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Andrew Richardson

19 August 2005
Declaration

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Andrew Richardson
19 August 2005
Abstract

This thesis examines the work of repatriation authorities in Tasmania after WWI, the returned soldiers' responses to the system, and the experiences of both the soldiers and the authorities in re-establishing returned men into society.

Repatriation was one of the great problems facing Australian administrators after the Great War. The need to provide for the large numbers of returning soldiers and cater for their re-establishment into society was one of the most costly programs undertaken by the Commonwealth. Pryor, Lloyd, Rees, and Garton have all examined repatriation in Australia in a national context, while other authors have considered select repatriation policies on a regional basis. However, previous historians have failed to investigate the specific Tasmanian context of major Commonwealth repatriation policies such as the soldier land settlement scheme, employment, health services, and the political dimension of repatriation. This thesis focuses on the Tasmanian context to enable some comparison where applicable with Commonwealth outcomes of repatriation.

To provide comparison and to examine repatriation policy and its implementation in Tasmania, this thesis focuses on the design and implementation of Commonwealth Repatriation policy during the latter half of the war, and assesses a decade of its post war performance of, in particular, policies such as health and employment.

Returned soldiers' abilities to reassimilate successfully into the community were determined by two main factors. Firstly, Commonwealth health policy, treatment, and subsequent pensions were crucial to Tasmanian returned soldiers who suffered injuries caused or aggravated by their war service. Secondly and even more important was the need for meaningful employment and vocational opportunities and training. Employment and vocational training for returned men had the most immediate impact on their abilities to re-engage with society and support families; hence it was crucial to the success in their efforts to repatriate.

One form of employment involved the Returned Soldier Land Settlement Scheme. It illustrated the provision of employment and vocational opportunities in Tasmania, and it suffered the highest failure rates in the Commonwealth in terms of soldiers vacated and of losses per head. Through the examination of legislation, departmental correspondence,
individual cases, media reports and a State Royal Commission, the path of the scheme in Tasmania is explored.

In understanding the design and implementation of Commonwealth repatriation policies and local responses to it, Tasmania's unique social and regional needs are highlighted. Repatriation in Tasmania largely confirms the broader national experience with some exceptions based on the State's comparatively isolated location, with the conclusion that Commonwealth policies, while at times adequate, could not hope to satisfy all the needs of the Tasmanian returned soldier.
Acknowledgements

Even after spending so much time reading and thinking about this topic, I feel as if I have barely scratched the surface of what it offers. There is so much to tell, and so many stories, that it would take a lifetime to fully appreciate the experiences the men of the First AIF went through in returning ‘home.’ I hope I have done justice to them.

The writing of a thesis is never completed without the support and guidance of many people. Over the course of several years of study, one comes into contact with many people who offer advice, support and assistance to varying degrees in different ways. I wish to acknowledge my sincerest thanks and gratitude for the support I have received from the following people:

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I must also record my gratitude to the Archives Office of Tasmania for providing me with, and allowing me to reproduce, images from their collection, and images from old Tasmanian newspapers. Sincere thanks also to Adrian Howard who supplied me with valuable copies of the Tassie Digger, allowing me to gauge Tasmanian RSSILA reaction to various Repatriation issues, and finding their sense of place in the post-war Tasmanian community.

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Need for a Scheme</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining the Term</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Initiatives</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Repatriation Act 1917</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Repatriation Department and Benefits</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to Repatriation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Study</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prologue</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Repatriation and Politics</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return and Difference: The Formation of Returned Soldier Identity</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicisation of the Returned Serviceman: The Formation of the RSSILA in Tasmania</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSSILA Relationships</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriots and Shirkers: Recruitment, Conscription and Returned Servicemen</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Returned Soldier as Politician</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Formation of a Soldiers’ Party</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism, Returned Soldiers, and the Legislative Council Franchise</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Caring for Tasmania’s Soldiers – Repatriation Health Care</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Application Process</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensions</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to War Service</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health in the Community</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Establishment of the Repatriation Hospital</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldiers’ Cases and Responses</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Housing the Veteran – War Service Homes in Tasmania</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing a Home</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Public Accounts Committee in Tasmania – July 1921</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Committee Reports</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rectifying the Problems</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Administration</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Returned Soldier Employment in Tasmania</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Employment Question</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unions and Industry</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Tables

