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VICTORIA AT WAR, 1939 TO 1945

INTRODUCTION

The years between 1939 and 1945 witnessed much change throughout the nation, unmatched perhaps by any previous period of comparable length. This accompanied the gradual progression from the established precedent of over half a century in dispatching forces to support Britain in foreign military operations, to the state of extreme emergency in 1942, when the threat of imminent invasion at home ushered in a period of total war. Total war as described by Professor D. B. Copland is a three-stage process: the stage of economic expansion to absorb idle resources; the transfer of resources and investment from civilian needs to war purposes; and the final stage, when the community has reduced its civilian consumption to the minimum, a period of stability maintained by stringent controls. These stages are evident in a survey of the military, political, economic, and social aspects.

In military terms, during this process, Australia became an allied headquarters, arsenal, and supply base, the importance of which was recognised by the enemy. In a sea campaign that was kept from the headlines by strict censorship, dozens of ships and hundreds of lives were lost off the Australian coast by the depredations of German raiders, minelayers, and U-boats, and the gunfire or torpedoes of Japanese submarines. Politically, the successful application of government controls was facilitated by the elevation of patriotic co-operation above party considerations. Economically, the marshalling of resources effected a vast increase in, and diversification of, output of strategic materials. Socially, ordinary persons were called upon to make great sacrifices in their determination to unite in eradicating the threat to national survival. This Chapter examines these aspects from the Victorian point of view.

MILITARY ASPECTS

In Victoria in the depressed 1930s ex-servicemen of the First World War read with misgivings about the grave situation in Europe threatening the peace that had cost their generation so much. Some were engaged, ironically, as sustenance workers in constructing the approaches to the Shrine of Remembrance on St Kilda Road, Melbourne. As tension mounted after the Munich crisis, the announcement of war with Germany on 3 September 1939 was received by some with almost a feeling of relief. Although the theatres of operation were half a world away, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) ships put to sea, military units were mobilised and shore batteries alerted, and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) squadrons prepared for action. Yet during the period of the "phoney war" in 1940 there was some tardiness and complacency.

On the day after war was declared, in a strange coincidence, the first British artillery shot of this war was fired, as in the First World War, from a gun at Fort Nepean, to cause an unidentified vessel approaching Port Phillip Heads to acknowledge the recognition signal. During the war, the approaches to Melbourne were busy with the movements of grey warships, tankers, cargo steamers, and liners converted to troopships. The Williamstown Naval Dockyard launched and repaired many Allied vessels. The shore depots, oil installations, and loading terminals were disguised by camouflage and protected by gun emplacements from the danger of prowling enemy raiders.

In October 1940, the German auxiliary cruiser *Pinguin*, raider No. 33, captured a Norwegian tanker off Western Australia, renamed it *Passat*, and equipped it to lay 110 mines in Bass Strait, off Wilsons Promontory, Cape Otway, and elsewhere. A week later the British freighter *Cambridge*, carrying general merchandise from Britain, struck a mine off Wilsons Promontory and sank. The survivors were landed at Port Welshpool. Next evening the US freighter *City of Rayville*, with a cargo of lead, became the first US vessel to be sunk in the war when she struck a mine off Cape Otway. The surviving crew were rescued in dangerous conditions by fishermen from Apollo Bay. They were later thanked by the US Secretary of State, Mr Cordell Hull, on behalf of the President and the US Government.

Bass Strait was closed to shipping temporarily. The clearing of these mines added to the strains on the minesweeping force, and a requirement was issued for vessels over 800 tons to be fitted with paravanes, anti-mine devices towed by ships. The RAN had its first ship sunk in the war when the auxiliary minesweeper HMAS *Goorangai* was lost with all hands following a collision in Port Phillip Bay with the coastal liner *Duntroon* on 20 November 1940.

Early in the war a volunteer second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was raised, and recruiting booths appeared at the Melbourne Town Hall and local centres throughout Victoria. Citizens were trained to be soldiers and new military camp names, such as Puckapunyal, appeared among the press items. Convoys transported them to the war areas and by 1941, with Australian soldiers fighting at Bardia, Tobruk, and other places in the Western Desert, Greece, Crete, and Syria, and sailors and airmen in the Mediterranean and European theatres, the war news in the daily papers was frequently interspersed with casualty lists.

