The army administered schemes under which POWs were employed in these tasks throughout the state’s agricultural regions. Over 3500 Italian and 300 German prisoners were used on the two projects. Army administrative centres were established in country towns, from where labour was distributed to employers after a vetting process.

The POW labour scheme proved economically and politically beneficial for Western Australia and financially advantageous for the federal government. Farmers were able to access cheap and experienced Italian labour, while the German POW workforce assisted the Forests Department in overcoming the state’s critical firewood shortage. Australian authorities accepted POW employment because it was fiscally self-sufficient and low maintenance, while country towns appreciated the army’s presence because it provided security and because money was spent in the towns. The labour scheme also appears to have been relatively congenial for the prisoners, who were far removed from the war zones and were generally well treated by their hosts.
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My thanks are also due to the staff at the National Archives of Australia (Perth and Melbourne), the State Records Office, Western Australia, and the librarians at the Battye Library, Perth. Thank you also to the archival staff at the West Australian Army Museum, the Australian War Memorial, the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, Rail Heritage WA, and Graham McKenzie-Smith.

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INTRODUCTION

On 3 September 1939, Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced on radio stations throughout the nation that as Britain had declared war on Germany, Australia was also at war.\(^1\) The nation was, however, unprepared and ill-equipped for another major conflict. It had neglected its defence and infrastructure budgets due to poor planning and various financial constraints following the end of the First World War in 1918,\(^2\) and it was still suffering from the adverse effects of the Great Depression. Once the Second World War began, a large proportion of Australia’s human and material resources was directed at the war effort. This mobilisation eventually caused significant labour shortages in critical areas, including the production of food and fuel. The government undertook extraordinary measures to address the labour shortage. One of these measures was the employment of Italian and German prisoners of war (POWs) as civilian labour. This thesis examines why and how the Australian government employed Italian and German prisoners of war in Western Australia between 1943 and 1946.

The depression of the 1930s had damaged Australia’s ability to raise revenue when compared with other countries, due to its considerable dependence on agricultural exports. Almost eighty per cent, or £140 million in value, of Australia’s annual exports was generated through the sale of farm products.\(^3\) With few manufacturing industries, Australia needed external financial aid to import commodities such as oil, petrol and manufactured goods from Britain.\(^4\) Since 1929 Australia had experienced high unemployment, rising inflation and reduced wages. In the late 1930s, with the rise of political tensions and conflict in Europe and Asia, Australia was faced with the possibility of commitment to another

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international conflict. Therefore, a coordinated mobilisation of the country’s industrial, agricultural and human resources was necessary. In May 1939, the Australian government introduced a national register of male citizens between the ages of eighteen and sixty-four. The next month, the government passed the Supply and Development Act, which allowed the authorities to survey the nation’s capabilities and assets for war mobilisation. S. J. Butlin suggests that these two government actions complemented each other as they enabled the human and material resources of Australia to be directed to critical areas for the war effort.

Policy was not always co-ordinated between the Commonwealth and State governments, even after the war began. For the first two years of the war, the conservative United Australia Party, led by Prime Minister Robert Menzies, controlled the Commonwealth Government. However, the opposition Labor Party governed a majority of the Australian states; thus, conflict often occurred. To combine the federal and state governments’ efforts in a national response to the crisis, while also ensuring that it controlled crucial decisions, the Commonwealth Government implemented the National Security Acts on 9 September 1939. These acts established the federal government’s right to regulate nationwide resources, including people, taxes, food and fuel. Meanwhile, the outbreak of the war provided significant employment opportunities, in an economy still suffering the effects of the Depression. Unemployed men quickly gained work on defence projects and elsewhere. Official unemployment figures show that over ten per cent of the male workforce in September 1939 had been unemployed, but eighteen

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months after the start of the conflict, jobless numbers had been reduced to just above five per cent.\textsuperscript{10}

On 10 June 1940, Italy entered the conflict as an ally of Germany.\textsuperscript{11} In 1940-1941, British and Commonwealth troops, including Australians, captured approximately 200,000 Italian soldiers in Italian East Africa and Libya.\textsuperscript{12} Because of the security risk caused by having so many captured enemy troops in his region, and the necessity of feeding and guarding them with limited available resources, the British Commander-in-Chief Middle East, General Archibald Wavell, asked his military superiors to have the prisoners urgently removed. The British authorities contacted colonial governments for assistance.\textsuperscript{13} The Australian federal government agreed in April 1941 to accept custody of up to 50,000 of these POWs, with Britain taking the financial responsibility for them.\textsuperscript{14} However, because of a shortage of available shipping to transport them, only 6,000 initially arrived in Australia, from late May 1941 onwards.\textsuperscript{15} Until they could be shipped elsewhere, including to Australia, the majority of the remainder of the Italian POWs were to be impounded for a further two years in Indian POW camps.\textsuperscript{16}

The North African battles, combined with the failed Allied campaigns against Italian and German forces in Greece and Crete, resulted in British demands for replacement troops and resources from Australia to compensate for losses incurred through casualties or capture.\textsuperscript{17} The federal government

\textsuperscript{13} British Prime Minister’s Department, request to Australia to accept POWs, possibly up to 50,000, April 1941. National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA): A373, 1945/2/6098.
\textsuperscript{15} Directorate of Prisoners of War and Internees, The arrival of Italian POWs at Sydney from Egypt on RMS Queen Mary, 27 May 1941. NAA: A7919, C98798.
\textsuperscript{16} Transfer of 10,000 Italian POWs from India to Australia, May 1943, NAA: A434, 1950/3/1553.
\textsuperscript{17} Robertson, \textit{Australia at War}, p. 42.
consequently, had to balance Australia’s available manpower against the requirements of the armed services, munition and armament production, and other essential wartime industries, such as food and fuel production. Farming began to suffer severe labour shortages. A 1939 government report showed that almost seventy-five per cent of Australian’s calorie intake originated from farming, examples being bread, cereals, milk, butter, eggs, and fruit and vegetables, the balance being mainly fish.\textsuperscript{18} The rural workforce had already lost 100,000 men to other industries and the military, which represented twenty per cent of the pre-war labour force, by the time Japan entered the war in December 1941.\textsuperscript{19}

Earlier financial constraints had reduced the Australian government’s capacity to standardise the national road and rail infrastructure network. Lack of standardisation created many transport problems during the war, and there were also labour shortages in transport, the postal system, banking and telephone services, as well as many other industries.\textsuperscript{20} Out of more than 700,000 industrial workers, 500,000 were eventually transferred to munitions, aircraft and other war supply work.\textsuperscript{21} As an example, S. J. Butlin and C. B. Schedvin write that by mid-1943, over 500 bank branches had closed due to the drafting of male clerical staff.\textsuperscript{22}

The war also affected another group of people living in Australia: people born outside the British Empire, who were referred to as ‘aliens’. At the commencement of the conflict, Australia had a population of just under seven million people, predominantly of British descent or citizenship with a small minority of non-English migrants.\textsuperscript{23} To maintain a mainly British society, at

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 368.
Federation in 1901, Australia had legislated for a white immigration policy, which, in practice, according to Barry Ralph, not only created a colour barrier but excluded many other people who were not of Anglo-Saxon heritage.\(^{24}\) After the outbreak of war, over 50,000 aliens living in Australia had been required to complete a registration form at their closest police station, even though not all of them were citizens of enemy nations.\(^{25}\) Germans, Italians and later Japanese became known as ‘enemy aliens’.\(^{26}\) Significant numbers of aliens were transferred to camps around Australia, often in remote locations. By late December 1942, according to Kate Darian-Smith, more than 7,000 people lived in these internment camps,\(^{27}\) which were administered by the Australian military. Conditions varied for the internees, depending on the location, climate and numbers and ethnic composition of the inmate populations. Because of the labour crisis, some of the internees were employed on farms, but according to Butlin and Schedvin, their contributions were negligible, as they mostly came from urban backgrounds and were inexperienced at farm work.\(^{28}\)

On 7 December 1941, Japanese forces began their advance through South East Asia, attacking British, Dutch and American territories, having also attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawai‘i. By mid-February 1942, Singapore had surrendered, Darwin had been bombed by Japanese aircraft, and the Australian community felt threatened. Australia was virtually defenceless, with most of its military forces committed in Europe and North Africa or imprisoned in South East Asia. On the presumption that Japan would invade the Australian mainland, the focus of the nation became self-preservation.\(^{29}\) The Australian government was now further forced to concentrate on its defence by expanding both military and munitions capabilities to the detriment of primary industries.\(^{30}\)

The entry of the United States into the conflict following the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor became a significant turning point for Australia and its allies. It was also to put immense demands on various Australia resources, including manpower. Prime Minister John Curtin welcomed U.S. participation in the war with his speech in early December 1941, saying that ‘Australia looks to America’. As Peter Dean argues, Australia had little choice but to surrender some of its authority to the United States, as it had previously done with Great Britain, in exchange for assistance. America quickly began transporting substantial numbers of troops and considerable equipment to secure Australia from a possible Japanese invasion, with the intention of eventually launching assaults from Australia on Japanese land and sea forces in South East Asia.

The conflict, now in Australia’s region, saw a massive increase in war work in Australia due to rising national production commitments and preparation for an influx of U.S. military forces. In early January 1942, the federal government introduced procedures to control the distribution of people between the armed services and civilian employment by establishing the Manpower Directorate. New regulations also co-ordinated the delivery of men and women to essential industries. Numbers of workers directly employed in the armament industries doubled from 600,000 at the outbreak of the Pacific War to over 1.2 million by March 1943. Many women entered the workforce, taking on jobs that had previously only been available to males, often replacing men who had left their jobs to enlist in the forces. By June 1943, the number of women employed in war-related industries had risen to 190,000, compared with 1,000 when war was declared in September 1939. Other directives prevented skilled workers in essential industries from enlisting in the military or changing employment. This

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31 ‘The Task Ahead, Curtin and America’, *Herald* (Melbourne), 27 December 1941, p. 10.
35 Ibid., p. 221.
policy became known as ‘manpowering’. Regulations safeguarded some priority industries, which eventually came to be called ‘protected industries’. Even as early as September 1939, attempts had been made to preserve sufficient labour in rural regions. However, as Wallace C. Wurth, the Director-General of Manpower, records, ‘the system was riddled with loopholes’ and therefore was too difficult to enforce.38

Australia’s acute labour shortage was exacerbated by the arrival of American military forces, who needed to be provided with food, accommodation and training facilities. Between December 1941 and August 1945, over 860,000 American military personnel were stationed in or passed through Australia to various war fronts.39 Dean notes that in 1942-1943, Australia developed as the primary strategic base for the offensive against Japan in the South-West Pacific.40 The presence of these troops in many capital cities had a significant impact on Australian life and local economies, and in particular, on the availability of crucial resources. The U.S. sent war materials and supplies to Australia under the Lend-Lease Act, a mutual aid agreement among the Allies. In return, in a system known as Reverse Lend-Lease, Australia provided goods and services to the United States military, mainly food, footwear and specialist military equipment manufactured in Australia, such as telephone cable, small watercraft and pontoon bridges.41 Overall, the American Army requisitioned immense amounts of supplies, both food and services, which not only placed new demands on production but also exerted a tremendous strain on the limited availability of items for civilian use.42 The American forces also required military bases to be built in

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40 Dean, MacArthur's Coalition, p. 41.
42 Michael McKernan, All In!: Australia During the Second World War, Melbourne: Nelson, 1983, p. 147.
Australia for troop accommodation, storage and training purposes. The Allied Works Council was set up, using Australian labour, to meet these needs, and the civilian workforce available for other purposes was thus further depleted.43

American military requirements for food could not be satisfied because of the acute shortage of rural labour in Australia, caused by the Australian authorities’ earlier decisions to redirect labour to military and munitions manufacture. The proportion of Australian food in total U.S. Army food consumption in the South-West Pacific theatre plunged from ninety-five per cent in 1942-1943 to fifty per cent in 1944-1945.44 More agricultural labour was needed not only to supply American military requirements but also for Australia’s own citizens and for troops serving overseas. Moreover, Australia was still committed to maintaining exports to Britain.45 To reduce home consumption, the Commonwealth government had been forced to impose various austerity measures on the civilian population. Items that were important to the war effort were regulated: thus petrol, food and clothing could only be obtained by use of a ration book.46 In the farming sector, the Commonwealth government tried various new approaches to combat the critical labour shortages. The formation of the Australian Women’s Land Army on 27 July 1942 was the first.47 This scheme copied British models from the First and Second World Wars; unfortunately, according to Juliet Ludbrook, the Land Army project failed to attract enough recruits to have any significant impact on the scarcity of labour.48 As a result, the Manpower Directorate was obliged to look elsewhere.

In April 1943 an inter-departmental committee of federal government agencies recommended that the Australian War Cabinet adopt a scheme for the employment of the captured Italian POWs who had previously been transported to Australia. The POWs were to be employed on farms, with minimum supervision,

43 Butlin and Schedvin, War Economy 1942-1945, p. 145.
44 Ibid., p. 130.
46 McKernan, All In!, p. 152.
47 Establishment of Australian Women’s Land Army, Australian War Memorial (hereafter AWM): 54 1025/4/1.
throughout the country.\textsuperscript{49} Articles twenty-seven to thirty-three of the 1929 Geneva Convention regarding the treatment of POWs authorised the employment of captured prisoners if the work was safe and not war-related, and remuneration was provided.\textsuperscript{50} Britain, having also faced labour shortages, had successfully implemented a scheme to use captured Italian POWs as manual labour for its primary industries from December 1941.\textsuperscript{51} Australia followed the British lead and eventually employed both Italian and German POWs in civilian work. Comparatively few German POWs reached Australia relative to other regions, as they were generally impounded in Canada and America. Between 1941 and 1945, Australia took custody of over 25,000 POWs, including 18,432 Italians, 1,658 Germans and over 4,000 Japanese.\textsuperscript{52} Many of the Italian and German prisoners were employed on work projects throughout Australia.

This thesis examines the economic and political dimensions of the POW labour schemes implemented in Western Australia. I focus on Western Australia because it is neglected in studies both of Australia’s wartime politics and economics, and of POWs in Australia. Official histories of wartime Australia provide very important overviews of national policies and their implementation, including POW employment schemes. Paul Hasluck’s two volumes, D. P. Mellor’s study, and the work of S. J. Butlin and C. B. Schedvin generally focus, however, on large industrial organisations in the eastern states and the role of powerful unions, especially in the New South Wales coal-mining industry.\textsuperscript{53} Western Australia’s economy, on the other hand, was predominantly agriculturally based, and its wartime requirements, as well as its wartime contributions, were therefore somewhat different. The issue of POW labour in

Western Australia provides one lens through which to broaden scholarly understandings of Australia’s domestic political and economic situation in the years after 1939.

