

# ACTIVITY 2.1 The causes and initial course of World War II

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM HISTORICAL SKILLS

- Use chronological sequencing to demonstrate the relationship between events and developments in different periods and places



**Source 1** Chancellor Hitler and President Hindenburg

Many historians have argued that the causes of World War II, including the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party, can be traced back to decisions made during the Paris Peace Conference when the Treaty of Versailles was agreed upon. The Treaty humiliated Germany and blamed it for World War I. It economically crippled Germany by imposing massive reparation payments, as well as by removing control of territory that was necessary to generate economic wealth and activity.

The ravages of the Great Depression during the 1930s also affected Germany greatly. Many businesses went bankrupt, and by the early 1930s one in three workers were unemployed.

German people were despairing. They were desperate for solutions to their problems, but also for something or someone to blame.

In the lead-up to the election of 1932, Hitler and his Nazi Party made the following promises:

- To tear up the Treaty of Versailles (including promises to pay reparations for World War I)
- To build up the armed forces again
- To provide work for all
- To reunite the ‘fatherhood’.

They also said that the Jews were to blame for Germany’s problems.

By January of 1933, Hitler became the Chancellor (Prime Minister) of Germany. Within a few months, concentration camps were opened and political opponents of the Nazis (mainly Communists) were placed in them. By March, Hitler introduced the Enabling Act, which let him make laws without going to parliament or the President. By July, Hitler had banned all political parties except the Nazi Party.

When President Hindenburg died in 1934, Hitler took over his role as President and declared himself the ‘Führer’ (leader) of Germany. A range of methods were then used to ensure the Nazis faced very little opposition during the following years. The Nazis controlled education and the media to ensure that German people only heard praise for the Nazi regime. The ‘terror’ organisations of the SS and the Gestapo were established to discover and punish anyone who could be an enemy of the Nazis.

On 2 August 1934, the entire army swore an oath of personal loyalty to Hitler. They agreed to stay out of politics and to serve Hitler. In return, Hitler began re-establishing Germany as a military power. He increased the size of the army, began building warships, and created a German air force. Compulsory military service was also introduced. This was despite the fact that one of the requirements of the Treaty of Versailles was that Germany had limited armed forces.

Another of the requirements of the Treaty of Versailles had been that no German troops were allowed into the Rhineland, the border area between Germany and France. Yet in 1936, Hitler took a huge risk and ordered German troops to enter the Rhineland. The French, reluctant to start another war, decided to do nothing. At the same time, Hitler made alliances with Italy and Japan.

Hitler’s next step was to begin taking back the land that had been lost as a result of the Treaty of Versailles. In March 1938, German troops marched into Austria and forced the Austrian leader, Schuschnigg, to hold a vote asking the Austrian people whether they wanted to be part of Germany. Schuschnigg asked for help from France and Britain, but they refused. Over 99% of Austrian citizens voted for ‘Anschluss’—political union with Germany. With Germany and Austria joining, another condition of the Treaty of Versailles had been broken.

