

World War I and World War II service records

There The National Archives holds the service records of Australians who served in World War I and World War II in the Australian Army, Royal Australian Navy (RAN), and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

What do service records contain?

Defence service records set out the essentials of a person's service in the forces. They commonly contain biographical information supplied on enlistment, such as name, address, next of kin and age, as well as service information such as movements, postings, changes in rank, and brief mention of injuries or illness. Although most records contain these basic elements, they do vary in the amount of information they contain. Service records were used by the services to administer the movements and pay of their personnel and they were not intended to be an everyday account of events in a serviceperson's career.

Under the *Archives Act 1983*, the Archives provides access to records once they enter the open access period.

Common questions about the records

Where did they serve and in what actions were they involved?

Service records will tell you in which unit or ship a person served. More detailed information about these units can often be found in unit records held by the Australian War Memorial.

For histories of the battles, and the units involved, check library sources such as the 12-volume Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918 (Angus and Robertson, Sydney) or the 5-series set Australia in the War of 1939–1945 (Australian War Memorial, Canberra).

What do the abbreviations mean?

We have published a list of common abbreviations used in the records. The Memorial's Glossary is another useful source for understanding abbreviations and acronyms.

Are photographs included with the records?

World War I Army service records and Navy service cards do not contain photographs. About half of the World War II Army records contain a photograph, as well as most of the World War II RAAF records. The [Australian War Memorial](#) holds a collection of photographs, including some of individuals.

Where were they buried?

The [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#) and the [Roll of Honour](#), held by the Australian War Memorial, give details of the burial place of those killed in service and of memorials to the missing.

Where can I find information about medals, honours and awards?

Inquiries about medal entitlements for service in the Australian Defence forces are handled by Defence Honours and Awards. They can be contacted by phone on 1800 333 362. Alternatively, complete the [Defence Medals - Online Application](#).

Why is no medical record included?

For World War I, the only medical information that normally exists is the brief information contained on the service record.

During World War II separate medical files were created, which are now either with the Department of Defence or were passed to the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Because of the personal information they contain they are not generally available under the Archives Act.

If you have a special need for access to the information they contain, you will need to apply for access under the Freedom of Information Act, to the [Department of Defence](#) (for information related to the period of service only) or the [Department of Veterans' Affairs](#) (for both period of service and later information).

The RAAF usually created a casualty file for members killed or severely wounded in service. These files are held by the Archives and a copy can be requested.

Who do you contact if the information on the record is incorrect?

If you think the information in a service record is incorrect, contact [Defence Freedom of Information](#).

If you are concerned that information on the World War II nominal roll has been incorrectly recorded, contact the [Nominal Roll team](#).

Eulogy service

Defence Archives responds to [eulogy requests](#) for Navy, Army and Air Force. For further queries contact Defence Archives on 1800 333 362 or email ADF.records@defence.gov.au.

Concerns about the public release of information

Under the Archives Act we are required to release as much information as possible. If you have concerns about information that has been released, please email us at publicrelease@naa.gov.au.

Purchasing a copy of a World War I or World War II service record

To purchase a copy of a service record, find the item on [RecordSearch](#) and then select 'Request copy'. Alternatively, [Ask us a question](#) or contact us through our National Reference Service at PO Box 4924, KINGSTON ACT 2604.

When requesting a record please include as many details of the member as you can – full name, service and conflict, service number, date of birth, enlistment and discharge. Requests for copies of records which have already been cleared for public access (ie Open and Open with exception) will be supplied within 30 days of the paid request being received by the National Archives.

Online digital copies of Navy service cards for [Navy Officers](#) and [Petty Officers and Men](#) (1911–70) and [World War I service records](#) are available to view on RecordSearch.