During World War II the role of women in the services and on the home front expanded immensely. Women were no longer confined to nursing, medical and voluntary roles, and they were able to join a women’s arm of each of the services.

On the home front the number of women employed grew quickly as men left jobs to go to war, and many new occupations suddenly opened to women.

The nature of the war and the threat to Australia meant that there was greater unity on the home front.

There were, however, tensions associated with women’s roles, and for many people old attitudes and values were hard to change.

INVESTIGATIONS:
1. What new service roles were open to Australian women?
2. What impacts did the war have on Australian women’s home front roles and experiences?
3. Did the war change the role and status of Australian women?
### Teaching suggestions

| Essential learning achievements | At the end of this topic students will have developed:  
|                               | - knowledge of women’s main roles in World War II;  
|                               | - understanding of some of the attitudes and values commonly held at the time;  
|                               | - empathy with the experiences of servicewomen and women on the home front; and  
|                               | - an informed judgement about the degree to which Australian women’s roles and status changed during World War II. |

| Suggested classroom approaches | 1 Have students look at the **Forming Ideas** page. This will help them identify important changes in attitudes towards women.  
|                               | 2 **Investigation 1** explores the changing roles of women in the services in World War II. There were now many more options for women apart from nursing. Students could be divided into groups and each group given a particular aspect of women’s services to report on to the class. Students might also act out the conversation on page 44. Students are challenged by deciding whether the image of one service, the WAAA, portrays reality. Divide the class into groups. Have each group report on one or two pages to the class, which will thus build up an overall picture.  
|                               | 3 **Investigation 2** presents a variety of evidence of women’s roles and experiences. By having students comment briefly on each one they will be better able to develop a more personal and empathetic understanding of life at the time.  
|                               | 4 In **Investigation 3** students bring all the evidence in this unit, together with some new aspects, to develop an informed judgement. Students will find that some of the statements can be either agreed or disagreed with, depending on their interpretation and on the emphasis they give to different pieces of evidence, so there should be a lot of analytical discussion about the various statements.  
|                               | 5 If this is the only unit being studied, students may like to undertake the museum exercise in **Unit 7**. The DVD section on the Australian War Memorial’s representation of women’s experiences of war (see below) will help them with this.  
|                               | 6 It would be desirable for students to interview people from the time. Contact your local RSL for advice on how to contact appropriate people in the community. |

| DVD | **Chapter 3 of the DVD** provides a museum study approach to the way the Australian War Memorial represents Australian women’s involvement in World War II. It is suggested that this segment of the DVD be used as part of **Investigation 1**. |

| CD-ROM activities | - What were Australian women’s uniforms like over time?  
|                  | - Create a National Australian Women’s Memorial  
|                  | - Create an Australian Women in War poster and timeline  
|                  | - Create a recruiting or information poster  
|                  | - Investigating the story of Vivian Bullwinkel  
|                  | - What decisions will you make about women’s lives and roles during World War II? |

|                 | Libby Connors et al, *Australia’s Frontline*, UQP, Brisbane, 1992  
### Key Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>World War II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>1939 – 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background to the conflict</td>
<td>In September 1939 Germany invaded Poland. Britain had declared that it would defend Poland. When Britain declared war against Germany the Australian Government proclaimed that Australia was also at war. In December 1941, Japanese forces bombed the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and invaded Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia), Papua and New Guinea. Australia for the first time declared war on Japan, rather than being part of a British declaration of war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of the conflict</td>
<td>Australia was involved in several distinct phases and types of war. The European war involved all three Australian services. The RAAF flew against German and Italian targets in the Mediterranean, Middle East and Europe as part of the European war against Germany and its allies. The Navy operated in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans as part of this war. Australian troops fought in North Africa, Greece, Crete, and the Middle East. When the Japanese entered the war, elements of Australia’s naval and air forces remained involved in the European war, but for the most part they and the Army were urgently returned to Australia to oppose the Japanese in the Pacific and South-East Asia, and to prevent what many believed would be an invasion of Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Australian women were involved</td>
<td>Many women served in the nursing corps of the three Australian services. Far more women joined the auxiliary services that were established during the war to release men for combat roles. There was an auxiliary element to the three services. There were also many volunteer organisations and a Women’s Land Army to support agricultural production. Far more women now worked than ever before, and many now held previously male-only occupations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key statistics

691,000 men served in the Army (either the AIF or the AMF). 45,800 men served in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). 189,700 men served in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

Over 66,000 women enlisted in a branch of the women’s services during the war, just under 7% of the nearly one million Australians who served.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Medical component</th>
<th>Auxiliary component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) 3500</td>
<td>Australian Women’s Army Service (AWAS) 24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) which became the Australian Army Medical Women’s Service (AAMWS) 8000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>Royal Australian Naval Nursing Service (RANNS) 60</td>
<td>Women’s Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) 3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) 600</td>
<td>Women’s Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF) 27,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Land Army — 2382 permanent, 1039 auxiliary members.

Many Aboriginal women joined the services, and some were employed in domestic duties or as hospital orderlies at the 121/101 Australian General Hospital at Katherine.

Over 130 women died overseas and in Australia.