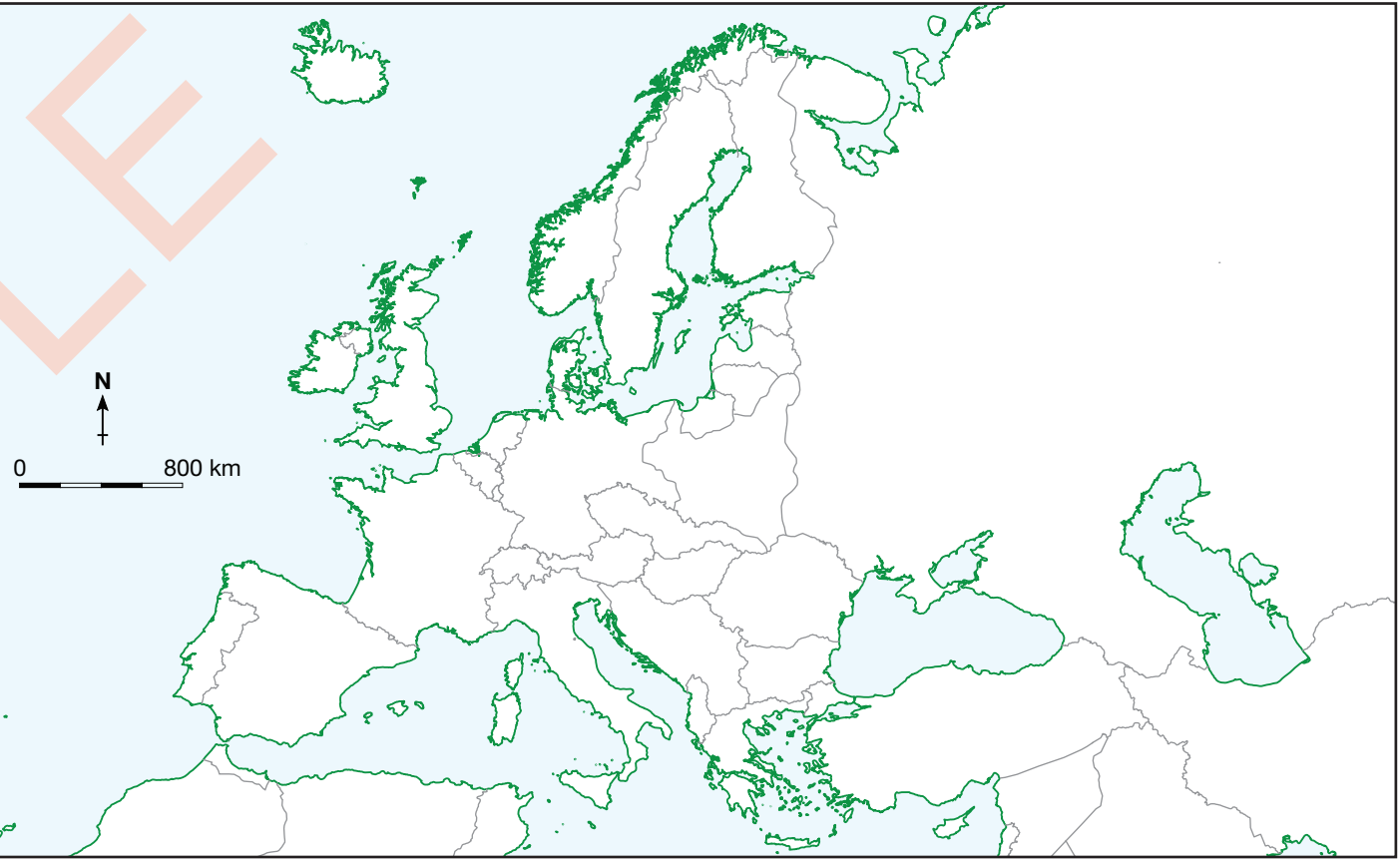
Later in 1938, Hitler demanded that the Sudetenland, part of Czechoslovakia, become part of Germany. The leader of Czechoslovakia was completely opposed to this, and wanted support from Britain and France. Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Britain, thought that if Hitler’s demands for the Sudetenland were met, he would at last be satisfied and would stop seeking to occupy further areas. A number of meetings were held between the leaders of Britain, Germany, France and Italy. On 29 September, they made a decision to give Hitler what he wanted. This agreement, known as the ‘Munich Agreement’, stated that Hitler could have the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia if he promised not to invade the rest of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain and Hitler published a joint declaration that this agreement would assure peace for Europe.

In March 1939, Hitler broke his promise and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia. Britain and France still did nothing. They did, however, tell Hitler that if he invaded Poland, they would declare war.