I show in this thesis that the federal and state governments and military authorities facilitated the POW employment schemes to overcome production problems that threatened to impede the nation’s war effort. Employment of POWs was also useful from a security perspective. Labour schemes for POWs provided an opportunity for prisoners to be physically and mentally occupied, thereby reducing boredom, and thus diminishing the prospect of escapes. I also show that farmers pushed for programs that provided desperately needed physical assistance to them, as did state government administrators needing labour to work in the state’s forests in the vital production of firewood.

Few books deal in detail with the subject of POWs in Western Australia. Although several works include relevant material, they are evidently intended for general audiences, and their data is largely unreferenced, making it difficult to verify their authors’ claims. Their typical focus, moreover, is on social history rather than on economic or political analysis. Alan Fitzgerald’s *Italian Farming Soldiers* and Barbara Winter’s *Stalag Australia* focus on national history, with a limited investigation of the Western Australian situation, and Bill Bunbury mentions the employment of Italian POWs on the state’s farms.54 Ernest Polis covers the employment of POWs in Western Australia. However, his *Study and Survey of Prisoner of War Facilities in Western Australia*, commissioned for the National Estates Grants Program, is brief.55 Several works on alien internment and on POWs have provided useful context for this thesis. They include studies by Joan Beaumont, Ilma Martinuzzi O’Brien and Mathew Trinca and by Margaret Bevege, as well as the collection edited by Richard Bosworth and Romano Ugolini.56

Two publications by Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich provide the broad picture of the fate of Italian POWs sent to destinations throughout the British Empire, and two of their chapters concern Italian POWs employed on farms in Australia. However, the first provides information only on the period 1941-1943, detailing where the Italians were captured and how the Australian authorities dealt with them when they arrived in Australia. There is no mention of Western Australia, even though by July 1943 Italian POWs were working there. The second chapter discusses both South African and Australian experiences with the employment of Italian POWs. Once again, the writers focus on the eastern states, this time from the viewpoint of finance and administration. There is only one mention of Western Australia: it concerns an Italian POW who was alleged to have committed an indecent assault.

Works on Western Australian agricultural history by George Henry Burvill, S. Glynn, and John Grenfell Crawford, C. M. Donald, C. P. Dowsett, and D. B. William provide essential information on the development of the agricultural regions, and the problems that eventually led to the use of POWs. Western Australia’s unpreparedness for the war is evident in Richard G. Hartley’s and in G. D. Snooks’ studies. From the point of view of federal politics, works

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by David Horner and John Edwards provide valuable details on crucial decisions that affected Australia and to a lesser extent Western Australia.62 For Western Australia, David Black investigates the state government’s relationships with both the federal government and the Western Australia union movement.63

Kate Darian-Smith and Michael McKernan both write about the Australian home front from a civilian viewpoint and describe the impact of rationing of food and fuel.64 Specific information on Western Australia is provided by Penelope Hetherington, Michal Bosworth and Lindsay J. Peet.65 The military aspects of the home front, both in Australia and Western Australia, are well explained by Albert Palazzo.66 Graham McKenzie-Smith’s two books provide information about the movements of the Australian Army throughout Western Australia, and about the construction of Marrinup POW Camp.67 Both David Horner and John Robertson provide useful data on the military from a national viewpoint.68 The arrival in Western Australia of United States forces, as explained above, put increased pressure on food supplies. Michael Sturma discusses the Allied submarine base in Fremantle and the operational and social aspect of the submarine war, while Malcolm Tull provides useful evidence about how Fremantle coped with this military expansion.69

64 Darian-Smith, On the Home Front; McKernan, All In!
69 Michael Sturma, Fremantle’s Submarines: How Allied Submariners and Western Australians Helped Win the War in the Pacific, Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2015; Malcolm Tull, A Community Enterprise: The History
The primary source materials for this work are federal and state records, principally held by the National Archives of Australia, the Australian War Memorial and the Western Australian State Records Office. They are supplemented by printed government reports, records from the Catholic Archdiocese in Perth, and local newspapers.

National Archives of Australia holds records for government departments covering the entire period relevant to this thesis, from the initial decision to use Italian and German POWs as a workforce, up to the prisoners’ return to their homelands, according to the requirements of the 1929 Geneva Convention. A variety of documents confirm that the setting up and running of the rural employment scheme for Italian POWs was a significant undertaking, requiring many government agencies to work together. Letters, reports and inter-departmental minutes tell a comparable story of how urgently required the German POWs were for the acute firewood crisis that had developed in Western Australia. The Australian War Memorial’s archives contain a wide range of operational and logistical reports from headquarters and various units, including copies of messages and administrative instructions. They also provide unit war diaries that record daily military activities, including unit locations, movements and transfers of both POWs and their guards, dates and numbers of POWs arriving in Western Australia, and the composition of the Australian Army staff involved in the schemes. One issue is the poor physical quality of the relevant files; many transcripts are faded and unreadable. The Western Australian State Records Office contains many documents that discuss the numerous infrastructure and production problems experienced between mid-1942 and late 1946. Topics include the shortage of labour, unavailability of coal, lack of rail services and infrastructure, petrol rationing and the critical shortage of firewood.

Some Western Australian government agencies, such as the Department of Mines, the Forests Department and the Western Australian Government Railways, issued annual reports which, between 1939 and 1947, offer material relating to

POW employment. Topics covered include reasons for the scarcity of coal or the difficulties in maintaining firewood supplies, and the inability to make adequate provision for war-time rail services. Department of Mines reports, including the report of the 1947 Royal Commission into the state’s coal-mining industry, comment on the unreliability of the supply of coal from the mines in the Collie region due to strikes and absenteeism. The Forests Department, charged with supervising firewood production, details how it attempted to overcome the critical shortages of firewood, and its use of alternative sources of labour, initially the Civil Aliens Corps and eventually German POWs. The annual reports from the state government railways, including the report of another Royal Commission in 1947, also focus on the lack of infrastructure and shortages in manpower.

The Statistical Registers of Western Australia for 1945-1946 and 1946-1947, produced by the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, contain the state’s agricultural production figures, showing a significant decline in acreage under crop, along with crops produced, despite the urgent need for higher production to meet the various demands of war. The registers also record a decrease in the state railway’s rolling stock, including trains, between 1942 and 1945. Data is provided on fuel shortages, which created significant freight problems for agricultural and firewood production. These shortages justified the employment of POWs in Western Australia.

The archives of the Catholic Archdiocese in Perth contain records pertaining to the Italian POWs, the vast majority of whom were Roman Catholics. The prisoners had access to the state’s clergy for their welfare and spiritual needs; from at least April 1944, POWs were officially allowed to attend mass. The records comment on prisoners’ health and the occasional deaths of POWs in the farming regions. Whenever a POW died, the local Returned Services League

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70 West Australian Forests Department, Annual Reports, archived at https://library.dcba.wa.gov.au, accessed 1 July 2019; Western Australian Department of Mines, Annual Reports, archived at https://www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/content/annual-report-archives, archived from accessed 1 August 2019; Western Australia Government Railways (WAGR), Annual Reports received from Rail Heritage WA, Bassendean, Western Australia.
Local and state newspapers of the period have also provided valuable source material. The most important is the *West Australian*, which reported various stories concerning the POWs, including descriptions of escaped prisoners. The *West Australian* was also used by the Manpower Department’s state representative to inform interested farmers about the opportunities to employ POWs through the Rural Employment without Guards Scheme. Comparison with eastern states’ newspapers highlights an apparently greater level of acceptance of the prisoners as workers in Western Australia: other states’ newspapers commented on ethnic discrimination against POWs and on union backlash against their employment, whereas Western Australian papers did not.

The thesis consists of three main chapters. Chapter One examines what happened on the home front in Western Australia, from the end of the First World War, through the Great Depression and to the start of the Second World War, emphasising the economic, political and social roles played by the federal government. Chapter Two discusses why and how Italian prisoners were employed in Western Australia’s agricultural regions. Chapter Three investigates the transfer of German POWs to the state and the work they did in Western Australia.

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71 Correspondence between Apostolic Delegate, Melbourne, Archbishop Prendiville Perth and Western Australian parish priests, December 1943 – December 1945, Stack 1, Box 433, Box 434, Catholic Archdiocese of Perth Archives, Mount Lawley, Western Australia.
CHAPTER I

THE HOME FRONT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Though the social and military costs of the Second World War would prove extensive, the conflict nevertheless brought some benefits to Western Australia. It provided a considerable boost to employment opportunities in a state still suffering from the economic and social collapse that had started in the mid-1920s and continued through the Great Depression. On the other hand, the war also put significant strain on industry and agriculture. This chapter explores the impact of the conflict on Western Australia’s economy and shows how the state and federal governments sought to cope with the new situation.

A great many of the infrastructure and transport problems appear to have occurred because of poor planning and neglect by previous Western Australian governments. Western Australia had made a sizeable investment in rail before the 1920s, but the state’s rural railway lines had generally been unprofitable after that. Of all the rail tracks in Australia, almost twenty per cent were in Western Australia. However, Western Australian railways carried less than ten per cent of the available national rail freight, the majority being carried by New South Wales and Victoria.¹ Hence railway lines were overdeveloped, especially in Western Australia’s agricultural regions. Another problem was Western Australia’s reliance on overseas funding for its capital expenditure projects, in areas such as health, education, and transport infrastructure.

Between 1923 and 1928, the Western Australian Treasury sourced forty-seven per cent of its funding from Britain.² Both the dependence on overseas funds and overcapitalisation were to have a significant impact during the Depression. From 1929 on, the state’s revenues were severely affected by falling world demand and weaker prices for its agricultural and pastoral products. A decline in capacity to borrow money on the international money markets because

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² Ibid., p. 19.
of the collapse of the stock market exacerbated the situation. Unemployment in Western Australia rose to almost twenty-five per cent in June 1933.\(^3\) The state’s population of just over 465,000 people, nearly half residing in Perth, the rest scattered throughout the vast rural regions, suffered much financial hardship.\(^4\) Even employed people experienced cuts to their wages and conditions. The state’s farmers also suffered because of their inability to obtain imported machinery and fertiliser, which had repercussions for food production during the war.\(^5\)

Unable to borrow capital from overseas, the Western Australian government was forced to reduce spending on public works and development projects. Inadequacy of investment in these areas was to have significant strategic consequences when war came. One response to the Depression, and to a perceived decline in financial assistance from the federal government, was the formation of a new political movement in Western Australia, dedicated to the idea of secession from the rest of the federation. Secession advocates even won a state-sponsored referendum in 1933, though secession was subsequently disallowed by the British parliament.\(^6\) The federal government, now realising that it needed to assist Western Australia, began providing financial support for assorted infrastructure projects. By 1935, according to G. D. Snook, almost all of the people receiving state welfare payments were employed on public works projects, predominantly related to water and sewerage.\(^7\) For instance, Wellington, Harvey and Waroona dams were constructed, assisting local farms and ultimately enabling the expansion of the state’s south-west dairy industry. Eventually, Italian prisoners of war (POWs) were employed in this industry. Another project initiated to support the rural sector was the construction of a rail line linking the towns of Pemberton and Northcliffe.

From the early 1930s, political tension had risen in Europe, prompting the Australian government to give increased attention to defence. Commencing in

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\(^3\) Ibid., p. 9.
\(^7\) Snooks, *Depression and Recovery in Western Australia*, p. 103.
late 1934, the federal government used the existing unemployment relief scheme for defence projects in Western Australia. Examples were the construction of two new rifle ranges at Northam and Midland Junction, expansion of many army drill halls throughout the Perth metropolitan area and the building of a new military aerodrome at Bullsbrook, eventually known as Royal Australian Airforce Pearce.\(^8\) These state and federal work projects reduced unemployment in Western Australia, but conditions remained very difficult. The Depression had forced many workers in the agricultural industries to work for as little as ten shillings per week, plus their keep. Thus, when mobilisation for Australia’s war effort commenced, many people departed the land, seeking higher wages in Perth or enlisting in the military. Jan Mayman and M. J. Davies report that the number of permanently employed males in the Wheatbelt region dropped from almost 18,000 in 1938-1939 to just over 12,000 by 1942-1943.\(^9\) Other than increased employment for men, however, the first two years of the conflict appeared to affect only a small part of the civilian population in Western Australia. There was limited demand for women workers, for example.\(^10\)

In July 1939 the federal government supplied each state government with a top-secret publication on measures to be implemented on the outbreak of a conflict. The report, known as the *War Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, outlined various plans the state governments were to carry out in co-ordination with the federal government on matters such as defence and communications. Two vital topics were omitted: manpower and supply measures. Chapters eight and nine, intended to be devoted to these matters, only provided the following text: ‘subject not yet completed’.\(^11\) Evidently, even when war appeared inevitable,

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\(^8\) Schedule of projects from the Department of the Interior, Commonwealth Government for defence construction works in Western Australia in connection with the unemployment relief problem, 7 December 1934, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA): CP103, 11,773, pp. 27-29.


the federal government still had no firm plans on how to deal with two critical issues that would affect Western Australia for the majority of the conflict.

Shortage of petrol was a crucial wartime issue in all Australian states. At the start of the conflict, Australia had only sufficient petrol for three months. The mechanised land battles and the naval and air war campaigns in Europe and North Africa demanded large quantities of fuel. Hence, oil and petrol fuel tankers, mainly from British-controlled Iran, were increasingly diverted from Australian ports to other regions. The federal government eventually decided to introduce restrictions on fuel consumption. This policy, however, faced strong opposition from various vested interests, including Western Australia’s motor industry. At the time, there were over 54,000 registered vehicles in the state. All states were required by the federal government to establish a Liquid Fuel Control Board to manage rationing. Still, it took until 1 October 1940 to finally implement the system using ration coupons. Even the premier and the governor of Western Australia were affected by petrol rationing. The oil and petrol shortage caused severe logistical and transport problems for most industries in Western Australia, including the provision of firewood supplies, a matter that eventually helped to prompt the employment of POWs. Inevitably, a black market developed in petrol rations, as with other restricted items later in the war.

