

# Preface

The idea for this book was initiated when Geoff Gray and Doug Munro first met, at a workshop on Pacific biography, 'Telling Pacific Lives', held at The Australian National University in December 2005. There was an apparent synchronicity, and certainly a meeting of minds. One of us was writing biographies of Pacific historians and, in passing, their wartime experiences; the other had written on Australian anthropologists and how the war impacted on the discipline and its development in Australia. Christine Winter, who joined in the project later, was writing about National Socialism in New Guinea and Oceania. By the time we next met, 12 months later in Dunedin at the Pacific History Association Conference, the idea for the present volume had congealed. We agreed that an examination of the war work done by Australian and New Zealand social scientists—especially anthropologists and historians during World War II—would enable a discussion of the way in which war affected the lives and careers of a selected group of scholars from the two countries.

We were aware that, in Australia, the readjustments of war provided opportunities for intellectual talent to play a role in government policy and in the plans for postwar reconstruction that would not otherwise have been available. This group of mostly men was confident of their ability to influence the course of events—if not during the war then certainly in the postwar period; they saw themselves as liberal, reform-minded progressives, with a nationalist agenda and a bias for state intervention. They were representative of the new academic and professional elite that emerged during the war and which was to play an influential part in public life during the decades following the war. The different circumstances of New Zealand limited the mobilisation of scholarship for the war effort. The majority of university graduates served in the armed forces in combat roles. Only occasionally were their talents channelled into war work more in keeping with their scholarly callings, be it scientific research or security intelligence.

The fact that we live in different countries has encouraged a trans-Tasman approach that allows comparisons that might not otherwise have been evident. That said, there is an element of pragmatism—unavoidably—in the selection of the individual scholars represented in this collection. Others could conceivably have been included but the final line-up was, in the last resort, a function of the availability of contributors. We hope that this volume will inspire further work on the broad subject of scholars at war and, in particular, attention to those individuals (such as the Australian museum anthropologist Norman Tindale and the New Zealand historian Angus Ross) not included in the pages that follow.

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