

2018 Junior Ron Rathbone Local History Prize

# **The impact of WWI on our society**

By Vicky Yan



St George Girls High School

Year 7

## Table of contents

Facts about World War I.....	3
Impacts on the Society during WWI .....	4
Impacts after WW1 .....	5
• Pneumonic flu .....	7
• Other war related illnesses .....	9
The changes triggered by WWI .....	10
• History .....	10
• Women.....	11
Bibliography .....	12

# Facts about World War I

World War One, also known as WWI, the war to end all wars, the war of the nations, The Great War and more. It took place in Europe because of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who was the Archduke of Austria. He was killed by a Serbian nationalist. The war was declared by Austria-Hungary and started on July 28<sup>th</sup> 1914 and ended on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918. This war was an extremely bloody war with 9 million deaths, 23 million wounded but a little amount of land lost or won.

There were 2 sides of the war and 32 countries participating. One side was called the 'Allies' or 'Entente', which consisted primarily of England, France, Russia, New Zealand and Australia. These countries fought against the 'Central Powers' which included Germany, Austria-Hungary, Serbia, The Ottoman Empire and Italy. These countries fought ferociously but in the end, the Allies won the war.



British children were used to carry secret messages for their Secret Service. The British government also created a law called DORA which gave them control over every civilian's life. The DORA organization took control over the war. They could take everyone's land to use

for war purposes and they were allowed to take over all the newspapers and media.

During the start of the war, many thought it would be a great experience and it would lead to glory and fame. So youths lied about their age in order to get in. In the Bayside area there were

publicised cases of 15 and 16 years-olds enlisting and being sent to the frontline after minimal training.

## Impacts on the Society during WWI

### For King and Country!



Corp. W. G. Bown, a native of Kogarah, who has returned wounded, and has been appointed by the Kogarah Recruiting Committee as Recruiting Officer. His father is now at the front.

When the Australians went to war on the 4<sup>th</sup> August, the world changed for every country and community. Over 2,000 local residents of across Bayside answered the call of the King and the Country and enlisted in the war.

On the left is a regular 'For King and Country!' section where local soldiers are publicised and their movement towards the battle field highlighted.

A lot of money had to be raised for comforts for the soldiers who were departing for war. So hundreds of Rockdale residents, including the Town Hall caretaker and the Deputy Town Clerk, Mr F. C. Waine contributed. Auxiliaries were formed in order to raise that money. The Rockdale Town Hall was the venue of send-offs to local troops before they sailed to the war.

Early in World War I local women's groups began creating tobacco, cakes funds, puddings, condensed milk, sugar, biscuits, newspapers and other 'luxury' items funds to supplement the Australian soldier's army rations. These fund-raising bodies were combined in 1916 to form The Australian Comforts Fund (ACF). The ACF

grew into an enormous fundraising organisation that rivalled the Red Cross. It mainly consisted of volunteers women who too charge of administrative and manual work.

Care parcels were sent to Australians serving overseas, with 'comfort' items such as extra clothing, food and tobacco. Socks were urgently needed, since soldiers could not wash or dry their socks in the mud and cold of the trenches, and tens of thousands pairs of socks were knitted. During the winter of 1916 alone the ACF sent 80,000 hand-knitted pairs of socks.

During the war, there was a shortage of food and money since all the money was needed for the war. Thus, resulting in many hungry and homeless people. They needed to ration their food or else thousands of people will not have enough to eat during winter. But the mothers and growing children were required to have nourishing food and warm clothing but their pay didn't rise while the prices did, which made it hard for the families to pay for their requirements.

In August 1916, the council attended a service in the Congregational Church in memory of 2 boys killed in the war. The death of many fathers, husbands, brothers and sons brought great despair over the relatives of the soldiers. The community under the horrors of the Great War the world has ever seen.

## Impacts after WW1

On the fourth anniversary of the war, the German soldiers warded off across the Rhine by the Allied forces. On November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918, Germany forfeited the war and then finally, the gruesome war ended.

When the news of the signing of the German Armistice was received in St. George, wild celebrations were demonstrated. Celebrations were launched everywhere in the bayside council and even in the whole of Australia. Flags were quickly flown and trains blew their whistle to deliver the message to everyone.