Map showing the main regions of the world where Australian servicemen and women served in this conflict

Forming ideas

Look at this poster from World War II.

1. What does the image on the poster portray?
2. What is its main message to women?
3. What is its main message to men?
4. What is the attitude shown towards the women portrayed in the poster?
5. Do you think this attitude was likely to be permanent, or to last only as long as the war lasted? Explain your ideas.

You are about to investigate the roles and experiences of Australian women in World War II. This will enable you to test the ideas that you have suggested.

**In Your Investigations** you should draw on these components of the *Australian Women in War* resource:

- UNIT 3 (pages 39–64)
- DVD:
  - CHAPTER 3 World War II
  - CHAPTER 5 A Local Community
- CD-ROM activities:
  - What were Australian women’s uniforms like over time?
  - Create a National Australian Women’s Memorial
  - Create an Australian Women in War poster and timeline
  - Create a recruiting or information poster
  - Investigating the story of Vivian Bullwinkel
  - What decisions will you make about women’s lives and roles during World War II?
INVESTIGATION 1

What new service roles were open to Australian women?

World War II saw changes to the roles that women played on the home and fighting fronts.

Look at Chapter 3 of the DVD. It will provide you with some information and ideas about how the displays in the Australian War Memorial show Australian women in World War II. They are a starting point for your investigations in this unit.

Look at this imaginary conversation between four World War II women nursing veterans. Use this conversation to summarise what happened in these aspects of nursing in World War II:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Good to see you, girls. Well, we’ve come a long way since World War I with our nursing services, haven’t we?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nola</td>
<td>Well you’re still in the largest nursing service, the Army, though not all nurses are with you now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>No, you’re with the smallest, aren’t you? The Navy doesn’t really need huge numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nola</td>
<td>Yes, about 60 of us. Not like you with three and a half thousand!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>Or me with 600.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>But I was part of the most numerous group, and we weren’t nurses, but medical aides. We used to be called VADs and were volunteers, but became professional in 1940. We had a new name, too – a bit of a mouthful, Australian Army Medical Women’s Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>Yes AAMWS. We’ve all got those – AANS, RAAFNS, RANNS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>You served overseas, didn’t you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Yes, like all three of you. Between us I think we served everywhere. England, Palestine, Egypt, Singapore …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>Libya, Greece, Syria, Ceylon, Malaya …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nola</td>
<td>Papua and New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Australia …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>and Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force at the end of the war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>I think we were basically the only women to serve outside Australian territory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>Yes. And suffered the dangers because of it. Nurses experienced combat conditions, evacuation under fire, air and torpedo attacks on their ships, sinking, and massacres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>And those terrible experiences of the prisoners of war. Awful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nola</td>
<td>Seventy-one nurses died during their service. Seventy-five received decorations for bravery or meritorious service, and 133 were mentioned in despatches for the way they conducted their duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>It makes you proud to be part of it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Yes, I joined out of patriotism, and I really feel I’ve served my country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nola</td>
<td>Well we all did, but I was also influenced by a sense of duty, that it was the right thing to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>And by a spirit of adventure, I’d say.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>And, if we’re honest, as a result of social pressure. Lots of my friends were going off, and I thought I should, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Well, between us we are upholding a great service nursing tradition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>We’ll meet again next Anzac Day. The boys want us here, and we belong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nola</td>
<td>Too right. Until next year. See you!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of the nursing services</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where they served</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers involved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Names of the nursing services

Main roles

Where they served

Numbers involved
Auxiliary services

During the war a number of women’s auxiliary services were formed. This term meant that they were not part of the existing Army, Navy or Air Force units, but were additional or supplementary to them.

**Women’s Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF)**

This body was formed in February 1941 to replace male wireless telegraphy operators for release for service overseas.

Later, while not all Air Force jobs (or ‘musterings’) were open to women – for example women could not actually fly aeroplanes in combat – most were. Many WAAAF members were engaged in skilled technical work – communications, signals, mechanics – though most worked in traditional female roles: cooks and mess stewardesses. Yet while women were called on to do the men’s jobs, they were only paid about two thirds of the men’s wages for equivalent positions.

The WAAAF reached its peak of membership in October 1944, at over 18,000, serving in about 200 stations throughout Australia. About one tenth of the total RAAF ground staff were women.

Uniquely among the auxiliary services, WAAAFs paraded with the RAAF men.

The WAAAF was disbanded in December 1947. Although admitting that women were better than men in some duties, it was argued that they:

- caused problems with administration, training and accommodation;
- were ‘uneconomical’ because too many left to get married;
- were limited in their employment overseas by ‘climatic factors’ and unsatisfactory amenities; and
- could not complete the full range of military tasks, such as guard and defence base duties.

It was also thought that men might resent being commanded by women.

3 How was this a new situation for women?

4 What problems might the WAAAFs have with male colleagues?

5 Which, if any, of these reasons do you accept as reasonable?

Look at this comment about the WAAAF by its first commanding officer, Clare Stephenson.