After the Japanese entered the war in December 1941, the toll grew when the 8th Division was captured in the enemy's lightning advance through Malaya, Singapore, and the Netherlands East Indies (later named Indonesia) and the shielding screen of Australian and Allied ships and aircraft was lost. By early 1942, for the first time, Australians faced the possibility of invasion by an enemy only a few hundred kilometres away.

At the insistence of the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon. J. Curtin, AIF divisions in the Middle East returned to Australia, regrouping in the southern States before transferring to battle zones in the north. Enemy bombers attacked the mainland at Darwin and elsewhere from February 1942 onwards, and marauding enemy submarines cruised along the eastern and southern coastlines, preying on the vital shipping lanes linking Australia and the United States, and raiding Sydney Harbour in May. Enemy aircraft on reconnaissance from submarine mother-ships flew over southern Australian cities.

The Japanese submarines patrolled as far south as eastern Victorian waters, attacking the ship *Barwon* with gunfire, and torpedoing the *Iron Crown*, laden with manganese, off Gabo Island in June, with the loss of 37 crew members. The crew of a Hudson bomber of No. 7 Squadron RAAF saw *Iron Crown* blow up, and when the submarine surfaced it was straddled with anti-submarine bombs. During 1942 and 1943, the RAAF flew many long-range patrols and attacked submarines in the area. Although inconclusive, these actions forced the enemy to retreat, first to the Tasman and then further north. A German U-boat, however, was reported to be still operating in nearby Victorian waters as late as January 1945.

Emergency measures introduced for civilian protection at the height of the invasion threat in 1942 included the suppression of lights in a "brownout", and familiarisation with sirens and shelters and other air raid precautions. The Volunteer Defence Corps, the home guard organisation, mobilised veterans and youths. There were plans to evacuate children. Slit trenches were dug in backyards and school grounds and parks. Street signs and railway station names were removed. Aircraft identification silhouettes appeared in the newspapers. At night searchlights swept the sky.

With Britain's inability to contribute significantly to the defence of Australia, the Commonwealth Government looked to the United States of America for assistance. In March 1942, General Douglas MacArthur of the United States Army set up his headquarters in Melbourne, until he removed it to Brisbane in 1943 as the Allies advanced northwards. Thousands of American and other Allied servicemen were eventually based in Victoria, in camps, schools, and other public buildings. The 1st United States Marine Division, after

fighting at Guadalcanal, occupied Camp Murphy at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. In 1977 a plaque was unveiled, acknowledging "with grateful thanks the magnificent hospitality they received from the people of Melbourne".

The Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942 deprived the enemy of further opportunity to expand south. By the year's end Australians fighting in Papua had repulsed the landing at Milne Bay, stopped the Japanese land advance on the Kokoda Trail, and had pushed the enemy back across the Owen Stanley Range. AIF and Militia forces supported by RAN and RAAF units fought in the South-West Pacific battles throughout 1943, 1944, and 1945, and two AIF Divisions had recaptured Borneo by the end of the war. The RAN and RAAF also continued to serve in the African, Asian, European, Atlantic, and other theatres.

A build-up of Allied strength, the marshalling of local resources, the large-scale movements of forces, and the arrival of wounded, gave Melbourne the mixture of emotion and drama of a rest and recreation area in the midst of total war. War loans were publicised in Collins Street rallies. Marches stimulated recruiting and lending. The citizens greeted with warmth the veterans of the 17th Brigade from New Guinea, marching in jungle green, and the khaki-clad 9th Division, when it returned from the breakthrough at El Alamein in North Africa.

The length and breadth of the State had provided the location for important defence installations, including Victoria Barracks, Flinders Naval Depot, and Point Cook Air Force Base. The presence of barbed wire, sentries, and bugle calls proclaimed the occupation of racecourses and showgrounds and sporting fields as well as the regular services camps. Airmen flew operations from Laverton and East Sale. Catalina flying boats were based at Lake Boga. Commando units were formed secretly at Foster and trained at Wilsons Promontory. The main military hospital was at Heidelberg.

