FINDING THE BLACK PARTS OF THE DIGGER LEGEND: 
A GUIDE TO ARCHIVAL SOURCES ON THE ABORIGINAL 
AND ISLANDER CONTRIBUTION TO THE 
SECOND WORLD WAR

Robert A. Hall

Each year about one million visitors walk through the imposing entrance to the Australian War Memorial to pay homage at the shrine to the digger legend. It is a shrine of massive proportions on which the dominant society in Australia lavishes a large annual budget. It is also a shrine which reflects an almost exclusively white Australian view of the national war effort. Far fewer people visit the nearby memorial to those black Australians who helped defend their country. In sharp contrast to the Australian War Memorial, this modest memorial consists of a simple plaque affixed to a boulder in a piece of untouched bushland. And where is it? If one were to imagine the Australian War Memorial as a north Australian homestead, this memorial to black servicemen and women would be the wood-heap - 200 metres out the back door towards Mount Ainslie. Not surprisingly, those visitors to the Australian War Memorial are unlikely to come away with the belief that Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (not to mention other visible minorities within the Australian community, like Chinese Australians) have a legitimate part in the digger legend. The galleries of the War Memorial contain few reminders of the military service of Aborigines and Islanders though, to be fair, their number and prominence is slowly growing.

In a sense, this lack of public acknowledgement of the role of Aborigines and Islanders is understandable. Many white Australians are ignorant of the scale of the Aboriginal and Islander contribution to the national defence effort and even those who are aware of it sometimes attempt to dismiss it as being numerically insignificant when compared to the effort of white Australians. Others have argued that all Australians are represented within the Memorial and that therefore the service of Aborigines and Islanders should not be marked by a display which sets them apart from other participants. Neither of these arguments makes sense. Clearly, the criterion for determining that which is or is not displayed within the Memorial is its historical significance, not its numerical significance.

Until fairly recently the historical significance of the Aboriginal and Islander contribution to the national war effort was not established. As a result, it has been easy for the Australian War Memorial to ignore pressure to include displays reflecting Aboriginal participation within the Memorial. However, much more work is now being done on the Aboriginal involvement in Australia's wars - this edition of *Aboriginal History* demonstrates that fact. This work will eventually cause the Australian War Memorial to invite Aborigines and Islanders to leave the wood-heap and come inside. Once that happens, those million visitors each year will start to see Aborigines and Islanders in new and refreshing ways.

An initial case for the historical significance of the Aboriginal and Islander contribution to the Second World War is made in Robert A. Hall, *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*. Briefly, the case is that an understanding of the Aboriginal and Islander contribution to the national defence effort during that war

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1 Sydney, 1989.
Plate 1. This photograph shows a squad of soldiers being drilled by their officer. The men were part of an Islander Light Infantry Battalion raised for the protection and security of the Torres Strait against Japanese attack. The Torres Strait was strategically important to the Australian defence effort in the Second World War because supplies of men and equipment bound for Darwin had to pass through it. The photograph is one of many depicting the military service of Aborigines and Islanders held by the Australian War Memorial photographic collection. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial (AWM). Negative number 119170.)
forces us to see Aborigines and Islanders and the post-war history of Black-White relations differently. It forces us to reject the widely held view that Aborigines and Islander people and white Australians are in a state of unremitting conflict. In the Second World War Aborigines and Islanders were faced with a number of options concerning their support or otherwise for the national defence effort, yet overwhelmingly, they chose to join with white Australians against the external enemy. They did this by serving in the Navy, Army or Air Force, by joining irregular guerrilla units operating in northern Australia, by providing their labour to support the armed forces and by working in defence or defence related industries. The scale of their contribution - approximately 3000 served as formally enlisted personnel and another 3000 worked as civilian labourers - and the fact that many served for far less reward than their white comrades in arms, underlines their willingness to cooperate with whites in the national emergency. The history of the Aboriginal and Islander involvement in the Second World War also forces us to acknowledge that the digger legend, which encapsulates all that is supposed to be good and worthy in the Australian character, applies equally to Aboriginal and Islander people as to whites.