‘Looking back over their years of service, WAAAF were almost unanimous in their comments. Many regarded them as the happiest of their lives; all felt they gave them independence – by no means the norm for young women in those days – and lifelong friendships they would never have made otherwise. For the young recruits, many from outback areas or sheltered suburban homes, joining the service was a totally new experience, opening doors they had never contemplated. After the strangeness of their new lives was overcome, they thrived on it; learning new skills and developing tolerance and understanding as they worked and lived with people of backgrounds different from their own.

Most felt they had helped to win the war, which gave them a warm and patriotic glow of satisfaction. Some felt they had gained educationally. A few found the discipline overwhelming at first, but none seem to have resented it, and many spoke of the respect their officers earned from them. They enjoyed working with men as members of a team, and many women met their future husbands in this way. Living side by side with other women developed a spirit of ‘give and take’ which carried over into civilian life.

Only one wrote that the day she was discharged to take up a job as cook in a civilian hospital was the happiest day of her service life! The rest are still proud to have been in the WAAAF.’

Clare Stevenson, in Clare Stevenson and Honor Darling (eds), The WAAAF Book, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1984 p28
6 What do you think were the main benefits to women from their service experience?

7 Do you accept the comments made by Clare Stevenson on page 45 as a good piece of evidence? Discuss the quotation’s strengths and weaknesses.

**Australian Women’s Army Service (AWAS)**

The AWAS was formed on 13 August 1941 when War Cabinet granted approval in principal. The AWAS became operational in October 1941. It was formed ‘to release men from certain military duties for employment in fighting units.’ Members had to be between 18 and 45 years, and single. Widows with dependant children were also allowed to enlist.

Many WRANS were engaged as technical specialists (often involved in top secret work), but most occupied traditional jobs – as typists, clerks, stewards, cooks, and orderlies.

8 How was this a new situation for women?

9 If most jobs were traditional women’s work, how was this a new situation for women?

There were never more than 3000 enlisted at any one time during the course of the war.

The WRANS was disbanded in 1948, reconstituted in 1951, and then disbanded in 1984.

**Australian Women’s Land Army (AWLA)**

This body was established on 27 July 1942 to replace male farm workers who had either enlisted in the armed services or who were working in other essential war work. Members enrolled full-time (for 12 months or the duration) or as auxiliaries (available for short periods at various peak times of the year). The peak number of enrolments was in December 1943 — with 2382 permanent members and 1039 auxiliary members.

Many women found themselves carrying out work which they had never contemplated before, and which proved very useful to the war effort.

The AWLA was a civilian body and was not part of the services. In 1994 the AWLA was one of the first groups to receive eligibility for the newly-created Civilian Service Medal 1939–1945.

It should be noted, however, that many women traditionally worked on their family farms, and there were probably far more women working in this way who have received no recognition for their efforts.

10 What opportunities and benefits did women gain from this experience?
Now look at these sources about aspects of service life, and answer the questions that follow.

**Source 1**

**RAAF Nursing Service in New Guinea**

‘Sister, can I have a drink, please?’ … ‘Sister, my head hurts.’ … ‘Sister, can you spare a minute?’ … ‘Sister, stay and talk to me.’ ‘Sister …’

It might be any hospital ward or tent … or a transport plane, carrying sick and wounded back from a forward strip to the comfort of a base hospital — a strange little world of sickness and pain, flying through space, eight, nine, ten thousand feet above the earth and the sea, where there is just room for Sister to move up and down between the tiers of stretchers.

In the plane Sister doesn’t wear the traditional starched dress and immaculate white flowing veil. She wears instead khaki slacks and a shirt, a fur-lined flying jacket and a forage cap. She’s atebrin-yellow*, too, but to the boys on the stretchers she’s more beautiful than the most glamorous pin-up girl. She’s cheerful, matter-of-fact, just as efficient as though she were in a modern hospital ward. Her presence brings a sense of safe, normal, everyday things and faraway homes …

In September 1944, only a few weeks after the [RAAF] Air Evacuation Service had begun duty, a transport plane evacuating a load of American casualties had to make a forced landing on the sea fourteen miles off the New Guinea coast. American ‘ducks’ [small landing craft] working a few miles away saw the accident and came quickly to the rescue. With the crew, last to leave the sinking aircraft, was a small [RAAF] ‘flying nurse’ — Senior Sister Nancy McBean, of Melbourne. She would not budge until all her patients were safely transferred to the ‘ducks’.

Sea water was lapping the aircraft as the last patient was taken off, but Sister McBean was too busy concentrating on the well-being of the patients to notice it. Some people called it ‘high courage and devotion to duty’. She thought it was just getting on with the job, ‘nothing to make a fuss about’ …

To the boys on the stretchers, they will always be remembered as the Florence Nightingales of New Guinea.

[*Atebrin was a drug used to avoid malaria. It turned the skin yellow.]

RAAF Saga, produced by the Australian War Memorial in 1944 from writings of servicemen to be read by servicemen

11 Who is the target audience for Source 1?
12 What is the story’s main message?
13 Do you think it is a good article? Discuss what you see as its strengths and weaknesses.