In addition to many personnel for the Navy and Air Force, Victoria had provided 205,758 personnel to the Army up to September 1945. This was 10.7 per cent of the State's population, and 28 per cent of gross Army enlistments from 29 per cent of the Australian population, a higher proportion than Victorian enlistments in the First World War. Some battalions previously raised in Victoria had been formed, e.g., 7th, 14th, 24th, etc., but as the war progressed State affiliations became less distinguishable.

Many Army commanders came from Victoria, including the Commander-in-Chief, General (later Field Marshal) Sir Thomas Blamey. Two Victorian soldiers and one airman won the Victoria Cross in Papua and New Guinea, heading a large tally of awards to Victorians for gallantry. Among thousands of Victorian casualties — killed, wounded, missing, and prisoners — were 7,844 Army fatalities alone, male and female.

POLITICAL ASPECTS

During the war Victoria was governed, apart from one brief period, by the Country Party Government of Mr A. A. (later Sir Albert) Dunstan, but it was from the Federal sphere that the emergency controls were mainly imposed. Despite the fact that the likelihood of war had existed for some time, there had been little preparation for such a contingency, on the assumption that Australia would follow British direction, as it had done traditionally. In Victoria, however, there was a naval dockyard and a newly established aircraft industry, and motor vehicle and other industrial works capable of adaptation to war production. The breathing space afforded by the "phoney war" allowed the build-up of this industrial base and the administrative machinery to organise the nation's resources.

Only slowly were the people subjected to sacrifices. The Commonwealth Government, headed by the Rt Hon. R. G. (later Sir Robert) Menzies, was reluctant to introduce unpopular hardships because it held office only with the support of two Independents. Petrol rationing was introduced, and a system of price controls was set up, although shortages caused some increases in prices. There were controls on rents, foreign exchange, and trade. Import licensing and agreements for marketing of wheat and wool were implemented. The task of financing the war led to the government seeking new sources of funds, including pay-roll tax.

In late 1941, the Rt Hon. J. Curtin's Australian Labor Party gained office and, with the uniting effect of the Japanese entry into the war, Labor's policies won acceptance and national emergency measures were not resisted as they might have been in ordinary

circumstances. For instance, State income taxes had varied widely. In Victoria, the maximum rate on personal earnings was 42.5 cents in the dollar, while in Queensland it was 75 cents. Uniform taxation was introduced in 1942, and State needs were provided for after defence requirements had been met.

The Commonwealth organised manpower, called up men for the Armed Forces, and directed those not in reserved occupations to where they were needed. Women entered factories and took over other traditional male tasks, including some working on the land. After 1941, the number of women in factories and the auxiliary services soared. Rationing was required to preserve scarce resources and coupons were issued for tea, sugar, butter, meat, and clothing. Civilians carried identity cards. Many were required to work long hours. War bonds and savings certificates and stamps attracted their surplus earnings. Travel was curtailed. Private building virtually stopped. Private investment was checked and share trading was restricted.

After the passing of the immediate danger of invasion there was a reaction against the Commonwealth Government's controls. In 1944, a referendum to transfer to the Commonwealth power to control employment and production was defeated by four States to two (although Victoria's majority was slender). The government controls had been more stringent than in the First World War and the hardships greater than experienced in the USA, although they were far less than those suffered in Britain.

ECONOMIC ASPECTS

The Victorian economy made a considerable contribution to the demands of total war. The agricultural sector suffered the problems of inadequate manpower, shortages of superphosphate when Nauru and Ocean Islands were captured, and drought during 1944-45. Although maintained at about pre-war levels for several years, grain production fell severely in 1944-45. A comparison of the following indicators for the war years is revealing:

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION: VICTORIA, 1939-40 TO 1944-45

