

## New Guard Movement, 1931–35

### The New Guard

The New Guard was formed in Sydney in February 1931. Its membership application form said that the movement stood for: unswerving loyalty to the Throne; all for the British Empire; sane and honourable government throughout Australia; suppression of any disloyal and immoral elements in government, industrial and social circles; abolition of machine politics; and maintenance of the full liberty of the individual.

The movement appealed to conservative returned servicemen who were strongly anti-Communist and deeply suspicious of the Labor Premier of New South Wales, Jack Lang, and his political and economic response to the Great Depression.

Eric Campbell (1893–1970), the New Guard's leader and a World War I veteran, gave the movement a quasi-military organisation – with divisional commanders, zone commanders and a chief commander. Members were placed into three classes based on their physical fitness and technical abilities.

At its height, the New Guard had a membership of over 50,000. The movement was almost exclusively based in New South Wales, with its heaviest concentration of support in Sydney. After the dismissal of the Lang government on 13 May 1932 and its subsequent defeat at the polls, and with an improving economy, the New Guard lost much of its momentum.

Despite efforts by Campbell and others to identify a wider sphere of activities that might sustain the movement, none met with long-term success. In his book *The New Road* (Briton Publications, Sydney, 1934), Campbell also attempted to define a political role for those who supported the concept of a New Guard.

### Records relating to the New Guard held by the National Archives

The National Archives holds a number of significant records relating to the New Guard and some of its prominent members. These are held in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney. They include security investigations into the New Guard, copies of and reports about New Guard publications,

and records concerning allegations that in 1931 and 1932 there were links between the New Guard and the Defence Department. Details of these records are provided below.

## Canberra

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>First AIF personnel dossier – Campbell, Eric</u>	1914–20	B2455, Campbell E H
<u>The New Guard and 'The Association'</u>	1930–49	A367, C94121
<u>The New Guard</u>	1931–48	A432, 1931/1871
<u>The New Guard, Vol. 1, No. 1 October 1931 (New Guard Publications Limited)</u>	1931	A1336, 21741
<u>The Association (post war) and the New Guard (pre war) – Vol 1</u>	1931–49	A6122, 2 volume 1
<u>The Association (post war) and the New Guard (pre war) – Vol 2</u>	1949–67	A6122, 2 volume 2
<u>Drawing – Captain FE de Groot – copyright registration and exhibit</u>	1932	A1861, 6339
<u>New Guard – alleged association of with Defence Department – Parliamentary question by Mr Beasley</u>	1932	A5954, 973/6
<u>EC's Gazette (Eric Campbell)</u>	1935	A6126, 2
<u>Newspaper cutting – The Rallying Point: My Story of the New Guard by Eric Campbell</u>	1965	A5954, 1248/43

## Sydney

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>New Guard Movement – correspondence with the Japanese Consul General in Australia</u>	1931–46	C443, J390
<u>Activities of Hon Lieutenant H H Downey, MC, AIC, in regards to disloyalty due to association with New Guard and Communism</u>	1933	SP1141/1, S33/1/30
<u>Colonel Eric Campbell – correspondence with the Japanese Consul General in Australia</u>	1935–46	C443, J140

## Melbourne

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Coast defences – Fremantle [This file is component 6 of 8 that comprise the attachments to 1887/2/35, 'Internal security – activities of New Guard' in box 5]</u>	1920–39	MP1049/9, 1887/2/35
<u>Lieutenant Colonel Eric Campbell – appeal to the Governor-General</u>	1926–42	MP742/1, C/1/34
<u>Report on alleged connection of Defence Department with New Guard</u>	1931–32	B1535, 812/1/23
<u>De Groot, FE – Temporary Major – connected with incidents at opening of Sydney Harbour Bridge</u>	1932–43	MP742/1, D/2/306
<u>The New Guard</u>	1933	B741, V/9397

## **Where to find further information**

A number of books have been published about the New Guard, including a volume of memoirs, *The Rallying Point: My Story of the New Guard*, by Eric Campbell (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1965), and the later study, *The New Guard Movement 1931–1935*, by Keith Amos (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1976).

Records relating to the New Guard are also held by [State Records of New South Wales](#) and the Mitchell Library, located within the [State Library of New South Wales](#).

- *Fact sheet 96 - JT Lang and Lang Labor*