**Source 2**

**Australian Women’s Auxiliary Service (AWAS) (1)**

At first, it was a total battle to get men to accept us as workers. They were very hostile … Articles in the press didn’t help. ‘Servicewomen keep their femininity’, and ‘Girls don’t lose their femininity in barracks’. This type of article abounded. The soldiers saw us as playing at war. Women had gone into the services with such a load of enthusiasm; they’d go from dawn to next daylight. Soon officers said, ‘The morale and behaviour of men have lifted since women joined the Service.’ … Every girl who enlisted expected to release a man for active service. The returned men appreciated this when they got used to seeing us around.

Dorothea Skov, quoted in Patsy Adam-Smith, Australian Women At War, Penguin, Melbourne, 1984 pp159-166

[Image of a poster: "Thanks! Now I can join my fighting unit..."
Release a man. Join the AWAS, McCowan, Ian, 1941-1945, lithograph, 61 x 48.3 cm. AWM ARTV01049]
Taking all this evidence of the women’s services into account, would you say that women’s work was accepted as equal by men? Justify your answer.

Were women seen as permanent or temporary in these roles?

What was society’s attitude to women and their new roles?

Being an historian

These ideas can be explored further by looking at some more evidence about the largest of the women’s auxiliary services, the WAAAF. Look at the sources on pages 49–55. Your task is to prepare a report on this service in which you balance its aims and achievements against any criticism that might be justified.

Your task is to prepare a report on this service in which you balance its aims and achievements against any criticisms that might be justified.

You know that many WAAAF veterans speak highly of the service. But you also know that there are often some aspects of any service that were not perfect.

Each of the following evidence pages raise some questions to help you focus on some key aspects you may want to include in your report.

You might prepare your report as a storyboard, or as a PowerPoint presentation.

Using sources 2 and 3, explain why it would have been difficult for men to accept women as members of the AWAS.

What benefits did the women gain from service life?

Source 3

Australian Women’s Auxiliary Service (AWAS) (2)

Many of these girls had never been away from home before, and being sent hundreds of miles away meant they had to readjust to this new phase in their lives amid an excitement, fear and responsibility they could never have anticipated. Their tasks were not easy. They lived and worked under the same conditions as the men whom they had released for overseas service. Many jobs were menial and monotonous. Postings in some of the isolated areas took them to all sorts of unpleasant conditions—life on lonely islands with mosquitoes and sandflies as companions, and to sandhills and the edges of swamps.

Lorna Byrne in Patsy Adam-Smith, Australian Women At War, Penguin, Melbourne, 1984 p198

Source 4

Women’s Royal Australian Nursing Service (WRANS)

You learn a lot from living in with a group of girls; we were all much enriched by the experience. Better people for it. You were not just yourself, you behaved, became part of something much bigger than yourself.

Sheila McClemans in Patsy Adam-Smith Australian Women At War, Penguin, Melbourne, 1991 p159
Advertising images

Look at this evidence and consider:

- What is being promised?
- How is it being ‘sold’ – in words, images and ideas?
- What expectations is it creating?
Advertising images

Look at this evidence and consider:

- What is being promised?
- How is it being ‘sold’ – in words, images and ideas?
- What expectations is it creating?
Popular cartoons

Look at this evidence and consider:

- Who are the subjects of the cartoons?
- What is the joke being portrayed in each cartoon?
- What is the attitude of the cartoonists towards the servicewomen in each case?
Musterings and rates of payment

Look at this evidence and consider:

- Which are the best paid jobs?
- How many people hold these positions?
- What jobs do most women have?
- How does their pay compare to that of the men’s for equivalent work?
- How does this reality compare to the promises or impressions of the wartime recruiting posters and advertisements?

Source 4

Musterings and rates of payment (1944) in the Women’s Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF) and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Musterings (employment)</th>
<th>Total number of WAAAFs in each group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draughtswoman, laboratory technician, link trainer instructress, meteorological assistant, X-ray technician.</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armourer, cinema operator, dental mechanic, electrician, fabric worker, flight mechanic, flight rigger, hygiene inspector, instrument repairer, painter, photographer, radar operator, telegraphist, wireless assistant.</td>
<td>2643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group III</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting machine operator, caterer, clerk general, clerk medical, clerk pay, clerk stores, cipher assistant, dental orderly, driver motor transport, equipment assistant, fabric worker’s assistant, hairdresser, meteorological charter, nursing orderly, postal assistant, recorder, tailoress.</td>
<td>6226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteen stewardess, clerk, clerk librarian, clerk medical assistant, clerk signals, clerk stores assistant, radio telephony operator, service policewoman, sick quarter attendant, telephone operator, tracer under officer disciplinary.</td>
<td>4273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircrafthand, anti-gas instructress, armament assistant, cook’s assistant, drill instructress, gardener, office orderly, postal orderly, stewardess, storeshand, trainee.</td>
<td>4115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Officers — Daily pay (shillings/pence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WAAAF</th>
<th>Daily pay</th>
<th>RAAF</th>
<th>Daily pay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Section Officer</td>
<td>12/-</td>
<td>Pilot Officer</td>
<td>18/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Officer</td>
<td>13/6</td>
<td>Flying Officer</td>
<td>20/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight Officer</td>
<td>17/-</td>
<td>Flight Lieutenant</td>
<td>25/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squadron Officer</td>
<td>19/6</td>
<td>Squadron Leader</td>
<td>32/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wing Officer</td>
<td>22/-</td>
<td>Wing Commander</td>
<td>38/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Officer</td>
<td>24/6</td>
<td>Group Captain</td>
<td>47/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Ranks — Daily pay (shillings/pence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>WAAAF</th>
<th>RAAF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under Officer</td>
<td>Flight Sgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group I</td>
<td>9/-</td>
<td>8/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group II</td>
<td>9/-</td>
<td>8/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group III</td>
<td>8/8</td>
<td>8/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group IV</td>
<td>8/-</td>
<td>7/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group V</td>
<td>7/4</td>
<td>7/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Photographic evidence