Year	Area utilised for crop	Production of –				Number of sheep
		Wheat	Oats	Barley	Butter	
	m. hectares	'000 tonnes	'000 tonnes	'000 tonnes	m. kg	million
1939-40	2.0	1,226.1	150.2	84.8	74.7	18.3
1940-41	1.8	367.9	47.6	26.9	70.9	20.4
1941-42	1.9	1,277.8	147.9	108.7	63.9	20.6
1942-43	1.6	1,137.7	120.4	28.9	57.0	19.6
1943-44	1.4	537.0	67.2	24.5	50.6	19.2
1944-45	1.7	95.2	24.2	8.2	48.0	16.5

It was to be expected, perhaps, that available resources would be devoted to manufacturing in a State with a large industrial base. Most of the 3,690 Australian-produced aircraft and 2,840 aircraft engines, as well as many ships, vehicles, guns, and a range of machine tools and other war equipment, and much food, were produced in Victoria.

Munition production had been pioneered in Australia when the Colonial Ammunition Co. Ltd commenced operations in 1888 at Footscray, becoming the Government Ammunition Factory in 1921. The Explosives Factory was established in 1911, and the Ordnance Factory in 1925, both at Maribyrnong. The only major armament factory outside Victoria in 1939 was the Small Arms Factory at Lithgow, NSW, established in 1912. War plans for new factories led to the decentralisation of munitions plants.

In 1940, the Department of Munitions was set up in Melbourne under Mr Essington Lewis, managing director of BHP. Munitions factories and establishments were operated at many Victorian sites: ammunition factories at Footscray and Mildura; explosives and filling factories at Maribyrnong and Ballarat; ordnance factories at Maribyrnong, Bendigo, Echuca, Horsham, Stawell, and Hamilton; and the laboratories and chemical defence factory at Maribyrnong. Gun ammunition factories were located between the filling factories at Maribyrnong and Salisbury in South Australia so that if one was bombed, the components could be transferred to the alternative establishment. A guncotton factory was placed at Ballarat because of its pure water supply and supplied both the Victorian and

South Australian factories. The explosives factory at Mulwala utilised Murray River water and fed New South Wales and Victorian explosives and filling factories. The ordnance factory at Bendigo was relatively close to forging plants at Melbourne and Castlemaine and was accessible by the factory at Echuca.

The figures for employment in such factories during the war are set out below and show the initial high concentration in Victoria:

EMPLOYMENT IN MUNITIONS FACTORIES: VICTORIA AND AUSTRALIA,
1939 TO 1945

At 30 June—	Victorian employment			Persons employed throughout Australia	Victoria as a percentage of Australia
	Males	Females	Persons		
1939	3,949	570	4,519	5,073	89.1
1940	8,354	1,612	9,966	12,250	81.4
1941	13,496	4,238	17,734	26,205	67.7
1942	17,136	9,079	26,215	51,942	50.1
1943	14,390	7,645	22,035	60,991	36.1
1944	9,445	4,179	13,624	37,856	36.0
1945	8,052	2,967	11,019	28,398	38.8

Figures for employment and value of output and production give some indication of the steady growth of the manufacturing sector in Victoria during the war.

EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING AND VALUE OF OUTPUT
AND PRODUCTION: VICTORIA, 1939-40 TO 1944-45

Year	Persons employed	Value of output (a)	Value of production (b)
	'000	$m	$m
1939-40	212	349	148
1940-41	238	419	178
1941-42	258	515	222
1942-43	262	555	243
1943-44	261	569	247
1944-45	258	575	245

(a) The value of factory output is the value of the goods manufactured or their value after passing through the particular process of manufacture and includes the amount received for repair work, work done on commission, and receipts for other factory work. The basis of valuation of the output is the selling value of the goods at the factory, exclusive of all delivery costs and charges and excise duties, but inclusive of bounty and subsidy payments to the manufacturer of the finished article.

(b) The value of production is the value added to raw materials by the process of manufacture. It is calculated by deducting from the value of factory output the value (at the factory) of those items of cost specified on the factory statistical collection form, namely, materials used, containers and packing, power, fuel, and light used, tools replaced, and materials used in repairs to plant (but not depreciation charges); the remainder constitutes the value added to raw materials in the process of manufacture, and represents the fund available for the payment of wages, taxation, rent, interest, insurance, etc., and profit.