3.1: Sample Comparison of Materials and Amounts Charged Up to Tasmanian War Service Homes, 1921 ................................................................. 167

3.2: Major Hobart Estate Purchases, War Service Homes, 1921 ................................................................. 169

3.3: Purchases of Existing Homes and Mortgage Assistance in Tasmania, up to 30 September 1921 ................................................................. 172

3.4: Amounts Expended in Relation to War Service Homes - Tasmania 1918-1922 ................................................................. 175

3.5: Operations of the War Service Homes Scheme to 30 June 1922 - Tasmania ................................................................. 175

3.6: War Service Homes Operations in Tasmania, 1919-23 ................................................................. 180

3.7: War Service Homes: Average Cost of Construction - Tasmania and Commonwealth, 1923-30 ................................................................. 185

3.8: War Service Homes Operations in Tasmania: 1923-30 ................................................................. 187

3.9: Number of homes provided nationally from inception to June 1929 (including homes built and assisted to build, homes purchased, and homes where mortgages have been lifted) ................................................................. 187

3.10: Summary of Operations of the War Service Homes Scheme from Inception to 30 June 1929 ................................................................. 188

4.1: Figures for Registered Unemployed, Tasmania 1919-1925 ................................................................. 258

4.2: Unemployment Fluctuations, Tasmania and Commonwealth, 1919-1929 ................................................................. 267

6.1: Inspectors and Areas, as at 30 June 1923 ................................................................. 336

6.2: Tasmanian Soldier Settlement Amounts owing to 30 June 1924 ................................................................. 346

6.3: Comparisons of Collections under Returned Soldier Settlement and Closer Settlement ................................................................. 358
List of Illustrations

'Tasmania's Political Serenaders on Tour', 1919 State Election cartoon. ..................412

RSSILA Clubrooms, 47 Murray Street, Hobart. .......................................................413

State Repatriation Board of Tasmania, 1918. ....................................................414

'Sir John Gellibrand at Anarantine on North Bruni [sic] Island with a group of AIF soldiers 1919' ..............................................................415

Coverpage, The Tassie Digger. Official Publication of the Tasmanian RSSILA..416

'Who's “Shouting”?' ..................................................................................................417

'Our State President', Caricature of D.P. Young. Tasmanian RSSILA, April 1920......418

Caricature of Tasmanian RSSILA State Secretary Major F.E. Forrest. ..................419

Former Tasmanian State RSSILA Secretary, F.E. Forrest, National Secretary of the RSSILA. .................................................................420

'Delegates to the first R.S.L. Congress, 1916' ........................................................421

George Foster. ........................................................................................................422

Sgt. John Whittle, VC ............................................................................................423

Dr Harry Nairn Butler ............................................................................................424

Orielton, Tasmanian Soldier Settler Country. ..........................................................425

Souvenir Programme for the official opening of the Repatriation Trades School......426

Hobart Repatriation Trades School. Corner of Harrington and Melville Streets.......427

Boot Repairing and Making Class ..........................................................................428

Interpretation of Repatriation policy in Tasmania, internal memo written by Deputy Comptroller J.F. Humphris, 11 August 1926. ..........................429-430

War Service Home, Sandy Bay, Hobart, Tasmania ..............................................431

War Service Home, New Town, Hobart, Tasmania ..............................................432