Railways continued to pose problems for the war effort in Western Australia. As previously mentioned, between 1906 and 1933, successive state governments had undertaken an extensive programme of railway construction throughout the Wheatbelt. By the early 1930s, the state’s agricultural regions, containing approximately 230,000 people, were serviced by over 3000 miles of

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16 Mayman and Davies, ‘1930-1945’, p. 106.
railways, including more than 400 stations and sidings. However, the West Australian Government Railways (WAGR) had been forced to subsidise the carriage of most of the rail freight. High maintenance costs, combined with competition from motorised transport, caused a financial crisis, requiring state government investment in the WAGR. Sufficient funds never became available, and hence the railways declined. Richard Hartley writes that there were three consequences of this lack of investment. First, between 1930 and 1936, no new locomotives were built in Western Australia. Second, of the 421 steam engines that were available, only sixty per cent were in good condition, and third, maintenance on the WAGR virtually ceased when the Midland Junction Railway workshops largely switched over to munitions production in 1943. Unreliable train services then caused frequent problems in transporting workers to the Midland workshops and to the Welshpool munitions factory, established in 1942. Trains were unavailable not only due to coal shortages but also to lack of available railway stock, a feature of poor planning by previous state governments. These issues were to have significant effects on wartime transport systems and indirectly created the need for the employment of German POWs.

The rail problem was not just endemic to Western Australia. The previously independent development of each state’s rail systems had led to significant compatibility problems. Not only were there three different rail track

18 Ibid., p. 135.
20 Richard G. Hartley, Industry and Infrastructure in Western Australia 1829-1940, Perth: Institution of Engineers, Australia, Western Australian Division, 1995, p. 110. WAGR Annual Report Year ended 30 June 1940, p. 12, received from Rail Heritage WA, Bassendean.
22 Department of the Army, Minute Paper, Lieutenant General Vernon Sturdee, Chief of the Australian General Staff, ‘Complaining about the Inadequacy of WAGR and the Need for the Midland Workshops to Focus on Railway Maintenance rather than Munitions Manufacture’, 15 August 1942, NAA: MP508/1, 325/745/691.
widths, but also dissimilar equipment and operating practices. Hence the wartime need to quickly transport large quantities of personnel, goods and equipment throughout Australia caused many problems. Only a single rail line connected Western Australia to the eastern states, so ordinary trains had to be moved on to rail sidings to give priority to more critical trains. As an example, in April 1943, a troop train was waiting on a spur line for the train carrying the Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, to pass. When the train slowed down, Curtin observed that the troop train contained numerous Australian soldiers being transported in cattle trucks. Following up the issue with the Minister for the Army, F. M. Forde, he was advised that it was a regular occurrence because of the shortage of rail stock and that conditions would not improve in the short term. This single rail line was also used to transfer POWs and their guards between various prison camps.

The presence of enemy aliens was an issue in Western Australia as in other states. The National Security Act of September 1939 gave the federal government emergency powers, including the authority to arrest and intern perceived enemy aliens. According to the 1933 Australian Government Census, the non-British population of Western Australia was 9000, with Italians being the biggest group at just over 3000 people. Following Italy’s declaration of war on the Allies on 11 June 1940, police and security officials in Western Australia arrested around 700 Italian men for internment. Ilma Martinuzzi O’Brien asserts that the arrests carried out in the goldfields were also intended to prevent a recurrence of the race riots that had occurred in 1919 and 1934. Italians owned farms in many rural areas in the state, and, in numerous cases, they were allowed to continue producing crops during the war; however, security considerations prevented them from employing POWs. Security considerations did not prevent

23 Department of Defence teleprinter message, Criticism by Prime Minister John Curtin, ‘Transport of Army Personnel to Western Australia in Cattle Trucks’, 22 April 1943, NAA: A5954, 270/34.
the Western Australian Fisheries Department from re-employing previously interned Italian fishermen in order to provide enough fish for the state requirements.27

The arrested Italians were initially moved to Rottnest Island for a short period until the internment camp at Harvey, in the state’s south-west, had been completed.28 This camp had accommodation for 1000 internees and 200 garrison guards, although, on average, only 500 people, the majority Italian, were interned there at any one time. Internees remained there until 1 April 1942, when the commanding general in Western Australia ordered them transferred to a new internment camp, Camp No. 11, further inland at Parkeston, near Kalgoorlie.29 Parkeston was considered more secure for two reasons. The camp was not in an area where Italians farmed, and collusion between Italian farmers and prisoners was therefore unlikely. It was also further away from the coast, which would reduce the possibility of a linkup between Italian prisoners and Japanese forces in the event of a Japanese invasion, which was considered likely after Japan entered the war in December 1941. There had also previously been internal security incidents at Harvey camp; in one case, knives, razors and tomahawks had been discovered amongst the internees.30 Before the internees transferred to Parkeston, searches were carried out to ensure these weapons were not taken with them. The internees were again relocated on 16 October 1942 to No. 14 Internment Camp, a large facility at Loveday in South Australia, where the majority remained for the duration of the war.31 Around the same period, seventy-two German aliens were also arrested in Western Australia, including forty-five who were sent directly to Tatura Internment Camp in Victoria for terms of up to six years.32

27 Ibid., p.85.
28 Commencement of Harvey internment camp construction, 12 July 1940, NAA: MP742/1, 259//462, p. 147.
29 Western Command, Swan Barracks, Transfer of Internees from Harvey to Parkeston, 7 April 1942, NAA: MP742/1, 259/7/137, p. 67.
31 Transfer of internees from Kalgoorlie No. 11 internment camp to Loveday South Australia, 16 October 1942, NAA: MP508/1, 255/717/65.
The military itself had also suffered from financial constraints since the end of World War One. The Chief of the Australian General Staff even suggested in March 1930 that to save money, the Royal Australian Navy should be eliminated. Instead, he wanted the Australian government to contribute to the upkeep of the Royal Navy.\textsuperscript{33} In Western Australia from 1930 onwards, there had been a significant reduction in the strength of the state’s military, many units being forced to amalgamate to reduce costs. The rising political tension in Europe in the late 1930s, however, prompted an increase in recruitment and in October 1939, Western Command, WA, was established as the army headquarters for Western Australia.\textsuperscript{34}

Garrison battalions were quickly assembled from men with World War One experience, who were assigned to guard vulnerable points such as power stations and ports around Perth and in the south-west of the state. These troops eventually comprised the majority of guards who supervised the Italian and German POWs in Western Australia later in the war.\textsuperscript{35} In September 1939 the Second Australian Imperial Force, a volunteer force, was raised throughout Australia to serve overseas. It included Western Australian units. The Volunteer Defence Corps was formed in July 1940 throughout Australia.\textsuperscript{36} This force was made up of part-voluntary, part-time soldiers, similar to the Home Guard in Britain. In Western Australia, they were formed into eleven battalions, strategically located throughout country regions, including Kalgoorlie, Narrogin, Katanning, Merredin and Manjimup.\textsuperscript{37} Some of these Volunteer Defence Corps units played significant roles in recapturing escaped POWs during and after the war.

\textsuperscript{37} McKenzie-Smith, \textit{Australia's Forgotten Army}, p. 6.
Due to the entry of Japan into the conflict, many defence projects and related industries, such as munitions manufacturing, which had experienced few production pressures before December 1941, were forced to increase production significantly. In many cases twenty-four-hour work rosters were required.\(^{38}\) This increase in labour demand caused recruitment difficulties. Similar to other areas of the war economy, the workforce was under strict government control, as previously mentioned, by the Directorate of Manpower. The movement of skilled workers between jobs, already curtailed, was further restricted in order to keep workers in critical industries. As an example, the East Perth Power Station, responsible for generating electrical power to the metropolitan area of Perth, including critical war production industries, prevented its staff from enlisting or taking other positions.\(^{39}\) In the retail sector, shops were forced by manpower regulations to reduce their staff by forty per cent as their employees were required in other, more critical industries, such as munitions manufacturing.\(^{40}\)

The port of Fremantle played a significant military role in the history of Western Australia during the war years. Malcolm Tull writes that in the first six months of 1943, over 200’ liberty ships’ called in to Fremantle to load and unload stores.\(^{41}\) Fremantle was also to be the port where Italian POWs arrived from Indian POW camps and from which they were repatriated at the end of the war. For a time it was the second-largest Allied submarine base in the southern hemisphere, with almost 170 American, Dutch and British submarines operating from the port at various periods.\(^{42}\) The American Navy, having the vast majority of the submarines, needed to expand the operation and repair areas at the facility, and required more accommodation for troops. Thus, it began building and renting

\(^{38}\) Department of Munitions, Western Australian Board of Area Management, Munitions Report, ‘Institution of Increased Shift Work due to entry of Japan into the War’, NAA: PP70/2,1, p. 21.
\(^{40}\) Mayman and Davies, ‘1930-1945’, p. 106.
\(^{42}\) Michael Sturma, Fremantle’s Submarines: How Allied Submariners and Western Australians Helped Win the War in the Pacific, Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2015, p. 11.
accommodation around Fremantle harbour and outlying regions such as Cottesloe.43

Other American forces were based in Western Australia’s Midwest and Wheatbelt, where fighter and bomber aircraft operated from.44 To assist the U.S. military, both the federal and state governments began using the reverse Lend-Lease agreement, previously mentioned, for numerous urgent defence projects around the state.45 Construction of airfields, barracks and ammunition storage areas on the fringes of Perth and inland began; Spring Hill, Byford and Cunderdin were some of the locations.46 However, even at this early period in the war, Australia did not have sufficient labour for vital defence works.

On 5 February 1942, the commanding American general, Major General Julian F. Barnes, asked the Australian federal government to import ‘coolie labour’ from the Netherlands Indies. The required number of workers was to be 25,000 or more.47 The Australian War Cabinet gave its approval despite the 1901 White Australia policy. The labourers were never recruited, due to the Japanese conquest of the Netherland Indies in March 1942. Once again, however, the episode underlines the shortage of labour in Australia, which later prompted the decision to employ POWs.

In early March 1942, Japanese forces began attacking Australia from both air and sea. In Western Australia’s north, towns including Broome, Wyndham, Port Hedland, Exmouth and Onslow were attacked by Japanese aircraft from the recently overrun Netherland Indies.48 Japanese submarines also operated up and down the West Australian coast. Because of the perceived threat of invasion, the

43 United States Navy Submarine Repair Base, Fremantle. Additional quarters, February 1944, NAA: MP105/1, 569/226/44.
46 Works carried out on behalf of the United States Navy in Western Australia, NAA: MP1049/5, 2017/2/130.
47 War Cabinet Minute, Request from U.S. forces to import over 25,000 ‘coolies’ from Netherlands East Indies for urgent works projects, 1 February 1942, NAA: A2684,737.
48 Enemy air raid locations on the Australian mainland, showing location and summary of all dates of raids, NAA: AWM: 54 812/3/12. n.d.
Australian War Cabinet decided that Western Australia’s military defences needed strengthening. A significant influx of troops began so that by the end of May 1942, new army bases had been established at Moora, Guildford, Northam, Geraldton, Chidlow, Bellevue and Dandaragan.\(^{49}\) Third Australia Corps, headed by Lieutenant General Gordon Bennett, took command of the new forces. Bennett had been General Officer Commanding of the 8\(^{th}\) AIF Infantry Division during the Malaya and Singapore campaigns, infamously escaping just after the Allies capitulated to Japanese forces on 15 February 1942.\(^{50}\) Eventually an army of over 45,000 Australian troops was stationed in Western Australia; the supply and upkeep of these forces were immense undertakings.\(^{51}\) Not only were food and liquid provisions required, but also fuel for heating and washing. Because of the severe shortage of coal, firewood had to be used, producing the need for more firewood cutters that was eventually to be solved by the employment of POWs.

State and federal politics had also changed since the beginning of the war in Europe. In October 1941 Robert Menzies had been replaced as Prime Minister by the Western Australia Labor politician John Curtin, who took a more conciliatory approach with the various state governments. In April 1942, Curtin invited state premiers to Melbourne to a briefing from U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, the Commander in Chief, South-West Pacific Area, who had moved his headquarters from the Philippines to Australia. MacArthur gave a lengthy presentation on the direction the war was taking. He discussed the possibility but not the probability of a large-scale attack on the Australian mainland by Japanese forces.\(^{52}\) His report also focused on various supply and equipment issues, including manpower, that Australia needed to resolve.

The Western Australian authorities had to balance the existing available manpower against the requirements of the armed services and munition and armament production, along with other essential wartime industries. At the same time, services to keep businesses and civilian communities functioning still had to

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\(^{49}\) McKenzie-Smith, *Australia’s Forgotten Army*, p. 76.

\(^{50}\) Robertson, *Australia at War*, p. 89.

\(^{51}\) Australian Army forces in Western Australia including USA Artillery, April 1942, NAA: B6121, 186Y.

\(^{52}\) Australian Prime Ministers War Conference. Minute 12, Meeting with state premiers, 23 April 1942, NAA: A5954,1/1.
be provided.\textsuperscript{53} The available workforce in the state could not sustain the demands placed on the state’s industries, especially in the agricultural regions. Agriculture, initially not a protected sector, had earlier lost many of its workers either to the military or to better-paid jobs in the munitions industry. A small-arms munitions factory had been established in Welshpool,\textsuperscript{54} and the following year, as noted earlier, a 25lb shell production facility for allied field artillery was constructed, attached to the Midland Railway Workshops.\textsuperscript{55} Both these facilities were to provide numerous employment opportunities for workers, including women, in the process reducing the number of workers available to the farming industry.

From the early months of the war, Western Australia had suffered from a shortage of coal. The state had depended on coal imports from New South Wales, but supply had suddenly stopped when German surface raiders mined the waters around the eastern Australian coastline, especially the coal supply ports of Newcastle and Sydney.\textsuperscript{56} Western Australia was then forced to rely on poor-grade coal from Collie; however, due to various production issues, supply from Collie was also restricted. By September 1943, coal stocks in Australia as a whole were critically low, with less than three weeks’ supply available. All state premiers were directed by the War Cabinet to reduce consumption. Western Australia had to reduce its already meagre consumption of 1000 tons per week by twenty-five per cent.\textsuperscript{57} The state government had very few means of addressing the shortage of fuel for transport, power generation and the heating of military and civilian establishments. The employment of German POWs to increase the supply of firewood was to become a necessary solution.