Ironically, further research on the historical significance of Aboriginal and Islander war service will draw heavily on the archives of the Australian War Memorial. Despite its seeming reluctance to give Aborigines and Islanders a place in the public galleries, the Australian War Memorial nevertheless holds in its archives a large amount of material relating to the military service of Aborigines and Islanders. Other major sources are the Melbourne, Canberra and Darwin offices of Australian Archives and the State Archives offices, particularly in Western Australia. Some guides to selected sources have been published, and they include material relevant to Aboriginal and Islander war service. They include two contributions to Aboriginal History by Myrna Deverall and Ros Fraser, and an Australian Archives publication, Relations in records: a guide to family history sources in the Australian Archives.

Before considering what these holdings have to offer in relation to the Second World War, it is important for those researching aspects of the Aboriginal or Islander participation in Australia’s war efforts to keep in mind that a distinction has to be drawn between Aboriginal and Islander military service:

- as formally enlisted members of the Navy, Army or Air Force;
- as informally enlisted members or de facto members of irregular forces; and
- as civilian labourers working directly for the defence forces or indirectly in the defence industrial effort.

Each of these categories of service requires the use of different groups of sources. For example, while records relating to the formal enlisted service of Aborigines and Islanders may be available in the Australian War Memorial, records relating to civilian war workers are more likely to be found in the records of the Department of the Interior held by regional offices of the Australian Archives, or in mission records.

Before proceeding to consider some of the collections in detail, a note of caution is necessary. Those interested in researching aspects of Aboriginal or Islander involvement in the Second World War will quickly find that the Army, Navy and Air Force made

2 For a more complete bibliography see Robert A. Hall, 'The relationship between Aborigines, Islanders and the Armed Forces in the Second World War', PhD thesis, 1987. Copies of this thesis are held by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies, the Australian Defence Force Academy library and the Private Records collection of the Australian War Memorial. A copy of the bibliography is held by the Canberra office of Australian Archives.


4 Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1988, esp. sections 2.4 and 3.3.
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considerable use of the 'native' populations wherever they were deployed on operations. Although this opens some useful opportunities for comparative study, many will find that it leads to frustration. In many documents indigenes are referred to as 'natives' regardless of whether they are Aborigines, Papuans, Solomon Islanders, Malays or other peoples. Sometimes this makes it extremely difficult to discern the subject of the document or whether the contents refer to all 'natives' or just one particular group. Secondly, even among those documents which deal specifically with Aborigines and Islanders, the term 'native' is often used where much more complete identification is provided for white personnel. For example, in ships' logs it is not uncommon to find that white personnel are listed giving full rank and name while Aboriginal crewmen are lumped under a phrase like '... and three native boys'. This can be extremely annoying if one is trying to trace a particular individual. Researchers should also be aware that many of the file titles and documents contain terms and ideas which are offensive to Aborigines and Islanders and care should be exercised in their use.

An important first point of call for any researcher attempting to trace an individual's military career are the three service personnel records areas. Their addresses are:

**Navy:**
Director of Sailors Postings
Navy Office
Department of Defence
Russell Offices
Canberra ACT

**Army:**
Soldier Career Management Agency
366 St Kilda Road
Melbourne Victoria

**Air Force:**
Director of Personnel Services
Air Force Office
Department of Defence
Russell Offices
Canberra ACT

These organisations hold files on every sailor, soldier or airman who has ever been formally enlisted, from the Boer War to the present, and consequently their file holdings are vast. The files themselves are confidential and will only be released to the researcher with the written approval of the service man or woman concerned. However, persons who can establish their bona fides as researchers or authors may be able to obtain an extract or summary of the personal file which contains only those pieces of information which do not require privacy protection. In order to identify the right file the researcher needs to provide accurate information about the full name, service number and preferably, unit, of the individual concerned. The agencies may be unable to locate the correct file unless this information can be supplied. However, if they are able quickly to identify the right file they can provide a short extract of the service career which might include the person's dates of enlistment and discharge, the units in which the person served, promotions, honours and awards and so on. This information makes the job of tracing individuals through other
records much easier. It is also important for researchers to note that personal records maintained by these organisations do not show the race of the service man or woman they describe. Consequently, a request to these organisations to provide information on all Aboriginal and Islander service personnel will probably be met with a polite refusal because it cannot be done.