Industrial disputes were comparatively mild and days lost due to strikes far fewer during the war than in the post-war years.

Commerce suffered with the sinking of vessels carrying imports *en route* from overseas, and with the restrictions on varieties of goods and attractive packaging, and implementation of ration quotas. Many businesses depended on women and juniors, and the continuation in employment of persons of retiring age. The controls on retail prices retarded increases between 1939 and 1945 to 34 points (22 per cent) for the six State capital cities retail price index numbers compared with 36 points (32 per cent) between 1914 and 1918 (base 1911 = 100). Although derived by linking a number of indexes that differ greatly in scope, and being for the six State capitals combined, it is considered that a comparable index for Melbourne would not vary significantly from these figures. A black market developed in certain lines of scarce goods, from nylon stockings to petrol coupons. The changing market structure following arrival of the Americans was reflected in the re-naming of chemists, confectioners, and milk bars as drug stores, candy stores, and soda fountains. Florists flourished and youthful entrepreneurs became shoe-shine boys.

The interstate movement of troops and goods was complicated by varying railway gauges, and highlighted the need for strategic highways. Interstate and overseas shipping fell in numbers of vessels entering and cleared from Victorian ports, and in net tonnage, although the amount of cargo shipped and discharged remained fairly constant. The composition of goods entering trade changed to essential war needs, and some overseas markets were lost or affected by shipping shortages.

INTERSTATE AND OVERSEAS SHIPPING AND CARGO: VICTORIA, 1939-40 TO 1944-45

| Year | Shipping | | | | Cargo | | | |
| | Entered | | Cleared | | Shipped | | Discharged | |
	Vessels	m. net tonnes	Vessels	m. net tonnes	m. tonnes weight	m. tonnes measure	m. tonnes weight	m. tonnes measure
1939-40	2,658	7.1	2,672	7.2	1.3	0.8	3.1	1.7
1940-41	2,465	5.7	2,473	5.7	1.3	1.0	3.4	1.5
1941-42	2,154	4.5	2,139	4.5	1.2	1.0	3.8	1.4
1942-43	1,681	3.3	1,678	3.3	1.0	0.9	3.3	1.0
1943-44	1,494	3.0	1,499	3.0	1.1	0.9	3.0	1.0
1944-45	1,412	3.0	1,444	3.1	1.1	1.1	3.5	0.8

Reduction in normal imports had some beneficial effects. Local production received impetus, e.g., publishing increased despite the paper shortage affecting books, magazines, and newspaper production. Broadcasting also developed during the war and news broadcasts and commentaries were frequent. The media generally was used for stirring patriotic feeling, and was subject to strict censorship. The economy was expanded so vastly that by the end of the war the range of tasks to which the labour force turned had changed markedly.

SOCIAL ASPECTS

The disruption to the lives of ordinary persons in the war is evidenced in the vital statistics for the period. The population of Victoria grew from 1,883,000 to 2,015,000 between 1939 and 1945. Marriages continued to rise until 1942 but tapered to pre-war levels in the last two years of the war. Many girls left Australia as brides of US servicemen. Divorces by 1945 had more than doubled the pre-war figure. Births increased steadily during the war, but deaths peaked in 1942. Births continued to increase in the post-war period, deaths and marriages remained fairly constant, and divorces returned to the wartime levels after a peak in 1947. There were fewer males per 100 females of the population in all years up to 1950, reflecting in part the deaths of males in action.

DEMOGRAPHY: VICTORIA, 1934 TO 1950

| Year | Population (a) | | | Births | Deaths | Marriages | Number of divorces — decrees granted |
| | Males | Females | Total | | | | |
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	
1934	910	927	1,837	28	19	14	621
1939	929	954	1,883	30	20	17	805
1940	947	968	1,915	32	20	22	822
1941	965	982	1,946	34	21	21	842
1942	971	992	1,963	36	22	24	959
1943	980	1,002	1,982	39	21	18	1,383
1944	987	1,011	1,998	39	21	18	1,694
1945	995	1,020	2,015	41	20	17	1,759
1946	1,006	1,033	2,040	47	22	21	1,651
1947	1,017	1,046	2,063	47	21	20	2,294
1948	1,039	1,069	2,108	46	22	20	1,681
1949	1,072	1,097	2,169	47	22	20	1,780
1950	1,114	1,123	2,237	50	22	20	1,604

(a) Figures from 1939 to 1946 include all living Australian defence service personnel irrespective of whether they were within Australia or overseas, but exclude members of Allied Services and prisoners of war and internees from overseas. The population estimates from 1947 onwards include defence personnel in Australia and are exclusive of members of the forces overseas.

