

Topic 6: Life on the home front

Work Sheet 6G: Air Raid Precautions for the 21st Century

When World War II started, the fighting was confined to Europe and we in Australia did not feel the full impact of the conflict. But with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the fall of Singapore and Japanese air raids on Darwin in 1942, the war came much closer to home. This meant that we had an enemy right on our doorstep and this gave the war an entirely new aspect for Australians on the home front. The Government responded to this threat by establishing the National Emergency Services to train people to deal with attacks such as air raids. Thousands of Australian men who were too old to fight in the war became air raid wardens helping in the defence of Australia. The sources on this work sheet will help you to understand how the home front responded to the air raid threat. Use the information gained from your study of these sources and the web pages listed below to carry out the following activity:

- read the series of instructions on air raid precautions at www.ww2australia.gov.au/allin
- listen to Jack Davey's song 'Our Air Raid Shelter' on the same page (text of song is provided on this work sheet as *Source 1*).
www.ww2australia.gov.au/allin
www.ww2australia.gov.au/underattack

Activity

Your task is to design a set of air raid emergency measures and instructions appropriate for 21st century Australia.

In small groups, create a checklist of important information to be considered in designing your air raid precautions. Some questions to consider include:

- Who is the target audience for the air raid precautions, eg national, state, local, school community?
- How will this affect the planning of emergency measures and advice given?

- What are the dangers to be faced? In the day or night?
- What preparations need to be made to avoid them? Evacuation plans, protection, blackout, first aid and other essential supplies?
- Who will be responsible for carrying out these measures?
- What emergency services will need to be carried out in the event of an attack?
- Who will coordinate and carry them out?
- Which people in the community have special skills/knowledge/experience that could be useful?
- How will information be communicated: between emergency services and to the target audience about precautions to be taken before and during an attack?

You will also need to consider what measures would need to be taken in the event of destruction of major communications, eg TV, radio or other public facilities.

Choose from the following formats to present your findings:

- Information leaflet or poster
- Instruction booklet or full page public notice in a newspaper
- *MS PowerPoint* presentation
- Short video segment
- Recorded radio announcement

You might like to design a list of suitable criteria for evaluating each other's presentations. Aspects for evaluation could include:

- clarity of instructions
- choice of images (if relevant)
- originality
- audience response

Source 1

'Our Air Raid Shelter'

We've got a house down by the sea,
We've been busy with the ARP,*
We've built a place where we can hide,
Now it bulges when we get inside.

There's no more room now in our air raid shelter,
There's Aunt 'n Gran 'n Dad 'n Mum 'n me.
And when the sirens sound we all run helter-skelter,
Just Aunt 'n Gran 'n Dad 'n Mum 'n me.

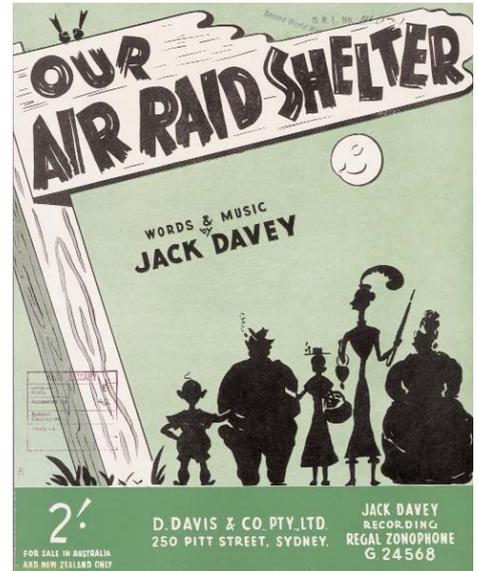
Of course it isn't very big, and it isn't very long,
And it isn't very deep, and it isn't very strong.
So if a bomb drops take a quick look up at heaven,
For Aunt and Gran and Dad and Mum and me.

It's made of bags filled up with sand,
And all the neighbours lent a helping hand,
When it was built, we raised a shout,
We rushed in and now we can't get out.

There's no more room now in our air raid shelter,
There's Aunt 'n Gran 'n Dad 'n Mum 'n me.
And when our friends drop in it makes it such a welter,
For Aunt 'n Gran 'n Dad 'n Mum 'n me.

Old Granny's causing us concern, though she doesn't care a bit,
For her bustle sticks outside and may get a direct hit.
And if she pulls it in it makes it worse than ever,
For Aunt 'n her 'n Dad 'n Mum 'n me.

**ARP – Air Raid Precautions. This song was written and recorded by the well-known radio personality Jack Davey on 16 April 1942.*



Screensound Australia, National Screen and Sound Collection



AWM 011522

Source 2

My dad, the air raid warden

When I was growing up I always felt I had less to offer in terms of my dad's participation in World War II. Other girls' dads had been POWs in Changi or on the Burma-Siam Railway, or had at least been in the army. My dad had been too old to go to war. 'Too young for World War I and too old for World War II' had always been the saying in the family. Instead of doing something glamorous in the war, my dad had been an air raid warden. Mum used to tell me what he did was to walk around the streets making sure that everyone's blinds were drawn so that the Japanese bombers wouldn't be able to find a target to drop their bombs on. I used to imagine whole squadrons of planes just flying around looking for a light left carelessly burning. The thing I found most exciting as a child was Dad's wooden ratchet. With this he was to run around the streets making a great din to warn people of an impending air raid.

It was only when I became an adult that I realised what an important job my father did for the home front. Along with many other men from the suburbs, he co-ordinated the defence of Australia's cities. As well as this, he volunteered as an orderly at Sydney Hospital on Saturday nights. This part of his war effort was not revealed until I was considered old enough to hear about the bloody brawls that were fought by soldiers who were on leave and living it up in wartime Sydney.

Christine Murray, Sydney

Air Raid Warden's Report Form

Municipality or Shire of _____

Warden's Post Number _____ Report Number _____

Time of occurrence _____ A.M. _____ P.M.

Date _____

Location of incident _____ Street

Nearest cross street _____

Nature of missile

High Explosive Yes No

Incendiary Yes No

Unexploded Yes No

Gas Persistent Yes No

Non Persistent Yes No

Fires Yes No

Has Fire Brigade been informed? Yes No

Casualties (state number): Adult males _____

Adult females _____

Children under 16 years _____

Services damaged (state yes or no):

Water

Sewerage

Electricity

Gas

Telephone

Names of roads blocked or unsafe (state wholly or partially)

Other damage (including buildings) _____

Remarks _____

Warden reporting _____

Finish with the words '**Message ends**'.