War Service Home, New Town, Hobart, Tasmania ..............................................433
War Service Home, Moonah, Hobart, Tasmania ................................................................. 434
War Service Home, Bellerive, Hobart, Tasmania ................................................................. 435
War Service Home, Sandy Bay, Hobart, Tasmania ................................................................. 436
War Service Home, Newstead, Launceston, Tasmania ......................................................... 437
War Service Home, Newstead, Launceston, Tasmania ......................................................... 438
War Service Home, Launceston, Tasmania ......................................................................... 439
War Service Home, Claremont, Hobart, Tasmania ............................................................... 440
War Service Home, New Town, Hobart, Tasmania ............................................................... 441
Abbreviations

ANA – Australian Natives’ Association
AOT – Archives Office of Tasmania
CPD – Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
CPP – Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers
DMO – Departmental Medical Officer
DSO – Distinguished Service Order
GSW – Gun Shot Wound
JPPP – Journals and Printed Papers of the Parliament of Tasmania
MHA – Member of House of Assembly (Tasmania)
MHR – Member House of Representatives (Commonwealth)
MLC – Member Legislative Council (Tasmania)
NAA – National Archives of Australia
OiC – Officer in Command
RSA – Returned Soldiers’ Association
RSL – Returned and Services’ League
RSSILA – Returned Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia
SPPL – Soldiers’, Patriots and Political League
VC – Victoria Cross
I am a married man, and am in the same predicament as your correspondent\(^1\) with regard to the weekly rent and tradesmen’s bills, and, like him, I often think that the horrors of war were, in a sense, preferable to the utter hopelessness, wear and tear, etc., of the present situation. In fact, were I not possessed of a brave, helpful, and sympathetic mate, my wife, who though completely dependent on me, is the best mate I ever had, I could say ‘definitely’ “The front line for mine,” and would return to it to-morrow, glad to get away from my native land and my mostly indifferent countrymen. A bold statement, perhaps, but none the less true, and I know other diggers who would go with me for the same reasons, and gladly. I wonder if in other countries the returned men are allowed for a minute to experience these feelings?

Charity is a thing we do not want, and which most of us would not accept; most of us want jobs, but jobs are scarce, and I for one do not expect a job to be made especially for my convenience, hence I am trying to make a living off my own bat by “selling things,” or trying to. Am on my feet all day long, and by the end of the day it is often hard to drag said feet along with me. I offer to the public good articles at a very fair price, but the results nearly all along the line can be described as follows: “The enemy attempted to advance against our positions (with a small bag in his hand), but was firmly checked and forced to retire (without even a decent hearing).”

A man who approaches an office or a front door with a small bag in his hand seems to be regarded as something to be avoided, a pest to be kept at a distance (a lot of them were kept at a distance for about four years, very effectively, but that was a very different matter, they really did not want to lose us, but they thought we ought to go). However, we are back again now, all comfortably settled and well on the road to prosperity, and all that is necessary to complete our sense of security and contentment is somebody’s kind permission to remain on earth and earn sufficient money to provide the bare necessities of life and solve the flesh-reducing problem of next week’s rent.

ANOTHER ONE.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Referring to a letter from ‘Hard-up Married Dig’, in The Mercury, 13 September 1921, p. 7. This letter lamented the lack of opportunities for returned soldiers in finding work and obtaining assistance in getting back into society. The writer claimed his four years of war service counted for nothing when finding a job. See also Employment chapter.

\(^2\) Letter to the editor, The Mercury, 19 September 1921, p. 6.
The palpable bitterness in not receiving a ‘fair deal’ on his return from war led this Tasmanian to remark that he would prefer the Front line to the vagaries of civilian life and unresponsive citizens. Being ‘home’ did not engender feelings of contentment or satisfaction. He felt that, having ‘done his duty’ for King and country, he was entitled to better opportunities than he obviously felt he was receiving. Did the country need to provide a process and programme to aid ex-servicemen’s re-establishment? Did society really owe returned soldiers from the Great War an obligation of gratitude – a ‘debt of honour’?