Some large schools were appropriated for military purposes and pupils were relocated. Most schools covered the loss of young male teachers with women and retired teachers. Many students spent time preparing school air raid shelters, assisted with harvests, or collected salvage items such as metals and rubber. In some schools the lists of old boys who had previously fallen were maintained, and throughout the war were added to as each year's school leavers joined the services and went overseas. There was also a corresponding rise in the proportion of female students at the University of Melbourne, partly due to the imposition of entry quotas on males.

Workers were subjected to long hours and shift work. The basic weekly wage in Melbourne for an adult male rose from $8 in December 1939 to $9.80 in November 1945, but the obligatory overtime and reduced supply of consumer goods led to high rates of savings in banks, war bonds, and war savings certificates. Savings bank deposits, for instance, grew from $160.9m in 1939 to $364.3m in 1945.

BASIC WEEKLY WAGES AND BANK DEPOSITS: VICTORIA, 1939 TO 1945

Year	Basic weekly wage — Melbourne, for Adult Males (payable from)	Savings bank deposits (at 30 June)	Trading bank deposits (average for year ended 30 June)
	$	$m	$m
1939	Dec. 8.00	160.9	236.6
1940	Nov. 8.40	158.3	262.8
1941	Nov. 8.80	171.4	270.3
1942	Nov. 9.70	188.5	280.4
1943	Nov. 9.80	242.5	322.2
1944	Nov. 9.80	307.8	361.0
1945	Nov. 9.80	364.3	385.0

The restrictions on private transport were apparent in the figures for registrations of new motor passenger vehicles which progressively fell to a few hundred annually and did not fully recover until after the war. Owners unable to obtain sufficient petrol fitted gas producers or placed cars on blocks for the duration. As would be expected there was a related fall in numbers of road traffic accidents and persons killed and injured in the years 1942 to 1945. Conversely the numbers of railway and tramway passenger journeys peaked between 1943 and 1945 and have not ever achieved such levels since. However, railway stock and track deteriorated without replacement, although railway finances looked more promising.

NEW MOTOR VEHICLES REGISTERED: VICTORIA, 1939-40 TO 1944-45

Year	New motor vehicles registered during period (a)	
	Cars	Total
1939-40	11,613	17,386
1940-41	5,529	8,833
1941-42	1,244	2,834
1942-43	852	2,005
1943-44	527	3,833
1944-45	496	2,847

(a) Excludes defence service vehicles.

With the curtailment of deliveries housewives struggled home with shopping and people made do with austerity clothes and patched garments. There was less variety in food although no one was on starvation rations. For wives and mothers there was only meagre relief from the strains of work, as they raised families alone and worried about absent menfolk. Many found time for voluntary work, preparing dressings, making camouflage nets, performing hospital duties or charitable activities. Regular parcels were sent by municipalities and individuals to recipients, friends, or relatives in Britain, and the war zones. Morale was supported by traditional social outlets, such as churches, community

singing, hotels, theatres, football, and horse races, and despite the grave situation people went about their daily tasks with good natured acceptance and humour. The vast movements of Australians, and contact both at home and overseas with a wide range of nationalities, prepared them for a diminution of parochial attitudes after the war. The proximity to war destroyed forever any belief in security through isolation.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS, AND RAIL AND TRAM PASSENGER JOURNEYS: VICTORIA, 1939 TO 1945

| Year | Road traffic accidents involving casualties (a) | | | Passenger journeys (b) (million) | |
	Accidents involving casualties	Persons killed	Persons injured	Victorian Railways	Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board
1939	7,098	480	8,074	151.3	182.1
1940	7,561	515	8,723	166.7	185.3
1941	6,548	412	7,610	189.8	193.4
1942	5,240	396	5,836	205.5	233.1
1943	4,166	347	4,749	204.1	265.9
1944	3,764	266	4,219	205.8	278.5
1945	3,827	260	4,368	205.9	284.1

(a) Year ended 31 December for 1939. Year ended 30 June for 1940 to 1945.
(b) Year ended 30 June.