From Anzac Day 1993, those interested in tracing men who served in the First Australian Imperial Force should also write to the following address:

AIF Project
Department of History
University College
University of New South Wales
Australian Defence Force Academy
Northcott Drive
Campbell ACT

The AIF project has collected publicly available information on the members of the First AIF from a wide variety of sources including embarkation rolls and newspaper death notices and has brought these together on a single computer data base. Beginning on Anzac Day 1993 the project team will produce a print-out of all the information it holds on a particular individual for a small fee. Once again, the project team needs an accurate name before it can do this.

The Australian War Memorial

Records held by the Australian War Memorial relate mainly to military operations rather than to policy direction and the higher administration of the Army, Navy or Air Force. However, included among the records are many which refer to or provide background information about the military service of Aborigines and Islanders. The Australian War Memorial Research Centre collections contain many series of records and depending on the limits of the research being undertaken, most could be worth examination.

AWM 52, AWM 64 and AWM 78 are 2nd AIF and CMF unit war diaries, RAAF formation and unit records and reports of proceedings, HMA ships and establishments respectively, for the Second World War. These records consist of monthly diaries usually containing a brief daily entry for each Army or Air Force unit or Navy ship or shore establishment. Some with particular relevance to the service of Aborigines in the Second World War are:

AWM 52: 2nd AIF and CMF unit war diaries
1/5/58 - Headquarters Torres Strait Force.
1/6/8 - Headquarters Thursday Island Fortress.
5/45/6 - 56 Port Craft Company.
8/4/7 - Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion.
8/4/9 - Torres Strait Infantry.
25/1/2 - 2/1 North Australia Observer Unit.
Plate 2. G.W. Lambert, Trooper James Hubbard, Rough Rider - Australian Remount, January 1918 (AWM, pencil drawing, 19 x 30.4 cm, 02729).
Plate 3. Stella Bowen, Private, Gowrie House, London, 11 June 1945 (AWM, oil on board, 30.4 x 25.4 cm, 26277).
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**AWM 64: RAAF formation and unit records**
- 54/a - Operations Record Book, Service Police Unit (Darwin Section) 1942-1944/5.
- 16/3 - Operations Record Book, Number 51 Operational Base Unit, Groote Eylandt.
- 16/3 - Operations Record Book, Number 58 Operational Base Unit, Drysdale Mission.
- 9/8 - Operations Record Book, Number 313 Radar Station, Mornington Island.

**AWM 78: Reports of proceedings, HMA ships and establishments**
- 400/2 - Naval HQ Darwin War Diary.
- 401/1 - Darwin Lugger Sightings 1941.

Researchers attempting to trace individual sailors, soldiers or airmen and who have first obtained an extract of service from the relevant service personnel records office, can easily identify the appropriate war diaries, unit history sheets or ships' logs they need to examine.

**AWM 54: Written records, 1939-45 war**

This series contains correspondence files on a wide variety of subjects some of which may be relevant to researchers interested in the role of Aborigines and Islanders in the Second World War. A similar series exists for First World War records. Below are a sample of the files in this series and the range of the topics they cover. Most of the file titles are self-explanatory but additional explanatory notes have been added where necessary.
- 13/2/12 - Report to General Headquarters by Captain R.W. Dungan - on Aerodromes in North West Australia - 1943.
- 39/1/2 - Commonwealth of Australia - Protected and Controlled Areas Native and Coastal - 1942. This file refers to the draconian security controls exercised by the army over Aborigines in Western Australia during the Second World War.
- 85/10/5 - Hints to aircrew - Coastal Area of North West Australia. This file refers to the role of Aborigines in rescuing downed airmen.
- 380/6/1 - Kimberley Ranges Patrol; by 3rd Australian Corps Guerilla Warfare Group, 1943.
- 506/5/10 - Native Labour: Torres Strait Malayans serving with the Australian Military Forces - Conditions of Service 1944.
- 605/7/2 - Patrol reports by Wing Commander D.F. Thomson and Captain C.C. Wolfe, 1943-44. This patrol employed Torres Strait Islander soldiers and was conducted in contested areas of Dutch New Guinea.
- 625/4/2 - Notes on protection of Bathurst Island.
- 628/1/1 - Torres Strait Islanders, 1944 - Enlistment, pay, etc.
- 628/4/5 - Report on Sibai Island, etc. This file covers Torres Strait Islanders pay issue and Moa Island sit-down strike.
- 741/5/9 - Report: The Organisation of the Northern Territory Coastal Patrol and the Special Reconnaissance Unit 1941-1943. This is a lengthy report prepared by Donald Thomson on the establishment, men, equipment, role, training and day-to-day activities of the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit. This unit was raised by Thomson and consisted of a small nucleus of white Australians, six Solomon Islanders, a Torres Strait Islander and fifty east Arnhem Land Aborigines.
- 963/22/14 - Water Transport - Luggers and small craft.