Fuel shortages, however, were not Western Australia’s only problem. The state needed to fulfil its food supply commitments both in Australia and overseas. Having been unable to generate sufficient numbers of workers from the Women’s Land Army, the state government turned to Italian POWs to assist farmers in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{54} D. P. Mellor, \textit{Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Vol. V. The Role of Science and Industry}, Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1958, p. 335.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Butlin and Schedvin, \textit{War Economy, 1942-1945}, p. 241.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 262.
\end{itemize}
meeting those requirements. If Western Australia were to play its part in supporting the nation’s war effort, the manpower obstacles in producing both food and firewood had to be overcome. The decision to use POW labour will be discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II
FOOD AND THE ITALIAN STORY

As discussed in the previous chapter, following the entry of Japan into the Second World War in December 1941, the agricultural regions of Western Australia experienced increased demand for vegetables, fruit, dairy, meat and grains, and shortage of supply resulted, mainly because of a shortage of labour. As in other states, lack of fertilisers, farm machinery, fuel and tyres also reduced productivity.\(^1\) This chapter addresses the food production issues that Western Australia faced in its struggles to contribute to Australia's war effort and shows how the Italian prisoners of war (POWs), along with Western Australian farmers, the Australian Army, and the Department of Manpower, tackled these challenges. The chapter also demonstrates that there were benefits in the labour schemes not only for the individual farmers but also for their communities and even the Italian POWs themselves.

British authorities were already using Italian POWs as civilian labour. Bob Moore writes that British authorities considered them to lack political commitment and to be generally docile; for these reasons they were thought to be ideally suited to civilian employment, and their use also offset the costs of their captivity.\(^2\) Their apparent passivity removed the requirements of close supervision. Britain consequently used its Italian POWs on farms without any need for guards and achieved positive production results.\(^3\) By the end of 1941, over 9000 Italian POWs were employed in farm work and on other projects throughout Britain.\(^4\)

In Australia, Allied Works Councils were established in every state in February 1942 to direct and administer projects for the Australian government and Allied forces in Australia. Male refugee aliens or enemy aliens between the ages of eighteen and sixty were made available to a labour pool administered by the Allied Works Councils. The National Security (Aliens Service) Regulations Act, passed on 3 February 1942, had allowed the National War Cabinet to authorise this path. In May 1943, the Civil Aliens Corps (CAC) was created. The CAC further co-ordinated employment projects. In Western Australia, CAC workers operated from camps in the outer suburbs of Perth, the south-west of the state and Kalgoorlie. They were required to work on tasks of a non-combatant nature such as road construction, timber and firewood gathering, charcoal burning and potato digging. The work was physically demanding, the majority of the workers were old, and some of them resented being removed from their families and regular occupations; thus, many workers got into trouble for insubordination. Enrolment numbers were low and the project was not a success. To address the manpower shortage, especially in agricultural areas, the authorities needed to try other ways.

According to Kay Saunders, Western Australia’s Country Women’s Association was the first group to advocate for women to be employed on farms. The association attempted to get the Department of Agriculture to agree to the creation of a ‘women’s land army’. In Britain, such a body had been used during the First World War and had been re-formed two months before the outbreak of

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8 Directorate of Prisoners of War and Internees, Transfer of internees from Loveday Camp, South Australia, to work for CAC in Western Australia. National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA): KA1192, 89.
9 Forests Department, Notification, Civil Aliens Corps, potato picking at Cookernup, Kirup and Brookhampton, 29 November 1944, NAA: K1129, 43.
the Second World War, in July 1939, eventually enrolling over 80,000 members.\textsuperscript{13} As the food crisis in Australia became acute, the Commonwealth government followed suit. Thus, in late July 1942, the volunteer Australian Women’s Land Army was established under the jurisdiction of Wallace Wurth, the Director of Manpower.\textsuperscript{14} The initial goal was to recruit 6000 women nationally into the service; however, the Women’s Land Army only attained thirty per cent of this total, and in Western Australia never reached more than 160 women at any one time.\textsuperscript{15} Consequently, there was an urgent need to find labour from other areas.

As contemporary documents show, Chinese labour provided one temporary solution. After their initial attacks on Malaya and Pearl Harbor, Imperial Japanese forces had swept through colonised South East Asia, causing turmoil on both land and sea. European and American ships in the region, many of which were crewed by Chinese seamen, were in great danger. Some ships sought refuge in Australian ports, including Fremantle. The vessels were then seized by the Australian government to carry troops and supplies to war zones. However, in Fremantle, the Chinese seamen refused to participate in war work, not wishing to put themselves at further risk, especially for low rates of pay.\textsuperscript{16} The dispute was only resolved when the Chinese sailors were persuaded to enlist in the Australian Army. They enrolled at Woodman’s Point on 16 March 1942.\textsuperscript{17} Their new unit, the 7th Australian Employment Company, of almost 500 Chinese men, was supervised by staff seconded from various army units in Western Australia.

The unit worked on projects throughout the state, at places including Harvey, Donnybrook, Chidlow, Kalgoorlie and Potshot (Exmouth).\textsuperscript{18} As the Queensland Allied Supply Council needed labour on the east coast, the company

\textsuperscript{13} British Women’s Land Army Recruit Numbers. Australian War Memorial (hereafter AWM): AWM54, 1025/4/1.
\textsuperscript{14} Australian Cabinet Minute, Women’s Land Army, July 1942, NAA: MP108/2, CM53.
\textsuperscript{17} 7th Australian Employment Company, Recruitment of Chinese. Western Australian detachment, March 1942, NAA: B3690, p. 191.
\textsuperscript{18} 7th Australian Employment Company, Western Australian works locations, NAA: B3690, p. 176.
was transferred by rail in July 1943 to Brisbane.\textsuperscript{19} Upon arrival, the Australian Army component was assigned to other units while the 272 Chinese members of the Australian Army were discharged and as civilians, under a mutual agreement between Australian and U.S. Headquarters in Brisbane, were allowed to enlist in the U.S. military supply service.\textsuperscript{20}

As previously mentioned, Australia had agreed in April 1941 to accept up to 50,000 Italian POWs captured during the battles in North Africa, predominantly Libya.\textsuperscript{21} In order to accommodate the first of these arriving POWs, the authorities relocated 2800 ‘alien internees’, the vast majority Italian and German civilians, who had arrived in Australia in September 1940 from Britain and the Straits Settlements.\textsuperscript{22} The enemy aliens, having been deemed a possible fifth column threat, had been interned, at Britain’s expense, in camps in New South Wales.\textsuperscript{23} In early June 1941, the internees were moved to camps at Loveday in South Australia.\textsuperscript{24} The first shipment of 2000 Italian POWs had arrived at Sydney on 27 May 1941, having travelled from Egypt on board the Royal Mail Ship (RMS) \textit{Queen Mary}.\textsuperscript{25} More POWs continued to arrive, so that by the time Japan entered the conflict, there were over 5000 Italian POWs in Australia.\textsuperscript{26}

Given the success of the British scheme to employ POWs, the Australian authorities moved towards the same goal. On 7 December 1942, an inter-departmental committee, consisting of representatives from Treasury (Defence Division), Army, Supply and Shipping, War Organisation of Industry, and Commerce and the Directorates of Manpower and Security Services, was set up to

\textsuperscript{20} Discharge and Transfer of Chinese members of 7\textsuperscript{th} Australian Employment Company to U.S. Military, 10 July 1943, AWM: 60, 341, p. 78.
\textsuperscript{21} Prime Minister’s Department, Request to Australia to accept POWs, possibly up to 50,000, April 1941, NAA: A373, 1945/2/6098.
\textsuperscript{23} Directorate of Prisoners of War and Internees of Army Headquarters, Melbourne, transfer by Britain to Australia of internees, NAA: A7711, Vol. 1, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{24} Bevege, \textit{Behind Barbed Wire}, p. 177.
\textsuperscript{25} Directorate of Prisoners of War and Internees, The arrival of Italian POWs at Sydney from Egypt on RMS Queen Mary, 27 May 1941, NAA: A7919, C98798.
study the British initiative, with a view to implementing a scheme in Australia. The committee presented its report in May 1943 to the Australian War Cabinet, recommending the implementation of similar arrangements using the Italian POWs in New South Wales and Victoria. The War Cabinet agreed, on condition that the hours of work were the same as those that already existed in the agricultural industry, to prevent the POWs from being used as cheap labour. Doing this would have upset the trade union movement by undermining minimum wage rates and thus creating unfair competition.

Upon being accepted as a POW employer, a farmer had to pay the army one pound per week per prisoner, along with providing meals and accommodation for the prisoner. Under Articles 23, 24 and 34 of the 1929 Geneva Convention, soldiers also had to be paid by the power detaining them, even when in captivity. Payment was made in metal tokens of various values. The use of Australian currency was not allowed: it was deemed a security issue, as local currency could assist a POW in an escape. The amount paid depended on rank, and also on the POW’s skill level: skilled people received a higher amount than unskilled or semi-skilled POWs. As previously mentioned, all POWs in Australia, as well as other parts of the Empire, were the responsibility of the United Kingdom. The British authorities had no objection to the Australian pay rates being lower than local civilian wages as long as the arrangement did not involve a loss to the United Kingdom and provided that Australia did not make a profit at Britain’s expense. The difference between work pay that the prisoners received and the amounts paid

30 Department of Treasury, Minute regarding POW money tokens, September 1948, NAA: A571, 1941/1659 A571, 1941/1659.
31 Department of the Treasury, Italian POW pay rates and allowances, NAA: A649, 82/600/417.
by the farmers to the Australian authorities was credited to the British authorities at the end of the conflict.\textsuperscript{32}

Following the departure of the Chinese seamen in the 7th Australian Employment Company from Western Australia, a replacement labour unit was required. On 23 June 1943, 161 Italians from 13 Camp Compound, Murchison, Victoria, were transported to Western Australia and formed into No. 8 POW Labour Detachment at Karrakatta army camp. This was the first time POWs had been used as labour in Western Australia.\textsuperscript{33} They did menial tasks for the Australian Army, at various army camps in the Perth area such as Melville and Bushmead.

By mid-1943, accommodation facilities for Australian and American forces, such as military camps, had been constructed around the Perth metropolitan area. These facilities required not only food supplies, but also timber for heating buildings and water. Civilian contractors were unable to provide enough firewood; therefore, the army decided to source the fuel itself. The 161 Italian POWs were moved to a densely wooded area approximately one hundred kilometres south-west of Perth, near Dwellingup. The Western Australian Forestry Department owned the site but had leased it to a local timber merchant. National Security regulations now permitted the government to acquire the land.\textsuperscript{34} Australian Army headquarters accordingly ordered the design and construction of a permanent camp to accommodate the POWs along with their guards.\textsuperscript{35}

The Dwellingup camp was near farming areas and surrounded by forests. It was also close to a railway and thus was ideal for transporting the firewood to Perth. Therefore, the POWs could be readily employed but sufficiently isolated to

\textsuperscript{32} Letter from F. R. Sinclair, Secretary of the Department of Army to Secretary, Department of Treasury (Defence Division) regarding financial adjustment with UK and employment of POWs and Internees, 10 June 1949, NAA: MP742/1, 255/4/358.
\textsuperscript{33} Adjutant-General, Army Headquarters, Melbourne, Establishment of No. 8 PW Labour Detachment in Western Australia using Italian POWs, 23 June 1943, AWM: 52 1/1/14/4.
\textsuperscript{35} Headquarters, Western Command, correspondence; setting up of Marrinup Camp and employment of Italian and German POWs, June 1943, NAA: A373, 11638B, p. 204.
allow easy supervision by the prison guards. Construction of the camp began in July 1943 using several Australian Army engineering units, assisted by the 161 Italian POWs.\textsuperscript{36} Once built, the camp was designated as No. 16 POW Camp Marrinup and was able to accommodate 300 POWs and one hundred administrative staff and guards.\textsuperscript{37} In early September 1943, the original 161 POWs were joined by an additional 140 Italian prisoners, again transported by rail from No. 13 Murchison POW camp in Victoria.\textsuperscript{38} The total number of 300 Italian POWs were to be employed in providing timber, up to 500 tons per week, for army camps and establishments in Western Australia.\textsuperscript{39}

The authorities considered the employment of Italian POWs in the eastern states’ agricultural regions to be a success. News of these favourable results had filtered through to Western Australian farmers and the state representative of the Commonwealth’s Department of Manpower. The department was keen to see a similar project implemented in Western Australia. The department’s state representative advised his director, Wallace Wurth, that Western Australian farmers could fully employ at least 5000 POWs over the next six months and that farmers had already applied for immediate employment of 1500 prisoners. Wurth pursued the issue first with the Director of Prisoners of War and Internees, Colonel J. McCahon, at the Adjutant General’s Department in Army Headquarters, Melbourne, and then with the Defence Secretary, Sir Frederick Shedden, until he received approval.\textsuperscript{40} Thus, a decision was made to extend the employment of Italian POWs to agricultural regions in Western Australia. The Italians who had been employed on firewood production at Marrinup were

\textsuperscript{36} Graham McKenzie-Smith, \textit{Sappers in the West: Army Engineers in Western Australia}, Perth: Royal Australian Engineer Association of WA, 2015, p. 123.  
\textsuperscript{37} Headquarters, Western Command, Marrinup POW camp capacity requirements, July 1943, AWM: 52 1/7/38/1.  
\textsuperscript{38} Adjutant-General, Army Headquarters, Melbourne, War Diary, Proposal to transfer 140 additional Italian POWs to Marrinup, 300 in total, 13 August 1943, AWM: 52 1/1/14.  
\textsuperscript{39} Western Command, War Diary, Requirement for Italian POWs to produce up to 500 tons of firewood per week, August 1943, AWM: 52 1/7/38/1.  
\textsuperscript{40} W. Wurth, Prisoners of War labour extension of present scope to Western Australia, August 1943, NAA: MP729/6, 63/401/700.
therefore replaced in November 1943 by German POWs who had been transferred from Murchison camp in Victoria.41

The Manpower Department initially advertised for potential employers of POWs in agricultural regions using local newspapers, or the statewide *West Australian*. Notices were placed advising that a representative from the department would visit the district to inform local farmers of the availability of POW labour.42 If sufficient numbers of farmers wanted to participate, the department asked the Australian Security Service for authorisation to establish a Prisoner of War Control Centre (PWCC) in the district. Often the numbers of available POWs could not meet the demand from farmers.43 Once the farmers had undergone a security vetting process by the Security Service, to see if they were of good character and responsible citizens, they could employ up to a maximum of three Italian POWs. Some regions of Western Australia already had relatively large Italian farming communities. To avoid the possibility of collusion with POWs, ‘alien’ farmers were excluded as employers.44 After securing permission from the National Security Service, the Army set up a PWCC in the relevant district.45 These centres were positioned throughout the state’s agricultural areas, often in the main street of the region’s largest town. Eventually, twenty-six prisoner control centres were established in agricultural areas in Western Australia.46

In each district, farms employing POWs had to be located within a twenty-five-mile radius of the PWCC, with a minimum of 200 prisoners allocated to each
approved area to ensure economy of administration.\textsuperscript{47} The POWs’ clothing - army battledress, dyed maroon - was supplied by the army, so even on their Sunday off, when they were permitted to leave the farm between 10 am and 4 pm as long as they stayed within a one-mile radius, the prisoners were still readily identifiable.\textsuperscript{48} Additionally, they were free to attend mass, which was organised by the PWCC and the local parish priest, as long as their employers took them.\textsuperscript{49}

The PWCCs were staffed by Australian Army personnel, with either a captain or lieutenant as its commander. Each centre usually had seven soldiers, all each with a different role, such as interpreter, medic or driver/mechanic.\textsuperscript{50} The main task of the army unit was to ensure the smooth running of the POW employment project in its region. To accomplish this goal, the commanding officer of the PWCC or his deputy visited the farmer and POWs at least fortnightly to address any issues that had arisen.

