



# VE DAY – VICTORY IN EUROPE

On 7 May 1945, the German High Command authorised the signing of an unconditional surrender on all fronts: the war in Europe was over. The following day, 8 May, was declared VE (Victory in Europe) Day. This brought an end to the war against Germany and her European allies that had spread across Europe, the Middle East and the Atlantic Ocean, lasting for five years and eight months.

Australians serving overseas joined wholeheartedly in the celebrations. In the major Australian cities, there were similar outbursts of rejoicing. Sydney was given over to jubilant revelry when the news of the German capitulation filtered through at the end of the working day. Torn paper was thrown from office windows and was reported as laying a foot deep in some places. People danced and sang and crowded the streets, bars and restaurants. While people allowed themselves this opportunity to celebrate there was, too, a realisation that the war against Japan was still to be won.

A mood of sombreness took over the following day as churches held thanksgiving services. On 9 May an estimated 100,000 people attended the service at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne.

On the day that Germany surrendered, Australian servicemen were fighting at Tarakan as part of the recently commenced Borneo campaign against the Japanese, while fighting continued at Bougainville, New Britain, and in northern New Guinea. Thousands of Australian soldiers were still suffering the brutality of the prisoner of war experience under the Japanese. Their relief would come three months later.

**IMAGE: Australian and British service men and women join crowds in London celebrating VE Day, May 1945. (SLV an009890)**



# HISTORY IN FOCUS