**AWM 60: Northern Command registry files**

The Army's Northern Command encompassed Queensland and this file series therefore includes some with a bearing on the military employment of Islanders and Aborigines in the defence of Queensland. Some examples are:
- 13/1/42 - Enlistment of Torres Strait Islanders.
13/1277/43 - 7th Australian Employment Company - Chinese. This file and others dealing with black American soldiers in Queensland provides interesting comparative data for the study of military attitudes to ethnic minorities during the Second World War.

59/1/730 - American coloured soldiers.

66/1/88 - Aboriginal missions in north Queensland.

87/1/1035 - Enlistment of half-castes.

200/3/249 - Enlistment of Aboriginals and half-castes in the AIF.

Other collections within the Australian War Memorial should also be examined. The Blamey papers (3DRL 6643) within the Private Records collection include files on 'Native' units (item 32.3) and 'Special' units (item 56.8) which refer to attempts to raise guerilla units of Aborigines in the Kimberley district. The Private Records Collection also includes a collection of correspondence to Mr Don Cameron MHR (PR 87/78) which lists many Aborigines and Islanders who participated in all of Australia's wars. Series AWM 88, which consists of the Governor General's Office honours and awards files, should be consulted in the case of Aboriginal or Islander servicemen or women who have won an honour or award.

Researchers should also consult the War Memorial's oral history collection, still photo collection, film collection and art collection. The Memorial has probably the best photographic record of the Aboriginal contribution to the national war effort in the Second World War of any collection. It includes good coverage of the employment of Aborigines as civilian labourers as well as of serving Aborigines and Islanders. The film collection is also interesting. However, the film collection is dominated by footage of events which might have titillated the tastes of white Australians back home in Sydney or Melbourne. As a result, there is much footage of Aborigines dancing and demonstrating boomerang and spear throwing to crowds of appreciative white servicemen, but very little showing Aborigines performing their wartime work. The Memorial's art collection contains a number of works by war artists depicting Aboriginal and Islander servicemen. Furthermore, the Memorial recently acquired its first work by an Aboriginal artist, Paddy Fordham Wainburranga, depicting an Aboriginal view of the Second World War.

**Australian Archives, Melbourne**

Many of the files relating to the policy questions of Aboriginal military service are held in Australian Archives, Melbourne. A number of series are worth examining. During the Second World War there existed a Department of Defence as well as Departments of Navy, Army and Air. The most useful Department of Defence file series are MP431/1 and MP729/6. These series are quite large and should be examined in detail, but the following files indicate the range of subjects that might be useful:

- **CRS B1535**: Army headquarters, Department of Defence, general correspondence files, multiple number series, 1930-1939
- 849/3/1644 - Enlistment of selected half-castes into Darwin militia.
- 929/19/912 - Australian Aborigines' League - Proposals for training Aboriginal men and boys.

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5 Researchers interested in the depiction of Aborigines and Islanders in war art should see Rensch, Elena, 'Aborigines in war: depictions of Aborigines in the art collection of the Australian War Memorial', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 2, 1990. Elena Rensch is the Acting Curator of Special Art Collections at the Australian War Memorial. Most of these images are reproduced in this number of *Aboriginal History*.

6 Paddy Wainburranga's bark painting is titled 'World War II Supply Ships', but it is a recent painting, not a wartime image.
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929/19/1049 - Enlistment of Aborigines for defence purposes.
929/19/1162 - Liability of Aborigines for compulsory military training under the Defence Act.