Look at this evidence and consider:

- What jobs are being portrayed?
- Were these jobs traditionally done by women before World War II, or were they ones traditionally done by men?

Source 5
Photographic evidence

Look at this evidence and consider:

- What jobs are being portrayed?
- Were these jobs traditionally done by women before World War II, or were they ones traditionally done by men?
Why women joined, and did not join

Look at this evidence and consider:

- Why did some women join the WAAAF?
- Why did some women decide against joining the WAAAF?
- How do these sources both support and challenge the image created by wartime recruiting posters and advertisements?
- Did the image created by the wartime posters and advertisements match the reality?

**Source 7**

Some reasons why women joined the WAAAF:

- Being patriotic and wanting to serve my country.
- I was young and healthy with an unbending sense of ‘my country needs me’.
- I’m not sure but perhaps it was my dad’s 1st AIF background, seeing friends and families affected in various ways, the lure of enlisting campaigns or the air of mystery and appeal as women began appearing in uniform in our town.
- First and foremost I wished to serve my country.
- Seeing my four brothers in uniform made me very determined to want to do my bit too.
- I joined up because I loved marching, music, excitement, pageantry and the colour blue! I also joined because I loved and still love England.
- I joined the WAAAF because I was born Patricia instead of Peter.
- I knew that somehow I must be part of the challenge to the German fallacy that ‘might is right’.
- Many, like myself, found ‘joining up’ an escape from an intolerable dead-end employment situation, as well as a patriotic response.
- Apart from patriotic reasons, I was better off financially.
- Walking along St George’s Terrace, Perth, with a crowd of girls one evening in 1942, I pointed to an Air Force House and said, ‘I think I’ll join’. One of the girls said, ‘Well, go and do it’, and pushed me in the door.
- I joined up from a war-embattled home to help protect 40 Marine Parade, Maroubra.

**Why women were not joining the WAAAF — A 1942 report**

Reasons:

- Bad name — 25%
- Low rate of pay/Civil work important — 15%
- Personal fears and objections — 12%
- Unsatisfactory recruiting methods — 9%
- Time lag in muster — 9%
- Accommodation problems — 9%
- Objections to discipline — 8%
- Fear of unemployment after war/Compensation problems — 7%
- Snobbishness — 6%

An explanation of some of these reasons:

Low rate of pay

The low rate of pay is a very strong and indeed, unanswerable, argument for many girls, especially for those who contribute to the upkeep of their parents’ home.

Fear of unemployment after the war

There is fear that if they give up their present position to enter the Auxiliary Air Force, they run a big risk, not only of losing status in their work, but even of being unable to obtain work at all after the war. This is of special importance to young women who occupy responsible positions in the commercial world.

Unsatisfactory propaganda and recruiting methods

The basis of the appeal which urges women to release Air Force men for the front by taking their base jobs as clerks, cooks and so on is not effective. Possibly many women do not want to be merely substitutes for men; if they can do certain duties as efficiently as men, they want to be regarded as fellow members of the Air Force — not as substitutes.

Social and personal objections

A number are deterred by a fear, or impression of snobbishness. Many girls are genuinely attached to their homes, and the desire that they should not leave them for comparative hardships, possible unpleasantness and risks of membership of a ‘fighting’ service, is mutual between them and their parents.

It’s not ‘our’ war

Indifference and selfishness must be included in the personal reasons which in some cases prevent enrolment.

Moral aspersions

There is no doubt that stories about the moral conduct of WAAAFs have put many girls off joining up, and have caused parents to dissuade their daughters, and Air Force men, to dissuade their girl friends and sisters from seeking to enrol.

Clare Stevenson and Honor Darling (eds), The WAAAF Book, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1984 pp80-87

Professor AP Elkin, University of Sydney Archives Document, AWM PR84/291
Look at this collection of evidence about women’s roles and experiences on the home front during the war.

1 For each one:
   - write a short summary of what it tells you was happening to women’s roles and experiences during the war; and
   - decide whether you think this was likely to be a permanent (P) or temporary (T) thing.

Write your responses in the space provided after each source.

Source 1
Food
If I went to my friend’s place for lunch or dinner at night, I would take my butter and sugar. And I remember one time when I was only about six or seven, my girlfriend and I decided we would surprise my mother by making a cake and we used all the butter and sugar ration. And she came home and she was anything but pleased of course.