On 24 August 1939, Hitler and Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, made a deal not to attack one another and to divide Poland between them. This was known as the Nazi–Soviet Pact. On 1 September 1939, German troops invaded Poland from the west, and Soviet forces invaded Poland from the east. On 2 September, Britain and France declared war on Germany.

From September through to March 1940, however, there was little actual fighting. Although Britain and France had declared war on Germany, they did not actually send troops to defend Poland. For this reason, the period became known as the ‘Phoney War’.

In April 1940, Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway, and in May, the German army turned its power on France. The French government surrendered on 21 June 1940.



- 1 On the map above:
- a Shade Germany in one colour.
  - b Use another colour to outline the Rhineland.
  - c Shade in the countries that Germany took over between 1936 and 1940 in a different colour.

2 Using the information provided above, complete the following timeline by summarising the key events in the lead-up to, and the early years of, World War II.

1940

1939

1938

1936

1934

1933

ACTIVITY2.2

Australia and the war in the Pacific

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM  
HISTORICAL SKILLS

>

Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument

>

Identify and analyse different historical interpretations (including their own)

During the 1930s, Japan had sought to build an empire in Asia. In 1931, it had invaded Manchuria, and by 1937, Japan had invaded the rest of China. By 1940, they had control of Shanghai, Nanjing and most of coastal China. It was in 1940 that Japan also occupied French Indochina (now Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam).

The United States was nervous about Japanese actions and placed a number of trade restrictions on Japan. Japan believed that if they could cripple the US naval presence in the Pacific, they would be able to gain control of eastern Asia and the western Pacific. Japan officially entered World War II when it attacked Pearl Harbour, the United States naval base in Hawaii, on 7 December 1941. Between December 1941 and March 1942, the Japanese took Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaya (Malaysia), the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) and much of Burma (Myanmar). Singapore surrendered to the Japanese on 15 February 1942, and over 130 000 allied troops, including 15 000 Australians, became Japanese prisoners of war.

The fall of Singapore caused great concern in Australia. Singapore had been regarded as almost impossible to invade, and the strong British presence there prior to 1942 had meant that Australia felt protected. The defeat of the British base in Singapore meant that there was nothing to stop the Japanese advance into Australia. Australia’s leaders realised that they could no longer depend on Britain, who was fighting Germany, and that they needed new allies against Japan.

I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pang as to our traditional links of kinship with the United Kingdom ... We know the problems that the United Kingdom faces. We know the constant threat of invasion ... but we know too that Australia can go, and Britain can still hold on ... We are therefore determined that Australia shall not go, and we shall exert all our energies towards the shaping of a plan, with the United States as its keystone, which will give our country confidence of being able to hold out until the tide of battle swings against the enemy.

Source 1 Australian Prime Minister John Curtin, quoted in the *Melbourne Herald*, 27 December 1941

Not long after the fall of Singapore, around 90 Japanese aircraft bombed the northern port of Darwin. Darwin would be bombed by the Japanese sixty times between 19 February 1942 and 12 November 1943.

Although Father John McGrath at the Bathurst Island mission north of Darwin observed the Japanese aircraft passing overhead and radioed a warning to RAAF Operations at Darwin at 9.37 am, his warning was not passed on by the RAAF to the 2000 inhabitants of Darwin or the numerous naval and merchant ships in the harbour.





Source 2 An Australian government-produced poster from 1942

The first notice of the Japanese attack received by the citizens of Darwin was the terrifying sound of falling bombs. Within two hours of the first attack, Japanese aircraft struck Darwin again. Owing to the lack of response to Father McGrath’s warning, heavy damage was inflicted on the town, shipping in the harbour, and the RAAF airfield in the two initial air raids on 19 February. Eight ships were sunk in the harbour and many were damaged. A Japanese dive bomber attacked and severely damaged the clearly marked hospital ship *Manunda*. The Darwin post office took a direct hit from a bomb which killed 10 civilian employees. Two hundred and forty-three people were killed at Darwin on 19 February, and 300 were wounded.