In Arncliffe the residents held a celebration of the signing of the armistice in the school grounds, Rocky Point-Road on the afternoon of the 11<sup>th</sup> November. The residents celebrated by singing the National Anthem and marching down the streets of Rocky Point-Road, Spring Street, to west Botany Street and up Terry Street. The route was all decorated in bunting and flags. Of the arrival on the grounds, there were talks about all of the good qualities the flag represented. And what this celebration and gathering was for. The children sang patriotic songs, and cheers were called for the soldiers and boys at the front. This celebration was a big success and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves. More than 420 Servicemen from the Arncliffe area served in WWI, which is a significant number for any area in the day.

Even after the war, the casualty lists still continued to go up. This was due to passing away after the war had finished or being discovered that the soldier was missing were killed, died of illness and some were just wounded or suffering illness.

After initial celebrations, a community came together to help each other to rebuild lives and restore normality which has been lacking for quite some time.



#### JUNIOR RED CROSS.

On Wednesday, 6th November, a meeting was held at St. George Girls' High School, with the object of forming a branch of the Junior Red Cross. The teachers and students of this school have already worked very hard, and given freely to all the various funds, and "Days," including Red Cross work. They also have their own recruit. The Mayoress of Kogarah, Mrs. Hanigan, introduced Mrs. Boyce, from the head branch, who spoke of the marvellous work done on the battlefield, and the necessity for the work to continue, even now that the war is practically ended. The girls responded with enthusiasm, and formed their branch—the St. George—with Miss Hazel Dymock, president; Miss Jessie Hutchison, secretary; Miss Edna Brown, treasurer. A successful

meeting closed with the singing of the National Anthem.

On Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1916, a meeting was held at St George Girls High School about forming a branch of the junior red-cross. The Mayoress of Kogarah, Mrs Hanigan. She introduced Mrs Boyce from the head branch who spoke about the importance and necessity of work to continue for the red-cross. The St Georgians responded keenly and enthusiastically and formed their branch with Miss Hazel Dymock as the President, Miss Jessie Hutchison as secretary and Miss Edna Brown as treasurer. The successful meeting closed down with the singing of the National Anthem.

In December 1918, the Kogarah Branch of the Red Cross has asked for any car owner who will be willing to place his or her car at the disposal of the branch for the purpose of taking returned and sick soldiers for a ride. The Secretary of the branch stated that of all the soldiers there was none that didn't appreciate a motor trip and she felt that the car owners will show this small amount of kindness for the soldiers who have risked their life for the society.

## Pneumonic flu

As the rebuild continued, all across Australia the pneumonic flu epidemic broke out in December 1918. The pneumonic flu is a severe lung infection caused by the Yersinia Pestis bacteria. Some symptoms include fever, headache, shortness of breath, chest pain and cough.

The pneumonic plague was believed to be brought back by the soldiers from the battlefield. This disease spread extremely quickly and within a few months, the disease had spread to thousands of people and killed dozens. The council set up a special committee to deal with this illness. It was planned to make Rockdale school into a temporary hospital if necessary.



Alderman Laurence's son perished during the epidemic and people feared for the life of Alderman Martin. The symptoms of the pneumonic flu was very severe as the hospital was overcrowded with patients trying to get cured.

The doctors and nurses were extremely busy and some nurses even collapsed from overworking. The hospital stated that visitors will not be allowed in or allowed to phone the hospital during the epidemic, except in urgent cases. Even children were involved as volunteers in the Junior Red Cross to aid the efforts.

Due to crowding doctors instructed anyone who has any symptoms of the disease that aren't able to be admitted to stay at home in bed and do leave the house until all of the symptoms are gone for at least 4 days.

The Sans Souci Red Cross dealt with all cases of the pneumonic flu where necessary.

Members have volunteered to deliver S.O.S. cards throughout the Sans Souci and Sandringham regions and food orders to contacts. If any residents see a card in any window, they were to report the case to the secretary of the Sans Souci Red Cross at once.

Students in schools had to be sprayed daily to prevent the disease from contaminating the students.

Because of the breakout of the epidemic, the Official Peace celebrations had to be postponed until September 1919 and when it was held, it was a disaster as the St. George band failed to turn up.