During inspection visits, the army supplied the farmer with food ration coupons so that the farmer could provide three meals per day to each prisoner. As part of an agreement between Italy and Britain, each country’s POWs received thirty-five free cigarettes or tobacco to the same weight, along with safety razor blades.\textsuperscript{51} As previously mentioned, the POWs also received payment in tokens for their work. Thus, they could purchase items from the PWCC canteen, such as lollies or chocolate, during the army’s visits. POWs had the opportunity to send messages home, and mail was collected during the farm visits. Mail from home was unreliable, however. According to Phil Collas, Italian mail could take up to two years to arrive, often having been re-directed from other POW camps.\textsuperscript{52} When

\textsuperscript{47} Report from the Directorate of Prisoners of War, Army Headquarters, Melbourne, Location and number rules for each PCC, June 1944, NAA: A7711, p. 237.
\textsuperscript{48} Commonwealth of Australia Security Service notice to employers of prisoners of war regarding rules to follow, NAA: A376, T321.
\textsuperscript{49} Correspondence from Apostolic Delegate to Archbishop Prendiville Perth regarding POWs and Mass, 21 December 1943, Stack 1, Box 433, Catholic Archdiocese of Perth Archives, Mount Lawley, Western Australia.
\textsuperscript{50} Department of the Army, Melbourne, PWCC administration details, NAA: MP742/1, 255/13/118, n.d.
\textsuperscript{51} Department of the Army, Melbourne, Issue of free cigarettes and razor blades to Italian POWs, NAA: MP385/7/0, 53/101/255, n.d.
\textsuperscript{52} Phil Collas, \textit{The Postal History of Internees and Prisoners of War in Australia during World War II}, Melbourne: Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria, 1982, p. 19.
army personnel visited, the farmer would occasionally raise issues, such as a POW being unsuitable for farm work or disciplinary problems caused by a POW’s refusal to do specific tasks when directed. Such complaints would generally result in the POW’s return to Marrinup camp for corrective action, perhaps twenty-eight days of solitary confinement or other loss of privileges.

The Australian Security Service often inspected the PWCCs, checking on the standards of accommodation for the POWs and army staff. Confirmation that the correct maintenance of records and reporting of financial matters, including that POW work hours and pay sheets were regularly sent to Marrinup camp, were the main concerns. The Security Service reports often commented on the understaffing of the centres. Other issues also affected the smooth running of the PWCCs. The average distance travelled per week by PWCC staff was over 1000 miles. As each PWCC had only one vehicle, problems occurred when POWs needed to be transferred to Marrinup camp. This issue was eventually solved by the establishment of staging and distribution points in the larger centres. As an example, Moora, having been chosen as a distribution point for the northern agricultural region, received an additional vehicle and four extra staff. Local civilian professionals, such as doctors and dentists, provided for the welfare and health needs of the POWs. The use of their services also assisted the region’s medical facilities as it brought income into the district. However, in some areas, dentists were not available, so the army’s mobile dental unit would visit and provide treatment.

The purpose of welfare and health services was to ensure that the POWs could continue to assist with urgently needed food production. Nevertheless, a War Cabinet minute of May 1944 made it clear that the need for labour outweighed potential medical risks in the employment project. Dr J. L. Cumpston, the Australian Director-General of Health, had previously been questioned about

53 Commonwealth of Australia Security Service, correspondence file, Perth, Visits by security officers to regional control centres, April 1944, NAA: MP742/1, 255/28/1.
54 Western Command, War Diary, Weekly average distance travelled for each PWCC, 4 May 1944, NAA: 742/1, 255/28/1.
55 Adjutant-General, Army Headquarters, Melbourne, Additional resources for major PWCC locations, April 1945, NAA: MP385/7/0, 53/101/255.
56 Adjutant-General, Army Headquarters, Melbourne, Dental treatment for POWs by visiting Army dentists, 18 November 1943, NAA: MP742/1, 255/13/118.
possible infectiousness of POWs employed in the dairy industry who may have had a transmittable disease. Cabinet responded by stating that the risk was necessary because of the manpower shortage and that if a medical emergency arose, then Australian Army hygiene units would be provided to assist the civilian services to prevent any epidemic.\textsuperscript{57} The Director of Manpower, Wurth, had also earlier advised the army that the POWs supplied to farms needed to be physically fit, agricultural types and preferably with farming experience.\textsuperscript{58} To differentiate between the various POWs as to who was suitable for employment, they had been alphabetically classified into groups, from A to I. Only certain groups, generally A, D and F, who were ex-farmers or tradespeople, were employed in Western Australia.\textsuperscript{59} Others who had a bad disciplinary record or were only fit for light duties remained at Murchison camp.

According to Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, the POWs became so indispensable to Australia’s war effort that the Australian War Cabinet was willing to relax and even forgo its medical and security practices to get more prisoners into the rural employment scheme.\textsuperscript{60} Over 7000 Italian POWs were still impounded in Indian POW camps; however, they had been classified as fascists, and thus neither Britain nor India would employ them. Australia was willing to take 3000 of them.\textsuperscript{61} Once these prisoners arrived in Australia, between December 1944 and February 1945, the only mark that differentiated them from other Italian POWs was an ‘X’ that was added to their POW identity number.

Bridgetown had been the first region to participate in the prisoner employment project, which was eventually named the Rural Employment without Guards Scheme. The town’s army control centre was designated PWCC W1, the W signifying Western Australia. Because of the demand for labour in the agricultural regions, Western Australia continued to receive more Italian POWs.

\textsuperscript{57} Australian War Cabinet, POW health issues, 11 May 1944, NAA: MP729/6, 63/401/700.
\textsuperscript{58} Italian POW physical & skill requirements for Manpower Department, 25 November 1943, NAA: 742/1, 255/13/331.
\textsuperscript{59} Classification of Italian POWs’ suitability for work, 13 December 1944, NAA: MP742/1, 255/21/41.
\textsuperscript{60} Moore and Fedorowich, \textit{The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War, 1940–1947}, p. 194.
\textsuperscript{61} War Cabinet, Importing additional 7000 Italian POWs, June 1944, NAA: 742/1, 255/21/5.
They were conveyed by rail from several camps in the eastern states. Also, a direct shipment of 1000 Italian POWs arrived in Fremantle from India in February 1944. Upon arrival at Marrinup, these POWs were screened for their employment suitability, and those deemed low risk were retained in the state. Those apparently having fascist views or with various health issues, such as severe war wounds, were transported to POW camps in the eastern states.

Due to the growth of the rural employment scheme using Italian POWs, accommodation issues had arisen at Marrinup POW camp. As previously mentioned, the camp had been originally built to accommodate 300 POWs plus staff, and its primary role was for POWs to supply firewood for the army. The original 300 Italian POWs had been transferred to work on farms and had been replaced by 300 German POWs, as will be explained in the next chapter. However, the camp had also become the administration hub for the PWCCs, which saw a steep increase in numbers of both POWs and army staff. Moreover, not all Italian POWs were sent to work on the farms. Some were at Marrinup for disciplinary issues or light duties while convalescing. Two gardeners, two bootmakers, a carpenter and two hygienists were also employed in the facility. The gardeners were exclusively engaged on vegetable production for the camp’s inmates and guards, while the hygienists assisted with the POWs’ sanitation requirements. Consequently, with the substantially increased POW and army numbers, the camp required an expansion.

The need to expand the camp also arose from a serious political issue. On 8 September 1943, two days after construction had commenced, Italian forces in the Second World War surrendered. Italy was eventually granted the status of a co-belligerent with the Allies. When the Italian prisoners received the surrender news, clashes occurred between supporters of Benito Mussolini and followers of Victor Emmanuel III, the Italian king. The two groups of POWs had to be

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62 Adjutant-General, Army Headquarters, Melbourne. War Diary, arrival of 1000 Italian POWs from India, 22 February 1944, AWM: 52 1/1/14/7.
63 Fitzgerald, *Italian Farming Soldiers*, p. 175.
64 Italian POW employment at Marrinup camp, NAA: MP 742/1, 255/13/331.
65 Western Command, War Diary, Reasons for expansion of Marrinup POW camp, 15 July 1944, NAA: A10857, IV/122E.
separated into different compounds to prevent further confrontations. The camp’s expansion, to accommodate 1200 POWs, along with attached army staff, was eventually completed in December 1944. The extension had used much of the material, such as buildings, gates, lights and outer fence, from the redundant internment camp at Parkeston, near Kalgoorlie.67

The rural employment scheme was a success from everyone’s point of view. It soon began to have positive benefits for employers and for agricultural production, and it encountered no significant opposition. The union movement in Western Australia was not as powerful as in the eastern states and also, in the early stages of the war, it was close to the governing Labor Party, so there was little resistance to the employment of POWs.68 In the eastern states there was some opposition to the use of POWs, mainly from the strong shearsers’ union, which feared that the use of this cheap labour would cause job losses for its members.69

By June 1944, over 400 Italian POWs were employed in Western Australia’s dairy industry, while more than 800 worked on mixed crop farms throughout the state.70 The availability of experienced but inexpensive agricultural labourers was a distinct benefit for the struggling farmer. If a POW was injured or died while working, the farmer incurred no liability. Thus, farmers were not required to secure public indemnity or pay workers’ compensation for the POWs.71 Instead, the Commonwealth would provide maintenance, accommodation and medical care for the injured POW, or, in the case of death, a funeral. No cash payments for injuries were ever paid. The Australian Army’s presence in regional towns also benefitted business and residents: financially, through the rental of buildings and purchases of goods and services, and socially, as many people found the army presence comforting from a security aspect.

67 Marrinup POW camp expansion, 6 September 1944, NAA: 742/1/0, 259/7/176.  
70 Primary Industry classifications where POWs were employed, June 1944, NAA: A7711, Vol 1. p. 238.  
71 Italian POWs, farmers and workers’ compensation, NAA: 742/1, 255/15/700.
The Italians themselves, by and large, appear not to have resisted the scheme for several reasons. Working on farms allowed them to be out of a war zone. As previously discussed, most of them had been captured in North Africa, and in some cases had been interned for three years in Indian prison camps, in poor conditions, with a lack of food and with very little to occupy themselves. Unsurprisingly, reports indicated that the POWs were happy to be relocated to Australia. Many had done similar work at home and thus were used to farming environments. As conditions in Australia were favourable to their physical and mental wellbeing, few of them, according to Bill Bunbury, thought of escape.

As the threat of invasion of Western Australia had receded, some of Marrinup’s Italian POWs were transported to Rottnest Island in July 1944 to remove war-time defences such as barbed wire entanglements and to repaint previously camouflaged buildings. The aim was the restoration of the island to its pre-war condition, ready for civilian occupation. The prisoners were accommodated at the Airfield Camp, which had been vacated by the reallocated Australian 10th Garrison Battalion. These renovations continued until March 1946, when the POWs were moved to Northam POW camp, soon to be joined by other Italian prisoners from the farming regions.

Following the end of the war in Europe and the Pacific in 1945, both Britain and, indirectly, Australia, had come under pressure from different directions to end the rural employment scheme quickly. Article seventy-five of the 1929 Geneva Convention declared that all prisoners of war should be repatriated to their own country as soon as possible following the end of a conflict. The Italian government wanted the return of its citizens. A recent U.S. military survey, furthermore, had forecast a reduction in food requirements for its forces throughout the region, which would permit a fifty per cent reduction in vegetable production in Australia. In addition, in the six months after the end of the war,

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72 Report on the Directorate of Prisoners of War, advising that some POWs had been in India for three years, NAA: A7711, Vol 1, p. 114, n.d.
74 Movement of 10th Australian Garrison Battalion from Rottnest Island, April 1944, AWM: 52 8/7/14/7.
over 10,000 men from Australia’s military forces returned to the agricultural industry. Orders were issued for the withdrawal of POWs from agricultural regions, in preparation for their repatriation.\(^{76}\) However, the Victorian and Western Australia authorities requested a delay, justifying the need for the continued employment of POWs on the grounds of imminent harvests. Delays were granted and the scheme finished at the end of May 1946.\(^{77}\)

Due to a lack of shipping, repatriation of prisoners proved difficult. The main problem was that Britain, which controlled the majority of Empire shipping, needed the ships to return its troops to the United Kingdom from Asia. Also, manpower cuts to the Royal Airforce prevented troops being flown back, placing greater demands on the available shipping. Consequently, most of the Italian POWs had to wait at least six months to be repatriated, and some even longer.\(^{78}\) Some POWs were granted early passage for compassionate reasons following representations from the Apostolic Delegate, who was the pope’s representative in Australia, to the Director of Prisoners of War, Colonel E. A. Griffin.\(^{79}\)

In early 1946 there were over 3800 Italian and German POWs in Western Australia, and Marrinup POW camp could only accommodate 1200. On 24 May 1946, the Minister for the Army, Forde, approved a proposal to convert Northam army camp into a POW camp for the 3500 Italian POWs, while the 300 Germans remained at Marrinup.\(^{80}\) As the conflict had long since ended, demobilisation of Australian Army personnel had begun. To replace them, a ruling was issued at Northam camp allowing the employment of Italian POWs under supervision as cooks, bakers, storemen and even officers’ batmen.\(^{81}\)

As Europe had suffered extensively during the conflict, some POWs did not relish the prospect of returning to their homeland; the idea of staying in

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\(^{76}\) Reasons for ending Italian POW agricultural employment, 11 September 1945, NAA: 742/1, 255/18/468.
\(^{77}\) Adjutant-General, Army Headquarters, Melbourne, Withdrawal orders of Italian POWs from rural industry, 1 April 1946, NAA: 742/1, 255/21/27.
\(^{79}\) Requests from Apostolic Delegate to Director of POWs for early release of some Italian POWs, 23 July 1946, NAA: MP742/1/0, 255/19/409.
\(^{80}\) Department of the Army, Melbourne, Transfer of Italian POWs to Northam, German POWs to stay at Marrinup, 24 May 1946, NAA: A1067, IC46/32/1/9.
\(^{81}\) Employment of Italian POWs while at Northam camp, August 1946, NAA: MP742/1/0, 255/13/726.
Australia became very appealing. It was no surprise, therefore, that local newspapers reported attempts to escape, the majority of them from Northam camp.82 There were even occasions when Western Australian civilians were charged with harbouring the fugitives.83 Until 15 September 1947, when the Peace Ratification Treaty between Italy and the Allies came into force, escaped Italian POWs were still credited with their army pay.84 It was the task of the local police and army to find, capture and return escaped POWs.85 Several escapees remained at large for some years; the second-last fugitive was not arrested until 1955, with one escapee, Efisio Giglio, never located.86 Another twenty-two Italian and German POWs in Western Australia died at various times and in different locations through illness or misadventure.87

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82 ‘Further Italian POWs Escape’, *West Australian*, 2 October 1946, p. 16.
84 Department of the Army, Melbourne, Escaped Italian POWs’ pay, 15 November 1948, NAA: MP742/1/0, 255/19/409.
86 Correspondence to Commissioner of Police, Perth from Western Command, advising second last Italian POW now in custody, 4 January 1955, NAA: K1214, 173/1/01.
87 Headquarters, Western Command, Locations, dates and causes of POW deaths in Western Australia, July 1947, NAA: K1214, 173/1/04.
CHAPTER III
FUEL AND THE GERMAN STORY

Western Australia suffered in wartime from an acute shortage of fuel, principally because of a lack of manpower. Supplies of coal had dwindled since the early months of the conflict. East Perth Power Station and the West Australian Government Railways had first call on the limited supply of coal. For other purposes, a substitute fuel needed to be found, one that was easily obtainable and efficient to use. The chosen fuel was firewood, which, although not as effective as coal as a heat source, was readily available in the timber forests of the state. Civilian firewood contractors, however, could not meet the demand. It was therefore necessary to find alternative manpower resources and supply methods. The eventual solution was to employ German prisoners of war to (POWs) produce firewood.