MP729/6: Department of the Army, secret and confidential correspondence files, multiple number series (class 401), 1936-1945
15/401/243 - Darwin - employment of native labour.
16/402/111 - Transfer of mission natives, Cape York. This file refers to an army plan to evacuate Aborigines from Cape York because of their supposed support for the Japanese and the belief that they were responsible for the high rates of venereal diseases among allied servicemen based in the area.
29/401/626 - Japanese activities amongst Aborigines.
37/401/1609 - Formation, Torres Strait Pioneer Company.

The following Department of Army series contains many files dealing with the army's higher policy decisions relating to the military service of Aborigines and Islanders.

MP508/1: Department of the Army, correspondence files, multiple number series, '701 plus', secondary number, 1939-1942
50/703/12 - Refusal to enlist World War I veteran and other Aborigines.
61/701/68 - Employment of Aboriginal labour - Darwin.
240/701/217 - Role of Aborigines in defence of Australia - suggestion of Professor Elkin.
247/704/62 - Employment of Torres Strait Islanders on military duty at Thursday Island.
247/704/62 - Torres Strait Infantry.
275/701/556 - Enlistment of Aborigines 1942.
275/705/10 - Utilisation of Chinese - March 1942. Like other files relating to the military service of Chinese, this file provides useful comparative data on the military attitude to other ethnic minorities.
275/750/1310 - Aborigines - enlistment in AIF.

MP742/1: Department of Army, correspondence series, multiple number series, 1943-1951
85/1/445 - Torres Strait Islanders - discipline.
92/1/302 - Employment of Aboriginal labour in the army.
164/1/209 - Australian Aborigines - participation in the war effort.
175/1/189 - Hermannsburg mission - use of wireless transceiver equipment. This file refers to the army's concerns that Lutheran missionaries at Hermannsburg might use their radio transmitter to pass military secrets to Germany. Many white citizens in central Australia believed that the missionaries were also indoctrinating the Aborigines with Nazi propaganda.
240/1/358 - Formation of native auxiliary corps - Kimberleys.
247/1/290 - Conditions of service - natives of Papua/New Guinea and Torres Strait.
275/1/222 - Ban on Aborigines in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. The British Commonwealth Occupation Force was formed after the Second World War to provide an occupying force for Japan. Some of the units in this force were later to become involved in the Korean War.
275/1/696 - Enlistment in Australian Regular Army - Persons not of European origin - 1949.
286/1/96 - Service of half-castes in the Volunteer Defence Corps. The Volunteer Defence Corps was a voluntary, unpaid, part-time force made up of persons who, because of their age, reserved occupation or other reasons, could not serve in the regular elements of the defence forces.

R/1/3617 - Raiwalla - Darwin Aborigine for ANZAC March 1949.

There are also some Navy files in the Melbourne office of Australian Archives which include items of relevance to Aboriginal and Islander participation in the war effort.

MP138/1: Department of the Navy [ii], Navy Office [iv], correspondence files, multiple number series with 201 secondary infix, 1923-1950
603/217/1277 - Inventories - requisitioned luggers, 1942-1945.

MP151/1: Department of the Navy [ii], Navy Office [iv], correspondence files, multiple number series with 201 secondary infix, 1923-1950
463/208/1142 - Australian native labour for luggers - Thursday Island [not yet cleared for public use].
474/201/435 - Proceeds of sale of wild dingo scalps from natives. This file describes how Naval officers traded with Aborigines along the Kimberley coast to encourage them to stay near the coast where they might see and be able to report any signs of Japanese activity.
556/226/1920 - Lugger Heather - crew. Heather was another Navy lugger which patrolled the Kimberley coast looking for signs of Japanese interest in the area. Its crew included two Aborigines.

MP1049/3: Department of the Navy [ii], Navy Office [iv], correspondence files, multiple number series with 201 secondary infix, 1923-1950
603/201/770 - Luggers - Thursday Island.
712/205/621 - Employment of natives, Royal Australian Navy - Darwin.

Other series worth attention in the Melbourne office of Australian Archives include:

CRS B551: Directorate of Man Power, Central Office, correspondence files, single number series with year and subject significant prefixes, 1942-1946.

CRS B550: Employment Division [ii], Central Office, Department of Labour and National Service, correspondence files, annual single number series with subject significant infixes, 1946-1953

CRS B356: Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Lake Tyers correspondence files 1865-1968

This second series is useful for the light it sheds on the impact of the war on an Aboriginal settlement.