This thesis aims to explore the Repatriation apparatus in Tasmania, and examine its implementation, impact, and responses to it. Placing attention specifically on Tasmania allows a more focussed examination of Australian Repatriation policies than broader studies of the national context permit, and it also provides the opportunity to trace local outcomes from the application of Federal legislation. Tasmania’s unique geographical position poses interesting questions to the uniform application of Repatriation policy, and this factor constitutes a key aspect in this study. Consequently, this thesis aims to determine the impact Repatriation policies had on Tasmanian soldiers, and whether its effects differed from interstate outcomes.

The Need for a Scheme

Repatriation was the biggest question before the world...³

By the end of World War I, over 60,000 Australian soldiers had been killed and another 150,000 returned injured and ill. Stephen Garton notes that nearly one-quarter of all Australian men aged eighteen to forty-five years constituted these horrific figures.⁴ Tasmanian enlistments were 15,485,⁵ of which 12,195 soldiers went to war, with approximately 9,700 returning to the State.⁶ Even before the signing of

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⁶ A.G. Butler cites enlistment figures per Military District in Volume III of his History of the Australian Army Medical Services. Butler’s numbers for Tasmania were 15,500 enlisted (in round figures), 12,210 embarkations, 2,700 died or discharged abroad, and 9,700 returned to Tasmania.
the Armistice ending the conflict in Europe, Australian planners had been working on designs for an extensive repatriation policy to assist the returning Australian Imperial Force (AIF) back into society. The injured and ill would require some form of assistance on their return to reintegrate back into society, as would others whose lives had been disjointed by their participation in the war.

The call to formulate a government-backed Repatriation package accelerated as it became apparent that private Patriotic Funds collected throughout Australia in response to the war effort could not be centralised and administered effectively nor efficiently to the benefit of returned servicemen. Indeed, the proliferation of such patriotic collections could never really have hoped to have been controlled and utilised by the Federal Government for repatriation for two main reasons – the sheer number of them (Ernest Scott listed 185 Patriotic Funds Australia-wide, with a staggering 38 in Tasmania), and that the majority of these groups would not consent to surrendering their funds and individual identities to a larger corporate body. Such issues forced the Commonwealth Government to draft legislation to formulate a policy for the care and support of Australia’s volunteer force.

During 1914, the Fisher Labour Government asked George Knibbs, the Commonwealth Statistician, to calculate the cost of a war pensions scheme. The

'Table No. 14. Destination of Recruits for A.I.F. and A.N. and M.E.F. Analysed by States', The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918. Volume III, Canberra, 1943, p. 884. Slightly different figures are provided in a 1919 Tasmanian newspaper article, with the State Repatriation Board reportedly quoting 12,841 Tasmanians embarking for the war, and 2,419 killed on active service. 'Employment for Ex-Soldiers: Meeting to Decide the Best Means: Vocational Training', The Mercury, 23 July 1919, p. 8. The author cannot explain the discrepancy in the figures, but would opt for the latter source.

7 E. Scott, The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol. XI, Australia During the War, Sydney, 1936, Appendix 12, pp. 882-887. Nationally, Lloyd and Rees feel Scott’s figures are underestimated. According to Scott’s figures, Tasmania boasted more Patriotic Funds than all the states except Queensland, who in 1914 had three times the population. Tasmania’s Patriotic Funds were predominantly divided between the north and south of the state, C. Lloyd and J. Rees, The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia, Melbourne, 1994, p. 28. Marilyn Lake’s research on Tasmania during WWI has uncovered public attitudes to these Patriotic Funds – shifting from wholehearted charity to disillusionment over the course of the war. The Belgian Relief Fund was arguably the most popular fund, with Australians (and New Zealanders) donating freely. Of £1.5 million donated worldwide by 1916, Australia and New Zealand donated £1 million, see Lake’s, A Divided Society: Tasmania During World War I, Melbourne, 1975, p. 15. Lake’s figures see Tasmanian charity substantially higher than the British Empire and National amount per capita by March 1917: the Empire donated US 15c per capita; Australian Commonwealth US$ 1.23 per capita; and Tasmania US$ 6.53 per capita, p. 15. A proliferation of other appeals also drained Tasmanian’s charitable nature – they were arguably justified in feeling overtaxed by patriotic appeals.