Amid the panic of that day, many of Darwin’s civilian population fled southwards, heading for Adelaide River. The panic in the town was repeated at the RAAF base, where many servicemen also deserted their stations. This mass departure later became known as ‘The Adelaide River Stakes’.

The township was shattered by the bombing. It was the heaviest loss of life on Australian soil since European settlement in 1788, and the first time that an enemy nation had attacked our mainland. Although the bombing of Darwin was front-page news in Australia next day, the full extent of the damage and loss of life was not revealed by the Curtin government, who stated in the media that only 15 people had been killed and 24 wounded.

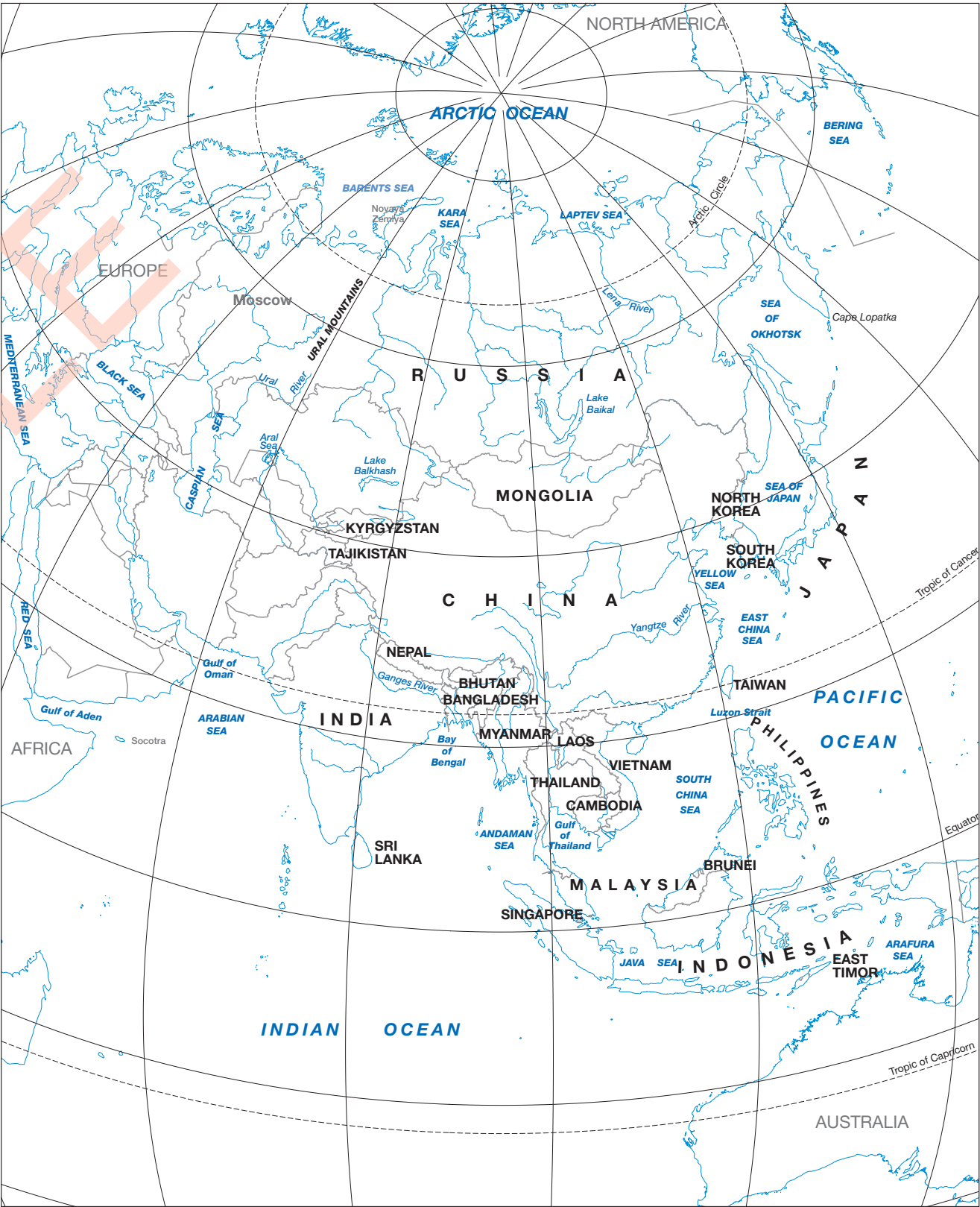
On the morning of Thursday, 19 February 1942, my ship was heading out of port and those of us who were not on duty were sitting on deck. We had not cleared the harbour, when we noticed a formation of planes approaching over East Head. It would have been close to 10.00 am when we first saw them. The planes were glinting in the morning sun, and we remarked on the good formation they were keeping. At first we thought these planes were ours, and then we noticed some silver-looking objects dropping from them. It was not long before we knew what they were as they exploded in smoke and dust on the town and waterfront. More Japanese planes came in from another direction. These were dive bombers, and they attacked the ships in the harbour. We saw a couple of planes crash into the sea. I thought they were ours.