Having already faced manpower shortages in its domestic labour market, Britain’s War Office had decided in November 1939 that any captured enemy personnel who were physically capable would be used for labour purposes.\(^1\) German prisoners at Grizedale Hall POW camp in the forests of England’s Lake District were offered as labour to the British Forestry Commission, provided they were not removed from the camp’s locality.\(^2\) The British authorities, being desperate for skilled forestry workers, had even requested that Australia send assistance. Australian authorities therefore recruited 600 experienced foresters and timber industry workers into the Australian Army, who were then sent to the UK and employed throughout the forests of England’s north and in Scotland for almost three years.\(^3\)

As noted in the Introduction, Western Australia had depended on high-quality coal imports from New South Wales until supply was stopped by the

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2 Ibid., p. 119.
action of German surface raiders in early November 1940. Western Australia was thus forced to rely on the poor quality coal from Collie, which was not as heat efficient as the eastern states’ coal. Other issues also affected the state’s coal supply, including the failure of previous Western Australian governments to obtain decent tender prices for local coal. A. N. J. Blain writes that coal prices paid by the state, the principal consumer of coal, were determined on a cost-plus system that had provided little incentive for increased efficiency by the management or workforce of the region’s coalmines. Also, the coal mines were privately owned and undercapitalised and as Western Australia had access to good quality and cheap coal from imports, there had been little incentive for the mine-owners to invest in new technology to improve output. In addition, because working conditions and production methods in the mines were poor, there was significant absenteeism and a number of industrial disputes, often including strike action, which further reduced the amount of available coal.

Several methods were examined to increase productivity. In September 1942, to increase the number of coal miners, the West Australian Mines Department had approached the Deputy Director of the state’s Manpower Department with a list of ex-miners serving in the Australian forces. Only a minimal number, however, were attached to military units within the state, and thus the majority were unavailable for the mines. Meanwhile, industrial disputes

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7 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
9 Department of Labour and National Service, Manpower Department, letter to Under Secretary for Mines, Western Australian Mines Department, ‘Request for ex-mineworkers in AMF’, 10 September 1942, Premier’s Department, Western Australian State Records Office (hereafter SRO), 1942/202.
and work stoppages continued at the Collie coalfields. As an example, in early June 1944, the Griffin mine’s colliers went on strike for over three weeks.\textsuperscript{10}

In early September 1942, the Western Australian Coal Committee, which had been appointed in July 1942 by the Commonwealth Coal Commission, had allocated all available coal to the state railways and the East Perth Power Station. Several government institutions, along with many factories and businesses, were then required to use wood as fuel instead of coal.\textsuperscript{11} Fremantle and King Edward Memorial Hospitals, the Western Australian State Abattoirs, Browns Dairy, Mills and Ware Ltd and the Red Castle Brewery all had to switch their boilers’ fuel to firewood.\textsuperscript{12} Unfortunately, to generate the same amount of heat energy that coal provided, almost double the quantity of firewood was required.\textsuperscript{13} The change of fuel created immense demand for firewood from new and expanding local industries, further compounded by the expansion of Australian and American military camps around the Perth area, which also needed fuel.

Because existing infrastructure and supply systems were insufficient to meet the state’s firewood demands, radical measures had to be implemented to obtain additional manpower if Western Australia were to contribute to Australia’s war effort. In March 1942, the 220 firewood cutters and carters who held permits from the Forests Department to obtain firewood were only able to supply 100,000 tons per annum, which left a substantial deficit.\textsuperscript{14} By May 1942, the annual firewood requirement for the Perth region had increased from 200,000 tons to 240,000 tons, with a further 50,000 tons needed for the defence force.\textsuperscript{15} This demand overwhelmed the local firewood suppliers. Furthermore, not all of the

\textsuperscript{10}‘Miners’ Strike now into Third Week at Collie Coal Fields’, \textit{West Australian}, 7 June 1944, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{11}West Australian Mines Department, Coal Committee, ‘Notification regarding Fuel Change from Coal to Wood’, 9 September 1942, SRO, 1942/202.
\textsuperscript{12}List of industries prevented from using coal, letter from West Australian Mines Department to the Deputy Director, Department of War Organisation of Industry, Perth, 23 January 1943, SRO, 1942/202.
\textsuperscript{13}Inefficiency of firewood as a fuel compared to coal. Report from Deputy Director, War Organisation of Industry to Premier of Western Australia, 24 February 1943, SRO, 1942/202.
\textsuperscript{14}Western Australian Forests Department, letter to the West Australian Premier, 22 March 1942, SRO, 1942/202.
\textsuperscript{15}‘Acute Shortage of Firewood for Perth due to Lack of Manpower’, \textit{West Australian}, 12 May 1942, p. 12.
existing workers were available. The firewood trade was not a protected industry and the wages were poor: the price of firewood was so low that cutters were unable to earn the basic wage.\textsuperscript{16} Many firewood contractors had joined the Australian military or other industries.\textsuperscript{17}

For the end-user of firewood, problems also arose because deficient firewood weights and overcharging had become the norm. In the early months of 1943, reports of a black market in firewood even began to surface at various metropolitan local council meetings such as those in Victoria Park, South Perth and Midland Junction.\textsuperscript{18} In June 1942, to put firewood supply on a more organised platform and prevent these issues continuing, the West Australian Forests Department, which already had control of the state’s forests, had taken over the management and production of firewood.\textsuperscript{19} By late March 1943, the Forests Department was distributing 500 tons per week among seventy out of the total of one hundred woodyards in the Perth area; however, the amount was only fifty per cent of what was required.\textsuperscript{20} The department had limited numbers of staff available for the added task of woodcutting from within its various branches. During spring and autumn months, staff were fully engaged with the controlled burning of over 1000 miles of firebreaks, while in winter over 10,000 miles of roads and tracks had to be maintained.\textsuperscript{21} Voluntary firewood rationing had commenced for Perth’s domestic users,\textsuperscript{22} but the shortage of firewood in Western Australia was so acute that the state government was forced to mandate rationing

\textsuperscript{16} Western Australian Forests Department, Report from T. N. Stoate, Deputy Conservator of Forests, firewood production issues in Western Australia, ‘Low Wages of Woodcutters’, 30 April 1943, National Archives of Australia, Melbourne (hereafter NAA): MP 1/1, 2/84/459.

\textsuperscript{17} Annual Operations Report, Year ended 30 June 1942, Perth: Western Australian Forests Department, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{18} ‘Overcharging and Shortage of Firewood,’ \textit{The Municipal and Road Board Gazette}, February 1943, p. 7; April 1943, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{19} Annual Operations Report, Year ended 30 June 1946, Perth: Western Australian Forests Department, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{20} Forests Department to Premier, 22 March 1942, SRO, 1942/202.

\textsuperscript{21} Annual Operations Report, Year ended 30 June 1942, Perth: Western Australian Forests Department, p 2.

\textsuperscript{22} ‘Introduction of Firewood Rationing’, Report from Deputy Director, War Organisation of Industry to Premier of Western Australia, 24 February 1943, SRO, 1942/202.
using the Firewood Rationing Regulations (1943). Firewood rationing for the Australian Army was also introduced in July 1943 across Western Australia: each man’s ration was reduced from seven pounds in weight to two pounds per day.

In early 1943, to meet the increased demand, the Forests Department had set up camps at Mundaring Weir, Gnangara, Jarrahdale, North Dandalup and Inglehope. The Civil Aliens Corps, which, as previously noted, comprised male refugee aliens or enemy aliens, supplied 260 men for these main firewood camps, sent from Loveday internment camp in South Australia. In addition, conscientious objectors cut banksia firewood at a Swan Coastal Plain camp. However, there were problems with alien workers. Conflict often occurred between them and their forestry supervisors; there was even a strike by the workers at Jarrahdale camp in April 1943. Incidents continued to occur, with military and civilian police frequently being called to arrest the disruptive aliens, the majority of whom were Italians.

Eventually, the Civil Aliens Corps camps downsized, due to the workers either being sent back to the internment camp as unsuitable or being transferred to other parts of Australia. In addition, as discussed in the previous chapter, the 7th Australian Employment Company deployed at Marrinup Mill, which had provided firewood for the state’s military establishments, was withdrawn by the army authorities because they required this company for more critical work elsewhere.

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23 Premier’s Department, letter from Premier John Willcock to Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, ‘Requesting Approval for Firewood Rationing Implementation in Western Australia’, 16 April 1943, NAA: MP1/1, 2/84/459.
24 Department of War Organisation of Industry minute from E. L. Aitken, the Coordinator of firewood supplies to his Director-General, ‘Reduction in Firewood Weights to Army Troops’, 5 July 1943, NAA: MP1/1, 2/84/459.
27 Ibid., p. 3
The army planned to obtain the 45,000 to 50,000 tons per annum of firewood it required from the state’s civilian resources.\textsuperscript{31} The loss to Western Australia of these experienced workforces, compounded by the extra firewood demand, put significant strain on the state’s existing civilian firewood supply system, causing considerable friction between the state and federal authorities. To alleviate some of that pressure, Mr E. L. Aitken, the National Firewood Co-ordinator, and the Australian Defence Force Adjutant-General’s staff, meeting in early July 1943, decided to use POW labour in Western Australia for firewood production.\textsuperscript{32} This decision would eventually lead to the employment of German POWs in Western Australia.

The first shipment of German POWs, 1000 men who had been captured in North Africa, Greece and Crete, had arrived in Sydney from Egypt on 23 August 1941 on \textit{HMT Queen Elizabeth}.\textsuperscript{33} They were then moved by train to No. 13 POW camp, at Murchison, about eighty miles north of Melbourne. From October 1941 to early January 1942, more German POWs had continued to arrive at the Murchison camp, so that eventually the total would reach 1658.\textsuperscript{34} As shown in the previous chapter, the Australian Army had initially used Italian POW labour to obtain firewood from the forests surrounding Marrinup POW Camp.\textsuperscript{35} Because of the decision to employ Italian POWs in the state’s agricultural regions instead, starting with those at Marrinup, they were replaced

\textsuperscript{31} Premier’s Department, Perth. Letter from West Australian Premier, John Willcock to Prime Minister, Canberra, ‘Concerning Australian Military’s Intention to Obtain Firewood from Western Australia’s Civilian Firewood Suppliers upon Withdrawal of Army Employment Company at Marrinup’, 1 July 1943, NAA: MP1/1, 2/84/459.

\textsuperscript{32} Department of the Army, Letter from Quartermaster-General to Director General of the Department of War Organisation of Industry, regarding employment of POWs for firewood project in Western Australia, 12 July 1943, NAA: MP1/1, 2/84/255.

\textsuperscript{33} ‘Arrival of German POWs from Egypt on HMT Queen Elizabeth in Sydney’, 23 August 1941, NAA: A7919, C102175.

\textsuperscript{34} Report of the Directorate of Prisoners of War, Army Headquarters, Melbourne, Summary of German POWs held in Australia during WW2, NAA: A7711, Vol. 1, p. 280.

\textsuperscript{35} War Diary, Quartermaster General Branch (Western Command), Western Australia, ‘Italian POWs to Supply 500 Tons Firewood per Week for Army Requirements’, 13 August 1943, Australian War Memorial (hereafter AWM): 52 1/7/38/1.
by German POWs from the eastern states. On 16 November 1943, 200 men were selected for transfer by train to Western Australia from Murchison. They comprised low-ranked German POWs, mostly ex-Afrika-Korps and Luftwaffe personnel, overseen by four German non-commissioned officers. Members of the arriving German contingent, however, were less fortunate than their Axis allies, the Italians. The British and Australian authorities considered the German prisoners to be a higher security risk than the Italians. Thus, the Germans were still held under guard and could only be used for certain types of work in a defined area. For this reason, they were ideally suited for woodcutting in the forests around Marrinup camp. The employment of German prisoners of war to increase the amount of firewood in Western Australia was to become an essential solution to the fuel problem.

The German compound at Marrinup POW Camp allowed the prisoners to be self-reliant; they created their own internal administration, even providing primary medical treatment using their own medical orderlies. The prisoners lived in six-man huts, previously used by the Italians, each having a bed, blankets and a locker. The prisoners’ food was chosen and cooked by themselves from allotted rations, which, under the Geneva Convention, had to be the same standard as those provided to the Australian Army staff. The compound also included toilets, showers, stores, a small school and a medical centre.

