

## Boer War records

Towards the end of the nineteenth century elements within the South African colonies had become disgruntled with increasing interference in local affairs by the British, who had established a presence in the region from 1806. In 1899 the Boer farmers of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, descendants of Dutch settlers, declared war on the British by invading the colonies of Natal and Cape Colony. The war continued for three years, but by 1902 the British had defeated Boer resistance. The 1902 Peace of Vereeniging installed a pro-British civil administration.

### **Australian involvement in the Boer War**

When war broke out the British government called for support from across the Empire. The Australian colonies – with initial hesitation – offered support. Contingents were raised from all colonies and after Federation in 1901 a joint Commonwealth contingent was raised.

There is no agreed figure for the number of Australians who served. Craig Wilcox in *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902* (Oxford University Press, 2002, p. xiii) suggests figures of 'around 20,000 men and 80 women', but adds 'we will probably never know the precise number as many enlisted more than once and those with irregular regiments have never been counted and may not be countable'.

The Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour lists 598 casualties. Six Australians were awarded the Victoria Cross for their Boer War service.

### **Record holdings**

The National Archives holds many records relating to Australian participation in the Boer War. The majority of these are held by our Canberra and Melbourne offices.

Series marked with an '\*\*' are available on microfilm in all National Archives reading rooms, with the exception of the Melbourne reading room.

## Defence, Army and returned soldiers records

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Department of Defence general correspondence files relating to the Australian Contingent in the South African (Boer) War</u>	1899–1911	A6443
<u>Submissions on the Boer War from the Department of Defence to the Federal Executive Council</u>	1901–03	A9298
<u>Army Orders issued by Army Headquarters Pretoria, South Africa*</u>	1901–02	B5169
<u>Regimental correspondence – 1st Australian Infantry Regiment</u>	1899–1900	C3167
<u>Registers of returned soldiers of the Queensland Defence Force*</u>	1901–03	B5163
<u>Boer War veterans' case files</u>	1938–48	J1773
<u>Insurance benefits for Boer War veterans*</u>	1900–01	B5159
<u>Boer War funeral benefit sub-files, BW prefix</u>	1901–61	B5517
<u>Boer War veterans' funeral benefit files, BW prefix</u>	1939–60	D4549
<u>South Africa Contingents Pay Office, general correspondence – Queensland contingents</u>	1901–03	MP744/1
<u>General correspondence of the Headquarters Brigade Office, Queensland Defence Force</u>	1900–01	MP744/3
<u>Confidential telegrams and correspondence, Headquarters Office, Queensland Defence Force</u>	1899–1900	MP744/6
<u>Registered papers of the Staff Officer for Mounted Infantry, Queensland Defence Force</u>	1901	MP744/7
<u>Chief Secretary's Office (Queensland), general correspondence</u>	1899–1907	MP744/11
<u>Papers of the Fifth Queensland (Imperial Bushmen) contingent</u>	1901–02	MP744/39
<u>Photographs of Queensland contingents</u>	1892–1906	A1715

## Records documenting service in the Boer War

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Enrolment forms of Victorian contingents*</u>	1899–1900	B5177
<u>Attestation papers – Commonwealth forces</u>	1901–02	B4418
<u>Attestation declarations for the Fifth South Australian contingent</u>	1901	AP613/7
<u>Nominal rolls of Victorian contingents*</u>	1899–1901	B5179
<u>Service rolls of Queensland contingents</u>	1901	A6615
<u>Nominal rolls of the Queensland Defence Force*</u>	1901	B5172
<u>Returns of Queensland contingents*</u>	1899–1902	B5175
<u>Roll of the Fourth Queensland Imperial Bushmen*</u>	1901	B5181
<u>Service rolls of contingents of the Queensland Defence Force*</u>	1899–1901	B5199
<u>Alphabetical roll of Western Australian contingents*</u>	1900–01	B5165

<u>Nominal rolls of the Third New South Wales Imperial Bushmen contingent and the Third New South Wales Mounted Rifles contingent*</u>	1901–02	B5198
<u>Nominal roll of Bethune's Mounted Infantry*</u>	1899–1901	B5203
<u>Nominal rolls of battalions for service in South Africa*</u>	1902	B5207
<u>Nominal rolls of Australian Commonwealth Horse</u>	1902	P2443
<u>Medical history sheets of members of the Sixth Queensland contingent returning by TSS Devon*</u>	1901–02	B5155
<u>Medical records of Queensland Defence Force members returned from South Africa*</u>	1899–1902	B5166
<u>Register of medical examinations for First Queensland (Mounted Infantry) contingent*</u>	1899	B5174
<u>Unregistered nominal rolls, pay lists, and associated accounting correspondence, relating to Queensland contingents</u>	1899–1902	A6588
<u>Camp and ordinary pay sheets for Queensland contingents</u>	1899–1901	A6590
<u>Pay lists and pay instruction rolls for Queensland Defence Force members*</u>	1901–02	B5161
<u>Pay list for H Company Fourth Contingent, Queensland Defence Force*</u>	1900–01	B5164
<u>Pay sheets of the Fifth and Sixth Queensland (Imperial Bushmen) contingents*</u>	1901–02	B5180
<u>Contingent pay ledgers for New South Wales Forces*</u>	1899–1908	B5200
<u>Registers of pay for New South Wales Forces*</u>	1900–03	B5201
<u>Pay ledger for Military Forces, New South Wales*</u>	1899–1902	B5202
<u>Pay ledgers for New South Wales Military Forces*</u>	1899–1902	B5205
<u>Index to pay ledgers for the New South Wales Military Forces*</u>	1899–1902	B5206
<u>Medal roll – Fifth Contingent, Queensland Imperial Bushman</u>	1901	A6614
<u>Medal rolls and clasps of the Queensland Defence Force*</u>	1899–1903	B5167
<u>Index to register of issue of Boer War medals and clasps – New South Wales Defence Force*</u>	1903–11	B5183
<u>Register of issue of Boer War medals and clasps – New South Wales Defence Force*</u>	1903–11	B5184
<u>Lists of Boer War medals and clasps issued to New South Wales and Imperial units*</u>	1899–1901	B5197
<u>Nominal rolls and lists of medals and clasps for New South Wales Military Forces*</u>	1899–1907	B5204
<u>Lists of medals and clasps</u>	1900–02	MP744/50
<u>Register of issue of medals and clasps</u>	1903–08	MP744/51
<u>Returns of Queensland Defence Force personnel who died in South Africa*</u>	1902	B5178
<u>Personal case files, BW prefix</u>	1904–	A2799

## **For more information**

See the National Archives' research guide, [The Boer War: Australians and the War in South Africa, 1899–1902](#) by Craig Wilcox.

Additional Boer War records are held by the [Australian War Memorial](#) and State government archives. Please see *Fact sheet 2 – Addresses of Australian Archival institutions* for further information.

*The Official Record of the Australian Military Contingents to the War in South Africa*, by PL Murray (AJ Mullett, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1911) includes lists of persons who served in the Boer War. You can also search the website of the [Australian War Memorial](#) for details of Boer War service.