THE YEARS SINCE

Repatriation

Gradually the troops, including prisoners of war, came home and the processes of repatriation and demobilisation enabled them to return to the labour force and the freedom of civilian life, although normal conditions were not fully restored until the early 1950s. Many required retraining under such arrangements as the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, as well as physical recovery, and soldier preference ensured for them the work opportunities and settlement blocks that their service had earned. Fortunately most soldier settlers received productive land, unlike many returned soldiers in the same situation following the First World War. The resumption of peace was reflected in rising rates for births, and a period of economic growth.

Post-war reconstruction

The long era of post-war development resulted in part from efforts made *during* the war to plan a better society *after* it. The Commonwealth Government's attention was drawn to this requirement even in the years when the successful outcome of the war was anything but certain. There were at least two underlying reasons for this. First, Australia was served by some very able men in government during the war. Two Prime Ministers — the Rt Hon. J. Curtin and the Rt Hon. J. B. Chifley — were able to appeal to a wide spectrum of the electorate — what is now often described as the middle ground of politics.

Their decisions were given effect to by a very talented group of senior Commmonwealth Public Servants, some permanent officers, others recruited from outside (especially the law, the banks, the universities, and State Governments), who not only understood the mood of the politicians, but also of the wider community. In the early years of the war (before December 1941) community support could not invariably be taken for granted. One very widespread conviction was the feeling that the cost of the war would need to be matched by the hope of a better society after it, especially as for most people in the early 1940s, the grim effects of the Depression were still subject to vivid recall.

For these reasons the Curtin Government established the Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction late in 1942; it consisted of the Rural Reconstruction Commission, the Housing Commission, and the Secondary Industries Commission. Although the most immediate concern of the Ministry was planning for the demobilisation of servicemen at the end of the war, their settlement of the land and in business, and their retraining for civilian occupations, it had more far reaching planning objectives: the achievement of full employment and the establishment of basic economic security for all (because of memories of the Depression), and planning for a greatly improved physical and social environment

both in the cities and in rural areas (due to recent recollections of the slums and rural poverty). In 1945, the Chifley Government published its White Paper on Full Employment.

Each of the three Commissions, in its own way and from its own viewpoint, endorsed the need for improved environmental and sociological planning so as to improve the lifestyle and community facilities of country people, the metropolitan landscape, the involvement of people in developing their own communities, and the decentralised areas for continuing and expanding the manufacturing facilities established in wartime. One regional form of expression in Victoria was the formation of the Murray Valley Development League in 1944.

It was the Rt Hon. J. Curtin who initiated moves for the Commonwealth and the States to co-operate and encourage the grouping of municipal authorities into broader regions so that the non-metropolitan areas of Australia could be more vigorously developed. The real threat of invasion in 1942 was a key contributing factor in his thinking about the need to decentralise Australia's population and develop the country's scattered resources. He wrote to the State Premiers in October 1943 and a conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers was held a year later, presided over by an enthusiastic Prime Minister. In Victoria this was the beginning of regional development (under the aegis of the Premier's Department) and the compilation of the State's Regional Surveys which were published progressively after 1944, the year in which Victoria also established the Town and Country Planning Board.

The co-operation between the Commonwealth and the States on regional planning had two far reaching and unexpected results: the eventual establishment of the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Scheme in 1949, and the Commonwealth-States Housing Agreement of 1945 to provide low-cost housing schemes for low income families. Other results were the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme which enabled ex-servicemen to train technically and professionally, and the Soldier Settlement Commission.

After the war the impetus waned and was not to be taken up again until 1973, when there was a brief resurgence of interest in urban and regional planning.