Then it was our turn for some attention. They began strafing us from almost mast height. As the only armament we had against aircraft was a Lewis machine gun, and this had been disabled by a Japanese bullet hitting the magazine pan, the skipper was firing at them with his .45 revolver. This strafing went on for approximately half an hour before my first taste of action ended. Our casualties were nine wounded out of a crew of thirty-six, and one of these died on the hospital ship *Manunda* on the following day. The skipper had both knees shattered by Japanese bullets.

We transferred our injured to the *Manunda*, and then our motor boat began rescuing survivors in the water. The scenes in the harbour during the raid were horrific, with ships on fire, oil and debris everywhere, ships sinking, and ships run aground. The merchant ship *Neptuna* was berthed alongside the wharf. It received a direct hit and blew up. The tremendous explosion was ear-shattering and sent debris flying up to half a kilometre. *Neptuna* had been loaded with depth charges and ammunition.

Source 3 Stoker 2nd Class Charlie Unmack was aboard HMAS *Gunbar* in Darwin harbour during the first Japanese air raid.

- 1 Using the information on pp. 19–20, shade the territory held by Japan in December 1941, on the modern map below. Then shade the territory captured by Japan between December 1941 and July 1942 in another colour. Label the countries that have changed names since World War II.





- 2

In your own words, explain why the fall of Singapore was such a significant event for Australians.
- 3

Analyse Source 1. What was Prime Minister Curtin saying about Australia's changing relationship with Britain and the United States?
- 4

Analyse Source 2. What message is being conveyed in the poster? What do you think was the motive behind its publication?

- 5

Why do you think the Curtin government underplayed the magnitude of the impact of the bombing? How does this contradict the message being portrayed in Source 2? How do you explain this contradiction?
- 6

Read Source 3. What can you infer about the extent of damage inflicted on Darwin by the Japanese on the 19 February 1942?



**Source 4** Damage to the Darwin post office after the Japanese air raid, 1942



ACTIVITY 2.3 Australian women during World War II

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM HISTORICAL SKILLS

- Identify the origin, purpose and context of primary and secondary sources
- Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument
- Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources

World War II saw many changes to the roles that women played on both the home and war fronts.

A number of women’s auxiliary services were formed. These were not part of the existing armed services, but additional to them. These included:

- The Women’s Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF), formed in March 1941
- The Australian Women’s Army Service (AWAS), formed in August 1941
- The Women’s Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS), formed in April 1941
- The Australian Army Medical Women’s Service (AAMWS)
- The Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS)

There was also a Women’s Land Army, formed in July 1942, which placed women on the land to support agricultural production.

In total, around 78 000 women enlisted in various services during World War II. Almost 4000 of these women served overseas.