According to Barbara Winter, life for the German prisoners was quite regimented, although the conditions were not harsh. The Germans soon settled into a disciplined routine, rising at 6 am, taking breakfast, and then working eight hours a day, with Sunday being their rest day. When not working, they had access

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36 Australian Military Forces, Headquarters, Swan Barracks Perth, Confidential correspondence files: Orders for transfer of 200 German POWs from Victoria to Marrinup POW camp, November 1943, AWM 52 1/7/35/17.
37 ‘200 German POWs Transferred to Marrinup POW Camp, Mainly Africa Corps’, 20 November 1943, AWM 52 1/7/35/17.
40 Red Cross Visit, inspection to Marrinup POW Camp, May 1944, NAA: A989, 1943/44/925/1/30.
to various recreational facilities, including a 500-book library, games and sporting equipment. Like the Italians, the German prisoners were paid in tokens, and were able to purchase items from the canteen in their compound, including food and cigarettes. The prisoners were allowed to send letters and cards home regularly, and the Young Men’s Christian Association even supplied the prisoners with greeting cards to post at Christmas time. German prisoners had satisfactory contact with their families when compared with the Italians’ infrequent communications.

Under the 1929 Geneva Convention, a ‘protecting power’ was entitled to check that the authorities were treating POWs correctly. The protecting power needed to be a neutral country, able to maintain diplomatic relations with both sides in the conflict. This duty was carried out in Australia by the Swiss government, which used as its representative a Swiss citizen, Dr Georges Guillaume Morel, who was the delegate for the International Red Cross in Australia. His responsibility was to visit POWs at various locations throughout Australia and New Zealand. Due to the long distances, combined with the scattered infrastructure in Western Australia, he was only able to visit the state once, in May 1944. His report declared that the prisoners at Marrinup camp had access to a radio and a cinema, along with tobacco and books. He also noted that in general, with only a few minor issues, the treatment of POWs was satisfactory and relations between the POWs and the camp garrison were cordial.

The UK authorities had offered Australia more German POWs, up to 7500 men; however, with the entry of Japan into the conflict in December 1941, it had become too dangerous to ship them to Australia. By January 1944, although the threat from Japanese naval forces had declined, the Australian War Cabinet

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42 Red Cross Visit, inspection to Marrinup POW Camp, May 1944.
43 ‘Canteen Profits for POWs, Marrinup POW Camp and PWCC’s’, NAA: MP742/1, 50/2/159, n.d.
46 ‘Red Cross Visits POWs’, West Australian, 19 May 1944, p. 6.
decided it was preferable to approach the British authorities to accept more Italian POWs rather than Germans.⁴⁸ There were two main reasons. First, German POWs, being deemed a higher security risk, required 1200 garrison staff. In contrast, 500 fewer personnel were needed to supervise Italian POWs.⁴⁹ Second, the growing success of the rural employment scheme using Italian POWs had influenced the Australian Cabinet in favour of the Italians; Alan Fitzgerald reports that by January 1944, there were already sixty-eight Prisoner of War Control Centres operating in Australia.⁵⁰

In April 1944, with the firewood demand increasing from both commercial and domestic sectors, the Army, Manpower Directorate, Forests Department and Security Service established a temporary POW camp in another region of the state’s forests.⁵¹ The area chosen was ten miles east of Jarrahdale, a township in the south-west area of the state. As the requirement was deemed urgent, and no German POWs were available, one hundred Italian POWs, who were waiting for farming positions, were transferred from Marrinup camp to work as woodcutters. However, even this new workforce failed to meet the firewood demands; hence it became necessary to assign a further one hundred German prisoners, including three cooks and a medical orderly, to Western Australia.⁵² The selection had to include a reasonable proportion of experienced woodcutters. It is unclear exactly how and when the German POWs arrived, but they were at Marrinup by early November 1944.⁵³

⁴⁸ Adjutant-General, ‘War Cabinet Decision to Request Italian POWs Instead of German POWs’, 31 January 1944, AWM: 1/1/14.
⁵¹ Commonwealth of Australia, Security Service, Letter from the Deputy Director in Western Australia to the Director General of Security in Canberra advising of the conference outcome, 22 April 1944, NAA: A373, 6221.
⁵³ Primary source documents have so far not revealed the details, while two secondary sources differ. Winter writes that they left Melbourne on the *Kanimbla*, along with 1100 Italian POWs, and arrived in Fremantle on 14 June 1944, then transferred to Marrinup POW camp (*Stalag Australia*, p. 237). However, the ship’s log for *HMAS Kanimbla*, presumably the same ship, states that the vessel was anchored off the north coast of Papua New Guinea at that time (*HMAS
By that time, early November 1944, each German woodcutter was supplying almost one ton of firewood per day.\textsuperscript{54} The prisoners provided two types of cut firewood: 6ft and 1ft lengths. The 6ft lengths were used in industrial boilers, while the 1ft lengths were for domestic use. Tight financial checks were maintained on all POW employment projects. Monthly production figures, mandays worked, and associated costs had to be submitted to the Australian Military Force finance officer in Perth each month by the Marrinup camp commander.\textsuperscript{55} The firewood project initially struggled to be financially viable, mainly because of the costs of transport. Once the German POWs had cut the firewood, it was transported to the local rail siding by the 9th Australian Auxiliary Horse Transport Unit, which was also quartered at Marrinup camp.\textsuperscript{56} The pay and allowances for the horse unit’s sixty-five soldiers were charged against the project. This fiscal imposition, along with poor haulage productivity from the twenty dray horses caused by the unavailability of good horse feed, delivered a negative financial return to the scheme.\textsuperscript{57}

As with previous firewood supply projects in Western Australia, the Forests Department controlled the resources. The department initially would not allow the roads in the forests to be widened to permit motor transport to be used.\textsuperscript{58} Eventually, this issue was resolved. The road system was expanded, and the army horse unit was replaced by army motor vehicles to deliver firewood to the railhead. However, the firewood supply chain had additional problems due to the unavailability or inconsistency of rail transport. The Forests Department,

\textsuperscript{54} Western Command, War Diary, German POW individual firewood production amount, 7 November 1944, NAA: MP742/1/0, 255/13/500; 17 June 1944, NAA: A646, 82/600/417.
\textsuperscript{56} Headquarters 9th Aust, AUX, H. T. Coy, Claremont, ‘Request for Improvements to the H. T. Section at Marrinup POW Camp’, 23 July 1943, NAA: K1214, 30/32/4.
\textsuperscript{58} Western Command, War Diary, ‘Firewood Project, Marrinup POW Camp’, 6 March 1945, NAA: MP742/1/0, 255/13/722.

therefore, had to use motor transport instead. Army transport units, even in March 1945, were compelled to supply ten trucks per day to make the round journey of 140 miles between Marrinup and Salter Point, Perth so that Perth could receive firewood.  

Although the war had ended in Europe in May 1945 and in the Pacific in August 1945, firewood was still needed in Western Australia. By late 1945 the German POWs had settled into a productive and well-organised routine, even, according to Winter, finding time to manufacture alcohol from the local fruit crops. The military guard staff at Marrinup camp had sometimes allowed them to attend a local Sunday dance or picture show if they were under military supervision. The main reason for the relaxation of official attitudes towards the Germans was that the Australian Federal Security Service had managed to filter out any Germans with conspicuous Nazi beliefs before their transfer to Western Australia. As a result, there were no ideologically motivated security issues. 

Firewood production increased, and Perth hospitals and schools were some of the many government establishments that benefited. By June 1946, firewood demand had decreased and the operation using POW workers ended. The POWs had cut almost 70,000 tons of firewood in the final year. When compared with the pay and allowances drawn by the employment company previously used by the army for firewood production, the use of German POWs had resulted in considerable savings to public funds. 

As noted in the previous chapter, in May 1946, the Italian POWs had transferred to Northam POW camp. The Germans, by contrast, remained at

59 Ibid.  
60 Winter, *Stalag Australia*, p. 325.  
63 WA Coal Committee to Deputy Director of War Industry Organisation, 23 January 1943, West Australian Premier's Department, SRO, 202/42.  
64 *Annual operations report, year ended 30 June 1946*, Western Australian Forests Department, p. 7.  
65 Financial comparison between Australian Army employment company and German POWs in firewood production, 7 November 1944, NAA: MP742/1, 255/13/500.
Marrinup, waiting for repatriation.\textsuperscript{66} Their journey commenced on 23 July 1946, when they left for Loveday POW camp in South Australia, where they stayed until they boarded a train to Melbourne on 20 January 1947.\textsuperscript{67} Finally, the POWs departed later in January 1947 aboard the SS \emph{Orontes} from Port Melbourne to return to Germany.\textsuperscript{68} No. 16 POW Camp Marrinup closed at the end of July 1946, with all the camp equipment sold at an onsite auction on 13 June 1947.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{66} Department of Army, Melbourne. ‘Relocation of Italian and German POWs Prior to Repatriation’, May 1946, NAA: 1067, IC46/32/1/9.
\textsuperscript{67} Winter, \emph{Stalag Australia}, p. 365.
\textsuperscript{68} Directorate of POWs, Army Headquarters, Melbourne, ‘German POWs Repatriation’, NAA: A7711, Vol.1, p. 207.
\textsuperscript{69} ‘Disposal Sale of Marrinup POW Camp Equipment’, \emph{West Australian}, 13 June 1947, p. 18.
CONCLUSION

Western Australia was unprepared for the Second World War. The state had never really recovered from the First World War and the Great Depression. Lack of capacity to obtain financial credit either from within Australia or from external providers, namely the UK or the U.S., prevented the Western Australian government from maintaining and expanding its infrastructure. Rail infrastructure, including rolling stock, had been allowed to degrade significantly. The rail network then proved insufficient for wartime needs, especially the efficient transport of agricultural products and firewood. The wartime state government also lacked both manpower and money.

Western Australia’s supply of vital resources was further compromised by the unavailability of imported coal, and the inefficiency of the Collie mines. The coal shortage ultimately led to the necessity to use firewood as an alternative fuel source. Food and firewood became the most important commodities in wartime, for different reasons: the shortage of firewood directly affected the state’s civilian population, whereas extra food production predominantly supplied areas outside the state. The agriculture and firewood industries, however, paid low wages. Not surprisingly, when new opportunities arose in the military and war industries, a large percentage of the workforce moved away from the lower-paying occupations. Both state and federal governments were then forced to find alternative sources of labour. Ultimately, they turned to European POWs interned in Australia.

POW labour in Western Australia provided significant financial benefits to employers, including farmers and the state government, and encountered little or no opposition. The employment of POWs benefitted the Western Australian economy for two reasons. First, the prisoners provided labour that was otherwise unavailable. Second, they were even more valuable because they were much cheaper than local labourers would have been, had those men been available.

The UK government, which had jurisdiction over POWs throughout the British empire, paid the Australian government for the upkeep of the prisoners interned in Australia. When Italian POWs were employed on Western Australian farms, their employers paid the army, which collected money on behalf of the
federal government. Farmers paid £1.00 per week per prisoner who was employed and lived on the farm, while also providing their accommodation and food, and £1.10 per prisoner who was employed but lived at an army hostel. On 1 June 1945, the hire rate for every employed POW who had six months or more experience in the rural industry was increased to £2.00 per week.\(^1\) Unfortunately, there is no available data on the numbers of POWs affected by this change. The army incurred costs in paying wages to the POWs, as was required under the Geneva Convention. Because Australia had used the POWs to assist in various employment projects, financial restitution had to be made to the UK after the war ended. The total amount paid was more than £2.3 million.\(^2\)

Archival documents indicate that the total number of man-days worked by POWs in Australia was over 5.9 million,\(^3\) which equated to almost one million weeks. In Western Australia, POWs worked 1.53 million man-days. The basic male wage in Western Australia in 1944 was £4 19 11d per week:\(^4\) nearly five times the rate paid for a POW farm labourer. If local labour had been available and had been used, the cost of 1.53 million man-days would have been just over £1.25 million. Using POWs for the same number of days, after the costs of maintenance and POW pay were deducted, the cost was only £225,853, a difference of £1,023,412.

Some comparisons show the value of this saving. The cost of building one Royal Australian Frigate at Cockatoo Dockyard in Sydney during the war was

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\(^1\) Adjutant-General, Army Headquarters, Melbourne, Letter advising various Army headquarters involved with employment of POWs about an upward revision in rate of payment for POW employers, 15 May 1945, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA): MP742/1, 255/13/118.

\(^2\) Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Army, Letter from F. R. Sinclair, Secretary of the Department of Army to Secretary, Department of Treasury (Defence Division) regarding financial adjustment with UK for the employment of POWs, 24 December 1946, NAA: A649, 82/600/417.

\(^3\) Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Army, Letter from F. R. Sinclair, Secretary of the Department of Army to Secretary, Department of Treasury (Defence Division) regarding man-day adjustment with UK for the employment of POWs, 24 December 1946, NAA: A649, 82/600/417.

£370,000.\(^5\) Thus, with the savings from employing POWs instead of local labourers in Western Australia alone, almost three ships could have been built. In today’s money, the saving of almost £1,023,412 would equate to over £43 million or approximately 80 million Australian dollars.\(^6\) In short, the Australian government, acting through the army, was essentially a non-profit middleman providing Western Australia with cheap labour, at about 20% of the peacetime cost.

The British government, for its part, clearly took the view that POW labour had benefited Australian employers. In fact, officials believed that Australian employers had gained an unreasonable advantage from POW labour, ultimately at the expense of the British government.\(^7\) UK officials were willing to agree that the efficiency or work ethic of the POWs was around 30% less than that of an Australian worker. They nevertheless felt that employers had paid far too little when compared with the local basic wage. One result was that the amount returned to the UK government after the war was lower than it might otherwise have been.

The perceived value of POW labour in Western Australia is also shown by the government’s fairly relaxed attitude to security and health risks. Prisoners often worked unsupervised on farms; and they may have carried disease from their journey or from an Indian POW camp. The Western Australian authorities, however, like their counterparts in other states, were prepared to accept the risks.

When comparing the use of POWs in other states with Western Australia, the evidence suggests that there was more resistance elsewhere from the civilian population and media. The strong unions in Victoria and New South Wales were not happy with the use of POW labour. Similar to the British government’s concerns about the low pay for employed POWs, the unions felt that POW labour undermined their hard-won wage structure. This issue does not appear to have

\(^7\) Commonwealth of Australia, Australia House, London, Memorandum for the Secretary, Department of the Treasury, Melbourne, Britain’s War Office comments regarding monetary difference in civilian and POW pay and charge rates, 31 August 1946, NAA: A649, 82/600/417.
arisen in Western Australia due to a comparative lack of radical unionism; unions were aggressive only in the mining and maritime industries. Any potential resistance to the employment of POWs was also mitigated by the cordial ties between the state’s union movement and the Labour Party, which governed in Western Australia during the war years.