Helen McAnulty in Joanna Penglase and David Horner, When The War Came To Australia, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p197

Source 2
Shortages
Until 1942 [Townsville] was a quiet seaside town, where everyone knew everyone else. Then the war, and many thousands of Americans arrived in our small town. Almost overnight just about every essential item for everyday living became scarce, especially food. To keep the forces in meat and vegetables left very little for the housewife to choose from.

My mother queued to buy meat, and if she was lucky [she would] get a leg of lamb or hogget. Then to the queue at the ice works for a block of ice. My mother was one of the unsung heroines of the time — how she could put a meal together with the few ingredients available I don’t know.

Marjorie King in Betty Goldsmith and Beryl Sandford, The Girls They Left Behind, Penguin, Melbourne, 1990, pp77-8

Source 3
Life at school
Every day we would get the Argus newspaper, which printed lists of those missing or killed. Every morning at school assembly the headmaster would tell us the war news; sometimes he would say that ‘so and so’ would not be at school that day because their Dad was missing or killed. I feel that we were not shielded from anything about the war, except the Americans when they came — and that was a lock-up-your-daughters situation — but I think that most of the girls at school my age accepted the war situation; life just seemed to go on. We knitted gloves, balaclavas, and socks, often writing short notes to put in the bottom of them. Once we started at high school we got coupons for uniforms, trying hard to stretch ourselves to five feet when they measured us, because then you got extra ration tickets.

Bev Larsen in Joanna Penglase and David Horner, When The War Came To Australia, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992, pp11-12

Source 4
Enemy aliens
[The police would go] there; they’d rip the mattresses off the beds and empty all the wardrobes, what they were looking for no one knows, yet they never took the person — yet they emptied the houses out. And never tidied up – just left things as they were, just scattered everywhere – oh, you know, we went to friends that happened to – they just sat there crying – “Just why? What had we done?” But we’d say, “Don’t worry, at least you’re home – you’re not taken away.”

Rita Costa in Libby Conners et. al., Australia’s Frontline, UQP, Brisbane, 1992, p96
Source 5

Letter from an American serviceman
Dearest Mother;
I hope you don’t mind my calling you mother; but after all you were a mother to me and the rest of the boys while I was fortunate enough to be in Melbourne. Yours was truly a house of hospitality to a couple of beat up marines.

E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, Yanks Down Under 1941-1945, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985, p207

Source 6

Separation
I was seventeen, and madly in love with my twenty-year-old boyfriend when the war broke out. After two years of courtship, we were to marry on 19 December 1941, but my fiancee’s call-up came, to take effect on 15 December. Hurried plans were made, and we were married on the twelfth, leaving us two brief days for our honeymoon …

I cannot adequately describe how heartsick and bereft I felt when … he had gone. I think I wept buckets of tears.

Mrs M, in Betty Goldsmith and Beryl Sandford, The Girls They Left Behind, Penguin, Melbourne, 1990, p71

Source 7

Black Americans
The American troops, the Catalina pilots and others, were stationed out the back of the university and we used to have dances every Friday night, and I remember these black guys used to come and look in the window and sort of tap their feet to the ‘Dark Town Strutters Ball’ or whatever we happened to be jitterbugging to, and look so much as if they wanted to be part of it all that I remember one night a couple of us went out and said, ‘Why don’t you come in?’. And they said, ‘Oh no, ma’am, we couldn’t do that, we couldn’t come in to join in with you people’. And I’m sure lots of black servicemen must have been incredibly lonely in that society … Some girls went out with black servicemen but they were shunned and talked about … .

Dorothy Hewett in Joanna Penglase and David Horner, When The War Came To Australia, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p236

Source 8

‘Come in Spinner’
In this extract from the novel Come in Spinner about a group of Sydney women during the war, an Australian soldier on leave is talking to his girlfriend about the Americans.

‘Say look at that corner.’ He had caught sight of the jitterbugs flinging themselves through their fantastic contortions. ‘Whacko-the-diddle-oh! The Yanks certainly have peped up this town. The place was dull as ditch water till they came.’

‘Well, I don’t see any improvement. Do you know what I really think of Uncle Sam and his glamour boys?’
‘I haven’t the faintest idea, and I couldn’t care less.’
‘No?’ He offered her a cigarette. ‘One thing, we don’t go flinging our rolls around like they do to catch the girls.’
‘You’re telling me. The Yanks know how to spend. They’re gentlemen. Not like you guys’ …

‘All I can say is, it makes me and my coppers pretty sick to come back and see what the girls have been up to with the Yanks. Haven’t they got any decency at all?’

‘Aw, go bag your head. It makes me want to puke when I hear you fellows going on with all this purity bunk, after putting the hard word on all the girls from Sydney to London… ’

‘Aw, come off it, Peg.’

‘You just lay off the Yanks then. Any brawls that have been started round Sydney in the last couple of years have been started by you chaps coming back from overseas too big for your boots. The Yanks don’t go looking for trouble.’

‘You want to see some of the blues up round Brisbane and Townsville.’

‘Well, I’d give ten to one on who started them. If you Aussies were as well behaved as the Yanks, we wouldn’t have anything to complain about.’