The largest of the women’s auxiliary services was the WAAAF. There were 73 different jobs that women could be assigned to when they volunteered for the WAAAF, including the roles of flight mechanic, signaller, electrician and instrument maker. During the existence of the WAAAF, over 700 women held roles which involved commanding units and having high levels of responsibility. They were paid roughly two-thirds of the wage of male officers in equivalent positions. The sources on the next few pages reflect a range of views on the WAAAF. Examine them and answer the following questions.



Source 1 Maurice Bramley, ‘Join us in a victory job’, 1943  
Colour photolithograph on paper  
Overall: 48.2 x 60.4 cm  
Australian War Memorial (ARTV00332)



Source 2 James Northfield, “Doing a grand job!” Join the WAAAF’, 1942  
Offset lithograph on paper  
Overall: 100 x 63.5 cm  
Australian War Memorial (ARTV05170)





**Source 3** Walter Lacy Jardine, 'Keep them flying!', 1942  
Offset lithograph on paper  
Overall: 24.8 x 31 cm  
Australian War Memorial (ARTV01114)



**Source 4** Members of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force cleaning and overhauling a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) aircraft, Pearce, Western Australia, March 1943 (AWM 29691)

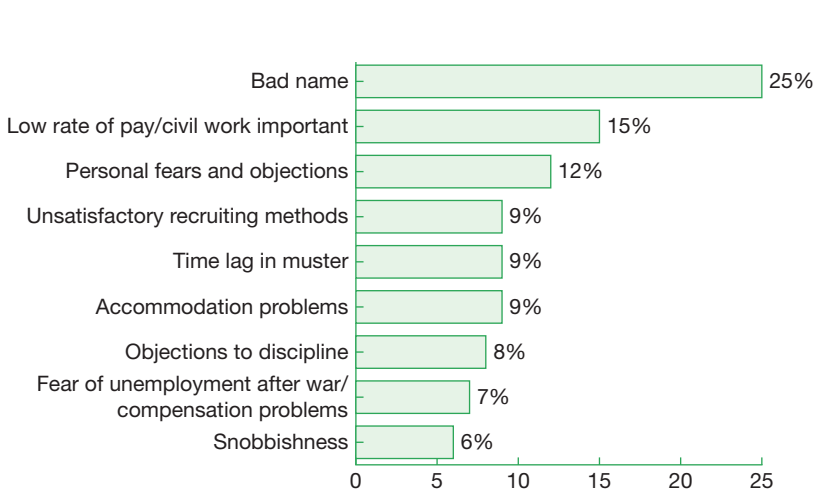


**Source 5** 'Male mess Orderlies are now a thing of the past on most Australian Air Force Stations where the introduction of WAAAF staffs has released more and more men for active work in the operational areas.' (AWM 13527)



- Being patriotic and wanting to serve my country.
- I was young and healthy with an unbending sense of ‘my country needs me’.
- I’m not sure but perhaps it was my dad’s 1st AIF background, seeing friends and families affected in various ways, the lure of enlisting campaigns or the air of mystery and appeal as women began appearing in uniform in our town.
- First and foremost I wished to serve my country.
- Seeing my four brothers in uniform made me very determined to want to do my bit too.
- I joined up because I loved marching, music, excitement, pageantry and the colour blue! I also joined because I loved and still love England.
- I joined the WAAAF because I was born Patricia instead of Peter.
- I knew that somehow I must be part of the challenge to the German fallacy that ‘might is right’.
- Many, like myself, found ‘joining up’ an escape from an intolerably dead-end employment situation, as well as a patriotic response.
- Apart from financial reasons, I was better off financially.
- Walking along St George’s Terrace, Perth, with a crowd of girls one evening in 1942, I pointed to an Air Force House and said, ‘I think I’ll join’. One of the girls said, ‘Well, go and do it’, and pushed me in the door.
- I joined up from a war-embattled home to help protect 40 Marine Parade, Maroubra.