The employment scheme seems to have posed few problems for the POWs themselves. When compared with the possibility of death on the battlefields of North Africa or the mundane life with poor food and unhygienic conditions in an Indian POW camp, life in Australia would have been pleasant. Both German and Italian prisoners in Western Australia appear to have been content with their situation and surroundings. As a result, there were far fewer escapes or disciplinary issues than in the eastern states.8 Vetting by Australian Security Service staff, who identified suitable candidates for employment in Western Australia, also helped to prevent such problems. With a safe environment, good quality and regular food, wages, work that occupied them both physically and mentally and the opportunity to have some external social and spiritual contact, there appears to have been little incentive for a prisoner to escape. When the authorities were required to return prisoners to their home countries after the end of the war, a few preferred to abscond, no doubt surmising they could have a better life in Australia.

In October 1950, the Australian government granted dispensation to escaped POWs who had managed to evade capture or were on parole at the time.9 If they were of good character, they would be allowed to remain in Australia and would be issued with an alien registration certificate. However, there were still some barriers to total acceptance. As an example, for a period following the end of the war, Italian POWs were forbidden to marry Australian women, by a direction of the British government, which still had overall responsibility for Axis POWs within the Commonwealth.10 After a peace treaty was concluded with Italy,

8 Department of the Army, Proceedings of Court of Inquiries, Escaped POWs, July 1942, NAA: MP508/1, 255/715/598; Department of the Army, Proceedings of Court of Inquiries, Escaped POWs, January 1945, NAA: MP385/7, 53/102/74.
9 Prime Minister’s Department, Confidential correspondence files to Minister for Immigration, Cabinet conditions allowing POWs still in Australia to remain, 25 October 1950, NAA: A4639, 134.
10 Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Army to Department of External Affairs, Australia to follow UK Government ruling, refusal to allow Australian women to marry Italian POWs, 7 July 1945: NAA: A1066, IC45/32/6/14.
Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria in February 1947, Australia began accepting migrants from southern and eastern Europe, with a significant rise from 32,000 in 1947 to over 170,000 by 1949. These immigrants included some ex-POWs, sponsored by farmers who had previously employed them, although there is no data on exact numbers.

For the state of Western Australia and its citizens, the use of prisoners of war as labour can ultimately be considered a positive experience for everyone involved. The labour scheme allowed the state to contribute substantially to the nation’s war effort through food production, and to a lesser extent through munitions supply, as POW labour freed up others to work in that industry. For many citizens of Western Australia, it also provided both financial and material assistance through government food contracts or firewood. Any fears officials may have held of public antagonism or union backlash proved groundless as most POWs worked well, and there was a constant demand for their labour. Many of their employers discovered that the POWs were willing to commit themselves to hard work, despite the language barriers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Movements

GERMANS

16 November 1943: 200 POWs, mainly Africa-Korps, transferred to Marrinup.

4 June 1944: 100 POWs transferred to Marrinup from Murchison, Vic.

23 July 1946: Marrinup closed, POWs transferred to Loveday Camp, S.A.

21 January 1947: General repatriation from Melbourne on SS Orontes.

ITALIANS

29 June 1943: 161 POWs, to Karrakatta, for use by HQ 3 Aust Corps in WA from Murchison, Vic.

7 September 1943: 151 POWs transferred to Marrinup from Murchison, Vic.

12 January 1944: 53 POWs transferred to Marrinup from Murchison, Vic.

22 February 1944: 1000 POWs arrive in Fremantle for Marrinup from India.

14 June 1944: 1000 POWs transferred to Marrinup from Murchison, Vic.

July-Oct 1944: 133 POWs transferred to Marrinup from Murchison, Vic.

20 February 1945: 350 POWs transferred to Marrinup from South Australia.

23 June 1945: 1000 POWs transferred to Marrinup from Murchison, Vic.

11 April 1946: Commencement transfer POWs to Northam POW Camp.

August – Dec 1946: Repatriation of POWs to Italy from Fremantle.

Note: Italian POWs were often transferred back to No. 13 POW Camp Murchison for various reasons, mostly disciplinary.
APPENDIX B: Camps

MARRINUP No 16 POW CAMP: Opened; 13 Aug 1943 – Closed August 1946.

Camp Commandants
5 March 1945: Until closed: Major Hector Stuart Foley (probably Acting Commandant earlier).

Australian Army guards:
8 P/W Labour Detachment, changed to 8 P.W. Guard Company (21 Sept 1943) changed to No.16 PW Camp Marrinup, (2 Nov 1943).
Troops mainly posted from local garrison battalions: 5th, 10th and 29th.

POW CONTROL CENTRES (PWCC)

W1 Bridgetown: Opened 27 Oct 1943 – Closed 23 May 1946.
100 POWs increased to 200 (Feb 1945), 175 to Northam, (April 1946). PCC OIC Lt Baker

W2 Kendenup: Opened 11 November 1943 – Closed 23 May 1946.
100 POWs increased to 200 (Feb 1945). PCC OIC Lt Mattner

W3 Darkan: Opened 18 November 1943 – Closed 1 November 1945.
100 POWs, increased to 175 reduced to 125, (Mar 1944). PCC OIC Lt McLean.

W4 Kojonup: Opened 8 March 1944 – Closed 23 May 1946.
100 POWs increased to 150 (Feb 1945). PCC OIC Lt Pearse

W5 Tambellup: Opened 1 March 1944 – Closed 31 May 1946.
100 POWs increased to 150 (May 1944). PCC OIC Lt Huffe

W6 Wagin: Opened 8 March 1944 – Closed 31 May 1946.
100 POWs increased to 175 (Mar 1944), reduced to 100, (Mar 1945). PCC OIC Lt McNamara

W7 Popanyinning: Opened 1 March 1944 – Closed 31 May 1946.
100 POWs increased to 175 (Mar 1944), reduced to 100, (Mar 1945). PCC OIC Capt Clayton

W8 Margaret River: Opened 15 March 1944 – Closed 23 May 1946.
100 POWs increased to 125 (Feb 1944), increased to 150, (Jan 1945). PCC OIC Capt Tweedy

W9 Beverley: Opened 8 April 1944 – Closed 23 May 1946.
100 POWs PCC OIC Capt Coppock

W10 Quairading: Opened 8 April 1944 – Closed 30 May 1946.
100 POWs increased to 125 (Feb 1945). PCC OIC Capt Hughes

W11 Kellerberrin: Opened 15 April 1944 – Closed 30 May 1946.
150 POWs decreased to 125, (Feb 1945). PCC OIC Capt Waldby
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<tr>
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<td>Narembeen</td>
<td>25 May 1944</td>
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<td>Lt Crabb</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to 150 (May 1944)</td>
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<tr>
<td>W13</td>
<td>Kununoppin</td>
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<td>31 May 1946</td>
<td>100 POWs</td>
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<td>W14</td>
<td>Kukerin</td>
<td>13 June 1944</td>
<td>23 May 1946</td>
<td>100 POWs</td>
<td>Capt Gibson</td>
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<tr>
<td>W15</td>
<td>Yearling</td>
<td>21 June 1944</td>
<td>1 November 1945</td>
<td>125 POWs increased to 125 (Feb 1945)</td>
<td>Lt Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W16</td>
<td>Wyalkatchem</td>
<td>19 June 1944</td>
<td>30 March 1946</td>
<td>100 POWs</td>
<td>Lt Giblett</td>
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<tr>
<td>W17</td>
<td>Kondinin</td>
<td>30 June 1944</td>
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<td>W19</td>
<td>Koorda</td>
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<td>W20</td>
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<td>Aug 1944</td>
<td>30 April 1946</td>
<td>100 POWs increased to 275 POWs</td>
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<td>30 May 1946</td>
<td>100 POWs</td>
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<td>Dalwallinu</td>
<td>13 March 1945</td>
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<td>W25</td>
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<td>2 April 1945</td>
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<td>W26</td>
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<td>2 April 1945</td>
<td>23 May 1946</td>
<td>100 POWs</td>
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<td>W27</td>
<td>Mullewa</td>
<td>9 May 1945</td>
<td>30 May 1946</td>
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**WORK CAMPS**

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<td>W28</td>
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<td>Dec 1945</td>
<td>31 May 1946</td>
<td>200 POWs</td>
<td>Lt Mattner</td>
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### APPENDIX C: POW Deaths and Locations

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<td>German</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<td>Karrakatta</td>
<td>Paul, H.</td>
<td>7 December 1942</td>
<td>German</td>
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<td>Muscolino, D.</td>
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<td>Faa, A.</td>
<td>28 February 1944</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Illness</td>
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<td>Northam</td>
<td>Vizzari, C.</td>
<td>26 June 1944</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narambeen</td>
<td>Zanier, A.</td>
<td>3 September 1944</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konidin</td>
<td>Ciuccariello, A.</td>
<td>3 October 1944</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrogin</td>
<td>Morosilio, S.</td>
<td>24 January 1945</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrogin</td>
<td>Vendetti, A.</td>
<td>16 March 1945</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalwallinu</td>
<td>Mattioli, E.</td>
<td>4 April 1945</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Springs</td>
<td>Casadio, L.</td>
<td>23 August 1945</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyalkatchem</td>
<td>Marasco, F.</td>
<td>7 September 1945</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrigin</td>
<td>Fracasso, A.</td>
<td>20 December 1945</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Drowned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northam</td>
<td>Grego, A.</td>
<td>27 March 1946</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katanning</td>
<td>Mosetti, T.</td>
<td>3 January 1946</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Drowned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northam</td>
<td>Grego, A.</td>
<td>27 March 1946</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karrakatta</td>
<td>Agnello, G.</td>
<td>28 April 1946</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Insanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northam</td>
<td>Riei, A.</td>
<td>4 June 1946</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karrakatta</td>
<td>Gavagna, Q</td>
<td>26 June 1946</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northam</td>
<td>Di’Damaso, G.</td>
<td>1 July 1946</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northam</td>
<td>Crescenzio, C.</td>
<td>11 December 1946</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karrakatta</td>
<td>Abbodino, G.</td>
<td>8 January 1947</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Illness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### APPENDIX D: Industrial Disputes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State or Territory</th>
<th>Year 1940</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Establishments Involved</th>
<th>Workpeople Involved Directly</th>
<th>Workpeople Involved Indirectly</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Working Days Lost</th>
<th>Estimated Loss in Wages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,108</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1,253</td>
<td>1,353</td>
<td>14,100</td>
<td>9,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,394</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>2,314</td>
<td>3,234</td>
<td>38,438</td>
<td>40,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2,781</td>
<td>3,979</td>
<td>6,760</td>
<td>11,988</td>
<td>89,984</td>
<td>93,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3,158</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>3,802</td>
<td>5,646</td>
<td>32,957</td>
<td>35,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3,264</td>
<td>3,056</td>
<td>6,363</td>
<td>9,636</td>
<td>68,329</td>
<td>68,329</td>
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</table>

Source: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistic

Table 1
### Industrial Disputes in Industrial Groups, 1944—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Industrial Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Establishments Involved</th>
<th>Workpeople Involved</th>
<th>Working Days Lost</th>
<th>Estimated Loss in Wages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Engineering, metal works, etc.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Other manufacturing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>Coal-mining</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>Railway and tramway services</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV.</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics

### Industrial Disputes in Industrial Groups, 1948—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Industrial Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Establishments Involved</th>
<th>Workpeople Involved</th>
<th>Working Days Lost</th>
<th>Estimated Loss in Wages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Engineering, metal works, etc.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Other manufacturing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>Coal-mining</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>Railway and tramway services</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV.</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,162</td>
<td>11,028</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics

### APPENDIX E: Western Australia State Government Railways

<p>| Traffic, Rolling Stock, Revenue, and Expenditure for each of the Ten Years ended 30th June, 1939 to 1948. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ended 30th June</th>
<th>Miles Traveled</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Locomotives</th>
<th>Coaches</th>
<th>Other Stock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>4,278</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>5,850</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>4,278</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>5,850</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>4,278</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>5,850</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>4,278</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>5,850</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>4,278</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>5,850</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>4,278</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>5,850</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>4,278</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>5,850</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>4,278</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>5,850</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>4,278</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>5,850</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Western Australia Yearbook 1947

Table 2

Table 3

Table 4
### Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Length of Open Railway</th>
<th>Capital cost per mile</th>
<th>Population per mile of Line</th>
<th>Capital Cost per Head of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>4,386</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>£ 5 4 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>6,127</td>
<td>6,158</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>36 5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>4,748</td>
<td>10,649</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>48 2 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>2,547</td>
<td>11,084</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>48 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>8,457</td>
<td>10,008</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>63 5 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>3,928</td>
<td>21,107</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>43 10 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Western Australia Government Railways Report 1946

### APPENDIX F: Agriculture in Western Australia

#### Table 6


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Acres Cropped, Cleared, etc.</th>
<th>Acres,</th>
<th>Acres,</th>
<th>Acres,</th>
<th>Acres,</th>
<th>Acres,</th>
<th>Acres,</th>
<th>Acres,</th>
<th>Acres,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under Crop. (a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>4,066,598</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>2,600,516</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>2,344,612</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>2,786,677</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>2,744,069</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>2,756,025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>2,579,448</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>2,098,578</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>3,008,138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Including Meadow Hay. (b) Not available. (c) Included in other columns.

Source: Western Australia Yearbook 1947
APPENDIX G: Western Australia Forestry Department

The total consumption of firewood for the year is estimated at 665,000 tons made up as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>Goldfields Area</th>
<th>Mill Waste used for fuel at bush sawmills</th>
<th>Goldfields Water Supply Pumping Stations</th>
<th>Country centres</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>286,000</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>322,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principal sources of supply were:

- Goldfields Firewood Licenses issued by Department over Crown Lands: 242,200 tons.
- Mill Waste at Bush Mills: 175,000 tons.
- Firewood Permits issued in South-West by Department over Crown Lands: 99,500 tons.
- Supplied by Forests Department, ex Alien, P.O.W. and Departmental Camps: 74,900 tons.

Source: Western Australian Forest Department Report June 1946

Table 7

APPENDIX H: Western Australia Coal Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Produced</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1942</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1944</th>
<th>1945</th>
<th>1946</th>
<th>1947</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantity in Tons</td>
<td>557,535</td>
<td>539,427</td>
<td>556,574</td>
<td>581,176</td>
<td>531,546</td>
<td>558,322</td>
<td>543,362</td>
<td>642,286</td>
<td>730,506</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Government of Western Australia, Department of Mines

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Canberra

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