Australian Archives, Canberra

The Canberra office of Australian Archives holds many file series which contain relevant files. Whereas many of the army and navy administrative files are held by the Melbourne office of Australian Archives, the Canberra office holds many air force administrative files.
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CRS A705: *Department of Air, correspondence files, 1922-1960*
7/1/657 - Bathurst Island Advanced Operational Base - aerodrome works. Much of the construction effort done on remote airfields like those at Bathurst Island, Port Keats, Milingimbi and other northern missions, was done by the local Aboriginal people.
7/1/694 - RAAF Milingimbi Advanced Operational Base aerodrome.
68/1/700 - Use of Aboriginal labour by RAAF.

CRS A1196: *Department of Air, correspondence files, 1935-1960*
12/501/185 - Inter-departmental conference to discuss conditions of service - native units.
59/501/4 - Admission of aliens/suspected persons to RAAF.

CRS A1564: *Royal Australian Air Force, North Western Area, correspondence files, 1942-1955*
1229/8/P3 - Native labour employment 1950.

In addition to these Air Force records, the Canberra office of Australian Archives holds other useful sources.

CRS A2653: *Department of the Army, Military Board proceedings, 1905-1976*
1942, vol 5, agenda item 8 - Aliens - military service for.
1944, vol 1, agenda item 31 - Gold lip shell for ANGAU. This Military Board agenda item concerns the employment of Islander soldiers as divers to harvest gold lip shell which was then used as currency to employ Papuan and New Guinean labour to support military operations in New Guinea.

CRS A816: *Department of Defence, correspondence files, 1935-1958*
40/301/312 - Control of pearling luggers north and west Australia. After Japan entered the war, the military became concerned that the large numbers of pearling luggers in north Australia might be captured by the Japanese and used to support the invasion of Australia. The Department of Defence was keen to control the luggers to keep them out of Japanese hands and to put them to its own use. This caused great hardship among Islanders who depended upon the luggers for their livelihood.
72/301/23 - Requirement to be of substantially European origin.

CRS AA1978/215: *Department of Defence, files concerning Northern Territory Aboriginals*
The whole of this series is worthy of examination but the following files given an idea of data to be found here.
21 - Native personnel.
34 - NT employment of mission natives.
55 - NT raising native Employment Companies. Employment Companies were military units which had the role of providing labour to support other elements of the army. Many Aborigines served in Employment Companies.

CRS A431: *Department of the Interior, correspondence files 1946*
The Department of the Interior was responsible for the administration of Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory and its files are a useful source of material concerning not
only the military employment of Aborigines, but also the impact of the war on the Northern Territory, including the civil administration and the pastoral industry, and hence, the impact of the war on Aborigines there. However, the following two files relate specifically to the military employment of Aborigines:

46/915 - Employment of natives on work for army (NT).
46/1357 - Aboriginal ex-servicemen - restrictions in civil life - easing of.

CRS A659: Department of the Interior, Correspondence files 1939-1950
39/1/12995 - Enlistment of half-caste Aborigines.
42/1/3043 - Co-operation - Aborigines/Whites after invasion.

CRS A1308: Treasury, Defence Division, correspondence files, 1941-1963
762/1/67 - Torres Strait Islanders - conditions of service 1944.
762/1/135 - Torres Strait Islanders - clothing allowance on discharge.

CRS A2671: War Cabinet Secretariat, War Cabinet agenda files 1939-1946
45/1940 - Enlistment in defence forces of aliens and of persons of non-European descent.
145/1944 - Rates of pay and conditions of service - Torres Strait Islanders enlisted in the forces.

Other regional branches of Australian Archives
Although other regional branches of Australian Archives may have some records relating to the war service of Aborigines and Islanders, by far the most useful source, at least for records relating to the Second World War, is the Northern Territory regional office. Its series F1 is a particularly rich source.