D. Cusak and F. James, Come in Spinner, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1961, pp264-5
Now look at the images of the Australian home front in Sources 13(a)–13(c) on pages 59–61. Give each a brief caption, then re-arrange some or all of them to create a sequence that tells viewers the story of Australian women’s home front roles and contributions to the war effort. If you need to check what a photograph is showing you can see the official caption at www.awm.gov.au, select Collections, then Collections search, and type in the AWM negative number.

**Source 9**

**My mother the hero**

My father went to war, and the day after he sailed for the Middle East my mother gave birth to twin girls. These were her eighth and ninth children. Dad didn’t see his twin daughters for six years.

Mum kept us well fed, but nice clothes were scarce. We were a poor family by others’ standards; Coolgardie safes and candles were the order of the day. We were rich by our standards, though. Mum taught us good manners, and we were, and still are, a very close family.

My oldest brother was only ten when Dad left, and a lot fell on his shoulders. When my father returned my brother found it hard to take orders at sixteen from a father he hardly knew, so he saved up and went to New Zealand where he still lives.

We all love our mother very much. My father was highly decorated, but I think my mother should have been too.


**Source 10**

**Munitions work (1)**

The girls were obviously attracted by the higher wages offering in munitions work and the vast majority were prepared to do overtime for the extra pay. They were expected to work six days a week and, eventually, to go on to two shifts. When asked why they were taking up the work, some said that they wanted to do something to help the war effort: but, if questioned directly, the majority admitted that the relatively high wages had also affected their decision. It is unlikely, however, that girls would deliberately give up so much of their leisure and work such inconvenient hours, if they had not felt in return that they were doing a worthwhile job. Munitions work is made more attractive by its aura of respectability and patriotism. Many girls who had not liked to enter factories before, felt no compunction in becoming cogs in Australia’s war machine.

Helen Crisp, ‘Women in Munitions’, *Australian Quarterly*, September 1941

**Source 11**

**A telegram home from an American soldier**

Somewhere in Australia.

HAVE MOVED, MET NICE GIRL, BECAME ENGAGED, MARRIED.


**Source 12**

**Munitions work (2)**

But of course you realised that they were depending on you. We were working eleven hours a day, seven days a week, and then they started shift work and when you were on night shift you couldn’t sleep during the day — but you needed your sleep so badly. So as well as boring and depression, it was extremely exhausting … The facilities were terrible. There was nothing. The work was dirty and there weren’t any conveniences at all, you had to walk about 200 yards to the outside toilet and they used to allot one bucket per ten people to wash our hands, there were never any wash basins where I worked. It was a huge place, just made of tin, and we’d be freezing, we’d be there with overcoats and scarves, sitting there for all those hours … For about three or four years, I regularly had bronchitis, which I’ve never had since, and everyone had flu and heavy colds. It was terrible. And you had bright lights about a foot above your head and I suffered very badly in those days with migraine and I used to nearly pass out, in fact I did once — I fainted. And I suppose that was partly the reason, sitting there all those hours.

Edna Macdonald in Joanna Penglas and David Horner, *When The War Came To Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992, pp 143-4
Source 13 (a)

Photographs of women’s activities on the home front

A

AWM 044519

B

Grow your own vegetables for victory, artist unknown, 1943, photolithograph in blue and black ink on paper, 76 x 50.8 cm. AWM ARTV02452

C

Enrol now in the National Salvage Corps, artist unknown, poster, 1943, photolithograph, 49.2 x 37.1 cm. AWM ARTV02743

D

Australian war brides. AWM P00561.036

E

AWM 044522

F

AWM 045106

G

AWM REL34259
**Source 13 (b)**

A. Join, artist unknown, poster, 1939-1945, photolithograph, 36.8 x 24.6 cm. AWM ARTV00790

B. Our job to clothe the men who work and fight, poster, 1943, colour photolithograph with block printing on paper, 73.8 x 47.9 cm. AWM ARTV01064

C. Coal is vital, artist unknown, poster, 1944, lithograph, 36.1 x 24.6 cm. AWM ARTV06690

D. Our job to clothe the men who work and fight, poster, 1943, colour photolithograph with block printing on paper, 73.8 x 47.9 cm. AWM ARTV01064

E. Join, artist unknown, poster, 1939-1945, photolithograph, 36.8 x 24.6 cm. AWM ARTV00790
Source 13 (c)

A

AWM 000118

B

ACF gives and can keep on giving!, artist unknown, poster, 1939-1945, lithograph, 101.5 x 76.4 cm. AWM ARTV06426

C

AWM P00784.209

D

AWM 044516

E

AWM 012268

F

AWM REL/18564

"HOME"
Here are some comments and statements about the impact of war on people on the home front, and especially women. Decide if you agree with them or not, and quote one key document that you have seen in this unit to support your answer in each case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Supporting source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rationing and shortages only affected poorer people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People had to make do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People had to change their behaviour in wartime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wartime was a time of fear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wartime was a time of happiness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wartime was a time of anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was no discrimination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people of enemy origins were interned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American soldiers only mixed with pretty girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was tension in society over the Americans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Americans were accepted by Australians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions of the heart changed some women’s lives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriages were strengthened by absences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The war brought people closer together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The war gave women new employment opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The war gave women more confidence and responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families were disrupted by the father’s/husband’s absence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm women worked harder to replace the work previously done by men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women took up jobs out of patriotism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women took up jobs for the money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men accepted and respected women as equals in work situations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people exploited others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People shared and helped each other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a housewife was a patriotic duty that helped the war effort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decide if you agree with them or not, and quote one key document that you have seen in this unit to support your answer in each case.
Did the war change the role and status of Australian women?

