# Security intelligence records held in Melbourne

The National Archives in Melbourne holds a significant collection of records created by successive Commonwealth agencies engaged in domestic security, intelligence and investigative activities from the time of World War I until the 1960s. These records largely relate to the operations of the Victorian branches of the agencies concerned and deal mainly with the activities of particular individuals or organisations within the state of Victoria. Equivalent records for other Australian states will generally be held by the National Archives office in each state.

## Agencies creating security and intelligence records held in Melbourne

| Title or description of record | Date range | Agency number |
|---|---|---|
| Headquarters, 3rd Military District, Intelligence Section | 1911–21 | CA 1841 |
| Special Intelligence Bureau, Central Office, Melbourne | 1916–19 | CA 746 |
| Investigation Branch, Central Office, Melbourne | 1919–46 | CA 747 |
| Investigation Branch, Victoria | 1927–46 | CA 907 |
| Commonwealth Investigation Service, Victoria | 1946–60 | CA 916 |

The security intelligence function had its origins in the perceived threat to domestic security posed by the climate of World War I and sought to monitor the activities of enemy and alien subjects or those whose loyalty to Australia's cause might have been in question. With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the Investigation Branch, which by this time was the agency administering the function, adopted a similar role, investigating enemy and alien subjects and the members of Australian based organisations whose activities were considered potentially detrimental to the Australian war effort. These investigations often led to the subject of investigation being interned.

During the period between the World Wars the Investigation Branch was responsible for peacetime security matters, which included immigration and naturalisation-related investigations. This was also the role of the Commonwealth Investigation Service, created in 1946 following World War II. The creation of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) in 1949 removed the domestic security function from the Commonwealth Investigation Service, which was eventually absorbed into the Commonwealth Police Force in 1960.

# Record holdings

As noted below, the scope of activities of the successive agencies varied over time, and this is reflected in their records, in both the breadth of activities that came under scrutiny and the quantity of records created. The case files listed below refer mainly to individuals, though some organisations that came under scrutiny are also included.

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## Case files and related records

| Title or description of record | Date range | Series number |
|---|---|---|
| Intelligence Section records | 1914–23 | MP16/1 |
| Correspondence files | 1924–62 | B741 |
| Reports to General Staff Officer (Military Intelligence) Southern Command relating to investigations made on behalf of the Army | 1939–42 | MT269/8 |

## Other records

| Title or description of record | Date range | Series number |
|---|---|---|
| Intelligence reports on enemy trading and other suspicious actions Weekly reports based primarily on intercepted cables and correspondence alluding to dealings with black-listed or enemy companies | 1916–19 | MP95/1 |
| Alien registration forms Bundled according to nationality and in alphabetical order within bundles. Records relate to the State of Victoria only | 1916–20 | MT269/1 |
| Monthly Intelligence Summaries 3rd Military District Records are arranged by subject categories (eg 'Industrial unions', 'Manufacturing') | 1923–36 | MP95/3 |

## Reference material accumulated by agents

| Title or description of record | Date range | Series number |
|---|---|---|
| Publications such as booklets, pamphlets, circulars, speakers' notes, election propaganda, songs and posters of organisations of interest. Mainly from World War II onwards. | 1933–72 | B2836 |

# The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)

Although ASIO had its headquarters in Melbourne for many years – from 1951 until 1986 (when the organisation moved to Canberra) – no ASIO records are held by the National Archives in Melbourne.

# For information on obtaining access to ASIO

## Fact Sheets:

- *Fact sheet 33: Security Intelligence records held in Canberra*
- *Fact sheet 69: ASIO files on writers and literary groups*

# For more information

Many items from the record series MP16/1 and B741 have been listed individually on the RecordSearch database at an item level and this data is available on this website or in all research centres. On the website read the help text to select a particular series on RecordSearch and narrow the search by a keyword, such as a surname or the name of an organisation to identify items of interest. Follow the links in the series lists to go directly to information on that series. You can also use RecordSearch to find out about the agencies that created the records and to locate more records on your subject.