## Other war related illnesses

The soldiers who fought in the war experienced many disastrous events. Facing such ghastly experiences during the war made them develop a mental illness called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder also known as PTSD is a serious mental disorder that can affect anyone after being exposed to a traumatic event such as war.

People with PTSD experience strong reactions to the traumatic event they went through.

These may include:

- Re-experiencing the event
- A desire to avoid anything associated to the event
- Always feeling panicked or anxious
- Feeling down, sad, tearful or hopeless
- Feelings of guilt and anger
- Having trouble focusing
- Having poor memory
- The disruption of sleep
- Being excessively alert
- Being easily startled
- Anger management problems
- Having difficulties managing relationships with others

Fortunately, in most cases, the symptoms of PTSD will subside even without treatment.

Allowing the soldiers to settle back into normal life.

Another condition that soldiers develop is called 'trench feet'. It is a medical condition caused by long exposure of your feet to damp, cold and unsanitary conditions like trenches. Trench foot

can be prevented by keeping the feet clean, warm, and dry. To prevent it, soldiers would go through regular foot inspections; soldiers would be paired up and made responsible of the feet of each other and they would apply whale oil on each other's foot. If they were on their own, the soldiers might forget to take care of their boots and socks and dry their feet every day but in pairs, this became less likely. Later on in the war, instances of trench foot began to decrease, probably as a result of the introduction of using wooden duckboards to cover the muddy, wet and cold ground and of the increased practice of the troop rotation so that the soldiers won't forget.

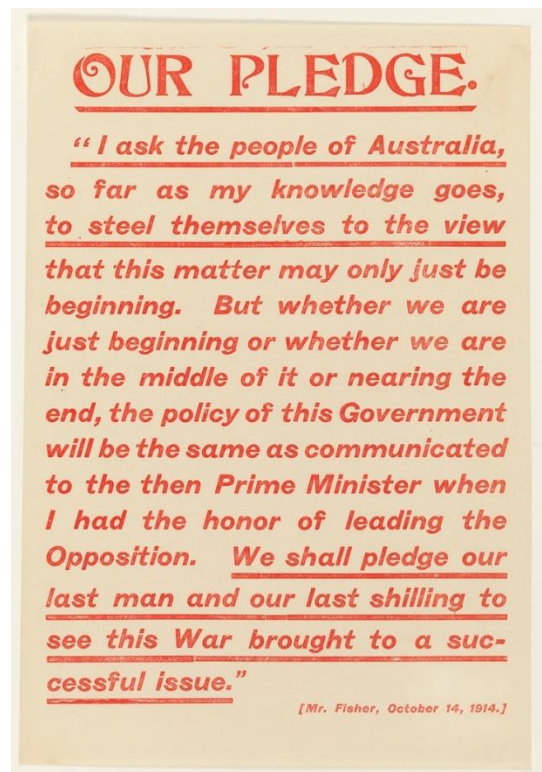
There was a shortage of shipping and a need for occupation forces so the large portion of the soldiers only came home in 1920 further the detriment they would have experienced with their illness and trauma.

## The changes triggered by WWI

### History

The community wasn't needed to fight in the war nor did the war affect us. The war was also happening on the other side of the world but the soldiers of the community still signed up to participate because people felt that we should help out our mother country, Britain who was fighting in the war. The Australian Prime Minister Andrew Fisher declared that we will support Great Britain "to the last man and the last shilling" (a British currency)

Australia had also just become a federated country and haven't had any real history yet so the soldiers



went to war to start making one which is finally unique to the Australia and finding our own identity on the world stage.

## Women

During the war, the occupations of men had been vacated as all of the working men had enlisted in the war so the only people who were able to do those jobs were women, although some women went to war to fulfil their duties as a nurse. At that time, women weren't as powerful and important as men so they did housewife jobs, such as washing clothes, cooking, cleaning the house, etc. After the war, people recognised the capability of women and gave them more respect. Soon, the women gained rights to stand for parliament.

Also, women who were not married before the war found it very difficult to find a partner after the war. Since too many young men went to war and most of them were killed, there weren't any eligible 'available' men.

At that time, the women were expected to marry young men and have children but too many of those young men died in the war, creating a serious impact on the society. Many women who had husbands who had been killed in the war found it difficult to raise money and had to work a lot harder to raise money to support their family.



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