Many school history textbooks claim that women's roles and status in Australian society changed dramatically because of World War II. Using the evidence from the previous sections of this unit, together with the sources that follow, decide whether you agree with this statement and what evidence you can use to support your conclusion.

Change can have all sorts of aspects to it. For example a change can be good (winning the lottery) or bad (being injured). It can be permanent (leaving school) or temporary (having a holiday).

It can be voluntary (changing your hair style) or forced (being conscripted). It can be beneficial (reducing the road toll) or harmful (an epidemic). And so on.

After you have read all the sources create a table with two columns. In one column list areas of changes in women's roles and experiences during the war. In the opposite column summarise the nature of the changes that occurred in this area. One example has been done to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of change in women's roles and experiences</th>
<th>The nature of the change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY SITUATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Permanent — where the husband/father had died</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Temporary — where he returned home from the war</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Better — where the relationship continued despite the separation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Worse — where the man’s personality or behaviour had changed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source 1**

**Women's pay**

Women got [paid] much less [than men who performed the same work]. As far as general office administration, women had been trained in business colleges and were able to do the job much better really, but we got less money than the men did … And most of the girls didn’t want [equal pay] because if the man got as much as they did when they went out they would have to pay for themselves. And it was so nice to have someone bring you a box of chocolates or flowers – so much more romantic. So they didn’t want it on equal terms.

Nancy Freedman in Michael McKernan, All In!, Nelson, Melbourne 1983, p64

**Source 2**

**The liberation of women**

The war had a tremendous effect on the liberation of women. To be important, that was the thing: to be absolutely necessary for the running of the country, that women should work, and this is not a light thing and it couldn’t possibly be forgotten once the war was over.

Dorothy Hewett in Joanna Penglase and David Horner, When The War Came To Australia, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p242

**Source 3**

**Changing jobs**

When the war was over, I went back to being a clerk in the Bourke Street store of Coles. I didn’t mind because it was made perfectly clear to us when we were made managers that it was for the duration of the war only.

Beattie Crawford, Melbourne in Joanna Penglase and David Horner, When The War Came To Australia, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p242

**Source 4**

**Reuniting**

When at last peace was declared and my soldier returned home, my happiness was complete. Although he was plagued with bouts of malaria for some years, I was one of the lucky ones whose husband returned from the war whole and without wounds. As a result of those years of enforced separation we do not spend any time apart now unless it is absolutely necessary.

Mrs M, in Betty Goldsmith and Beryl Sandford, The Girls They Left Behind, Penguin, Melbourne, 1990, p71
**Source 5**

**He did change, my husband**

He did change, my husband. When he came back, you couldn’t scratch, you couldn’t do nothing as would make a noise, he used to be that irritable. We had an open fireplace and Rex, my son, was sitting there one night eating his tea and the old man came in, in a frightful mood, and Rex said something and he went over and give him a boot, kicked him in the fire, all his tea and all went, he got his hands burned … But he was that irritable you couldn’t bear him home, he’d have to go back into a hospital or a home, whatever’d take him.

*Quoted in Nancy Freedman in Kate Darian-Smith, On the Home Front, OUP, Oxford, 1990, p.142*

**Source 7**

**Demobilised**

(During the war) you felt you were important, that you were doing something worthwhile and also you had the standing of the Army behind you. When I was demobbed and got into civilian dress I felt that I was bereft, I was out on my own. I had no support. (Before) you knew that if anything happened you’d just go to someone in the services and they’d help you sort it out.

*Quoted in Nancy Freedman in Kate Darian-Smith, On the Home Front, OUP, Oxford, 1990, p.142*

**Source 8**

**Strangers return**

I think one of the things that happened during the war was that women became the head of the family. They’d taken over all the responsibility of handling the money, handling the disciplinary problems, handling what would happen to the children, making day-to-day decisions. That was an enormous change. And when the husbands came back the children in many cases had never seen their fathers, they’d never lived in the same house with them, they didn’t know who they were. They were strangers, and I think many of those children never related to those fathers again — nor the father to the children.

*Dorothy Hewett in Joanna Penglase and David Horner, When The War Came To Australia, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p.236*

**Source 9**

**Nominal and Real Wages, Male and Female**

(average weekly wage, shillings(s)/pence(d))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Index of wages Male = 100</th>
<th>Female rate</th>
<th>Female wage as % of male rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>60.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin, War Economy 1942-1945, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1977, p.561*

**Source 10**

**Female employment in Australia (thousands)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Employers &amp; Self-Employed</th>
<th>Wage &amp; salary earners</th>
<th>Total Civilians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural Industry</td>
<td>Other Industries</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>71.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>77.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Commonwealth of Australia Yearbook 1946-1947, p.488*