**Source 6** ‘Some reasons why I joined the WAAAF’, From Clare Stevenson and Honor Darling (eds), *The WAAAF Book*



**Unsatisfactory propaganda and recruiting methods**

The basis of the appeal which urges women to release Air Force men for the front by taking their base jobs as clerks, cooks and so on is not effective. Possibly many women do not want to be merely substitutes for men; if they can do certain duties as efficiently as men, they want to be regarded as fellow members of the Air Force—not as substitutes.

**Social and personal objections**

A number are deterred by a fear, or impression of snobbishness. Many girls are genuinely attached to their homes, and the desire that they should not leave them for comparative hardships, possible unpleasantness and risks of membership of a ‘fighting’ service, is mutual between them and their parents.

**It’s not ‘our’ war**

Indifference and selfishness must be included in the personal reasons which in some cases prevent enrolment.

**An explanation of some of these reasons:**

**Low rate of pay**

The low rate of pay is a very strong indeed, and unanswerable, argument for many girls, especially for those who contribute to the upkeep of their parents’ home.

**Fear of unemployment after the war**

There is fear that if they give up their present position to enter the Auxiliary Air Force, they run a big risk, not only of losing status in their work, but even of being unable to obtain work at all after the war. This is of special importance to young women who occupy responsible positions in the commercial world.

**Moral aspersions**

There is no doubt that stories about the moral conduct of WAAAFs have put many girls off joining up, and have caused parents to dissuade their daughters, and Air Force men to dissuade their girl friends and sisters, from seeking to enrol.

**Source 7** Excerpt from a 1942 report about why women were not joining the WAAAF (Professor A. P. Elkin, *University of Sydney Archives Document*, AWM PR 84/291)

I came from a home where my mother did practically everything for me. I went into Bankstown camp and was among the first of the WAAAF in New South Wales. Now just imagine coming from a home where you never cleaned anything. Your main job was to mend your stockings, and to find out that you had to clean everything you used, including the toilets and the showers ... everything. Believe me, that was a culture shock! And to think you had to share a bedroom—it was only a hut—with all those women and you’d never even undressed in front of others before. It was so entirely different. It didn’t take us long, though—it was a case of survival of the fittest and you had to be fit so we survived.

Very early in the piece there were some servicemen who rather resented us being there but I think in the main most of the men accepted us. They couldn’t have handled it without us or a lot of the men wouldn’t have been sent overseas. So we were very necessary.

It had a tremendous influence on my life and I think anybody who was involved, anybody who felt they were doing a worthwhile job, would feel as I do—that it was a terrible time, it was a horrific time, but you wouldn’t have missed it for anything because it gave us a different outlook on life, it made us more understanding of a lot of things and it made brothers and sisters of a lot of people who would never have known each other otherwise.

**Source 8** Extract from the memoir of Judy Stone, a WAAAF servicewoman

1 Analyse Sources 1–3, and then complete the following table:

	Source 1	Source 2	Source 3
What is being promised?			
What sorts of jobs are being offered?			
Who is the target audience for these advertisements?			
What words, images or ideas are used to ‘sell’ the promise of the advertisement?			
How successful do you think the advertisement would have been? Why?			



2 Analyse Sources 4 and 5, then answer the following questions:

a What is shown in these photographs?

b Compare the jobs being done in these photographs to the range of jobs discussed in Sources 1–3. What are the similarities and differences?

c Who might have taken these photographs, and for what purpose?

d Are these better evidence for examining women’s role in the WAAAF than Sources 1–3? Explain your answer.

3 Analyse Sources 6 and 7, then complete the following table:

	Source 6	Source 7
List of reasons for or against joining the WAAAF		
How the source supports or challenges the image of the WAAAF presented in Sources 1–3		

4 Read Source 8. According to the author, what were the benefits of the WAAAF to herself and to her country?