CRS F1: Administrator, Northern Territory, correspondence files, 1915-1978
40/382 - Official aerodrome Milingimbi mission.
42/286 - Part 2: Finke River mission - Hermannsburg - Mr Battarbee's fortnightly reports to December 1943.
42/415 - Aboriginals - Removals from vicinity of military camps north of Mataranka.
42/435 - Native labour gangs - control camps at Mataranka, Tennant Creek, Katherine etc. - Employment of natives by army.
42/461 - Native labour - request for by station managers etc.
44/275 - Patrol officer W.E. Harney - patrols and reports.

State archives
State governments retained control of Aboriginal and Islander affairs in their states throughout the years of the Second World War and therefore, they had a vital interest in how the war was affecting Aborigines and Islanders. Like some of the regional offices of Australian Archives, the State Archives offices vary quite considerably in the extent of the records they hold and their willingness to assist the researcher. For example, while the Western Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs [check] encouraged my research and readily gave me access to its archives (housed in the Battye Library), the response in Queensland was quite different. With its large Aboriginal and Islander population and their heavy involvement in the Second World War, one would think that the bureaucrats in Brisbane would be pleased to publicise the war effort of Queenslanders and would assist researchers. However, despite letters to the Premier, the State Department of Community Services, which inherited responsibility for Aboriginal and Islander affairs, refused direct
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access to the records which it still held. Relatively few records of the Second World War era had been passed to the State Archives, and those which had were subject to a closed period which does not expire until 1995. The State Department of Community Services did offer to provide answers to specific questions but no historian should be satisfied with this inadequate access to the sources and in any case, my letters asking specific questions were never answered.

Although access to the Queensland records would be valuable in understanding how the Queensland government reacted to Aboriginal and Islander military service, it is not essential. Many documents relating to the response of the Queensland government are available on files held by Australian Archives in the series discussed earlier.

State Archives of Western Australia

ANI Native Welfare Department, acc 993, files 1926-1970
For access to the records in this series, researchers should first obtain permission from the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority of Western Australia. The series contains numerous files relating to the impact of the Second World War on Aborigines in Western Australia including:

- 38/40 - Military and defence - liability of natives for military service.
- 529/40 - Military and defence - List of natives under the Native Administration Act in the 2nd AIF. This file appears to be the only serious attempt by a State government to maintain a record of Aborigines who had enlisted. The file lists 112 Aborigines who had enlisted before the administrative effort of maintaining a record collapsed under wartime manpower constraints.
- 4/42 - Unemployed natives - Utilisation of services during war period.
- 102/42 - Natives - North West Areas - evacuation of all nomadic, unemployed, aged and infirm natives from coastal areas between Derby and Carnarvon to areas 100 miles inland.
- 1032/42 - Native auxiliary corps in the Kimberley district - proposal re organisation of.
- 592/43 - Evacuation and military control of natives in coastal areas south of Northampton.
- 365/44; - Effects of war in tropical Australia on future White development with particular reference to welfare of natives - Pamphlet by Professor A.P. Elkin for Institute of International Affairs.

MN 158: Cyril Longmore Papers, acc 1298A
1298A/40 - Cyril Longmore - Dispatches as war correspondent in north west in 1942. Cyril Longmore, together with Major Mitchell, trained white and black Australians to fight as guerillas in the Kimberley district of Western Australia. Longmore argued that this experiment should have been extended to create a large unit of Aborigines.
1298A/41 - Newspaper articles on bombing of Broome and training of native guerillas.
1298A/44 - Letters between Longmore and Curtin re use of Aborigines in war.

The Northern Territory Archives Service

The Northern Territory Archives Service has a continuing oral history programme which includes taped interviews and transcripts of many of the Northern Territory participants in the Second World War. For example, TS64 is a transcript of Len Harris, wartime missionary on Groote Eylandt, speaking about the role played by the Aborigines of Emerald River mission during the war. The collection includes many other useful recollections.
Other archival sources

For those particularly interested in the impact of the war years on Aboriginal employment on northern cattle stations, the Archives of Business and Labour at the Australian National University has a useful collection of union and cattle station records.

Aborigines and Islanders made a significant contribution to the defence of Australia in the Second World War and have been represented in the defence forces in every other war Australia has fought this century. It is fitting that their contribution should receive public recognition within the Australian War Memorial and within the broader Australian community. The achievement of that recognition will largely depend on greater exploration of the many questions raised by the Aboriginal and Islander involvement in Australia’s defence by historians and others using the sources described.

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