8 The Mercury in Tasmania called for Patriotic Funds to be centralised under one authority as early as 1915. In 1916, a Patriotic Funds Act provided for the “collection and disbursement of patriotic funds throughout the state.” Lake, A Divided Society, p. 16. Such an undertaking could not be successful in a national context due to issues over funding parity between the States, and the inevitable problems of one State’s funds being channelled to aid other States.
initial estimates could not produce an accurate figure, as the war was still in its infancy. Knibbs warned that his figures, calculated at a 5% mortality rate, would expand as more Australian personnel were committed.\(^9\) By 1914 the Federal Government was thinking of compensating the sacrifice made by its soldiers, in the form of a repatriation scheme to aid the process of return.

**Return**

Australian veterans had fought but one battle by the time they returned to their homelands from the Great War. A second, and perhaps equally daunting struggle was their reassimilation into society – fraught with potential difficulties and uncertainties.\(^10\) Had sweethearts and wives been faithful to them? Would employers keep their jobs open for them? How would they be treated in a society changed since their embarkation? Would promises made to them on their enlistment be redeemed at the cessation of hostilities?

Stephen Garton has examined the complex process of ‘return’ and the personal difficulties of repatriating in such a public and celebrated atmosphere as the return of Australia’s war servicemen and women. The individual negotiations with family, friends and loved ones had to be balanced with a comprehension and accommodation of their own life changing experiences from war service.\(^11\) The vast majority of ex-servicemen were able to return to their previous positions – perhaps quietly picking up the strands of their former lives – but most were never entirely the same.\(^12\)

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\(^9\) Garton, _The Cost of War_, p. 77.


\(^12\) Waller’s examination of the problem of reassimilating the soldier into society looked to past experience to guide America’s looming problem. Waller argues that service as a soldier leaves an irrevocable impact upon the man: “A man who has once been a soldier can never be quite a civilian again. A military experience, especially in time of war, leaves a mark upon a man.” This basis then can be used to inform the approach to veterans’ return undertaken in this study. See, Waller, _The Veteran Comes Back_, p. 18.
Marilyn Lake has argued that the war left its mark on Tasmanian society as much as it did on Tasmanian soldiers—

People's lives, attitudes and ideals were immensely changed. The men most obviously affected were those who participated directly in the fighting. Perhaps most shattering was the violence done to the ideals and assumptions of the men who enlisted.\footnote{Lake, \textit{A Divided Society}, p. 193.}

Assumptions of 'honour' and 'patriotism' as lauded in the Tasmanian press, and with which soldiers went to war, were different from their experiences in the trenches.\footnote{Ibid., p. 194.} Their return saw attempts at a reconciliation of these conflicting views, as well as the trauma of negotiating an altered society and its effects on family and friends. The war had changed everything in some way or another; according to Garton, "A whole spatial and cultural geography had undergone subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, transformation."\footnote{Garton, \textit{The Cost of War}, p. 1.} Physical and mental wounds were more difficult to heal in a 'foreign' atmosphere, particularly when their expectations were for the 'home' they knew and left. George Johnston's memoir \textit{My Brother Jack} ably demonstrated to the wider public the physical and psychological scars arising from war service, and the landscape to which soldiers returned.\footnote{G. Johnston, \textit{My Brother Jack}, London, 1975.} The politics of 'returning' in the complete sense was possibly the most difficult, if not an impossible experience for veterans. Close relationships formed with mates at the Front were usually broken on return as units were disbanded and each man attempted to make his own personal journey back into civilian life. A. Tiveychoc described the feelings of parting with old comrades:

They were members of a freemasonry that had endured many partings — partings from loved ones at home, with old cobby, with English and foreign brothers and sisters of the craft, with those 'gone west.' But their bonds of friendship, moulded in an atmosphere of mutual suffering, sympathy, and good fellowship, would endure. Materially, they had parted — were parting; spiritually, they were together.\footnote{A. Tiveychoc, \textit{There and Back: The Story of an Australian Soldier, 1915-1935}, Sydney, 1935, p. 223.}
The transition to a civilian mentality was sometimes very difficult to make, which may be useful in explaining the sense of difference and alienation some men felt from society, their families and friends. The rise of returned soldier associations can perhaps be traced from this sense of difference, and the RSSILA’s decrease in membership in the 5 years after the war correlates to a period when their personal repatriation had taken effect.

In addition, the idea that civilians did not understand the particular problems of returned soldiers and their difficulties in readjusting further contributed to this sense of difference. Lake argues that in 1917, “A new division was emerging in Australian society: one between those who fought and those who stayed at home.” Returned soldiers’ claims of a special right to speak out on social and political issues (like conscription, recruiting and defence), and of a special stake in the society in which they had fought, led to demands for their own political representatives that saw returned soldiers run as candidates and secure seats in State and Federal Parliaments. The community felt this sense of difference too, and saw the pensions and other schemes offered to returned men as special treatment. Lake even argues that, concerning the exercising of the law in Tasmania, “soldiers stood in a group above other men, and it sometimes seemed, above the law.” Fears in established society at the potential trouble returned soldiers posed were justified by the riots and disturbances they were involved in interstate. Concern at the mix of revolution and soldiers, as demonstrated by the collapse of the Eastern Front, further raised apprehension and concern at the release of a highly trained and largely brutalised military force into the community.

**Defining the Term**

The term ‘repatriate’, as defined by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, is to “Restore or return to native land; one who has been repatriated.” Similarly, the *Heinemann Australian Dictionary* defines the term in much the same way, but refines the meaning to more specific groups by adding “to send back a person, such as a

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refugee or prisoner of war, to his own country.”21 Another Australian dictionary, the Macquarie, further refines the term to a particularly Australian meaning: “repatriation. 1. the act of returning to one's native land. 2. Also, assistance given to ex-servicemen returning to a civilian life, in the form of pensions, medical care, allowances for dependents, etc.”22 As L.J. Pryor, Ernest Scott, Clem Lloyd, Jacqui Rees, and Stephen Garton have all noted, the expression ‘repatriation’ as a term to define the entire process of the assimilation, re-establishment, ameliorative care and financial assistance of returned soldiers in society is peculiarly Australian.23 Nowhere else in the world does the word repatriation have this meaning – rehabilitation, reconstruction, re-establishment and reinstatement were the preferred terminologies in Britain and Canada.24 How the word repatriation came to encompass the entire process of return and re-establishment is not entirely clear, but by the early years of the war, ‘repatriation funds’ were established throughout Australia. The Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Appeal and Act of 1916 further institutionalised the term in general usage, although the Commonwealth Hansard reveals some debate over the accuracy of the use of the word. However, it was felt that by 1917 the Australian public were familiar with, and had already contributed to, ‘repatriation’ funds rather than ‘re-establishment’ funds.25

Early Initiatives

The scale of the returned soldier issue led to a serious consideration of how to deal with the problem of ‘repatriation.’ The first moves were tentative, and were born

25 A distinction must also be made with reference to the usage of the word ‘repatriation.’ Repatriation (big ‘R’) refers to the official government sponsored programme, while repatriation (small ‘r’) is used in reference to the process of returning.
out of the inability to draw upon previous programmes of re-establishment. Nothing of this magnitude had been faced by Australian administrators before. Clearly, the lack of precedent hampered effective and coherent policy direction, and the problem grew as more men left for Europe and others began returning. Throughout 1915 and 1916, several pension Acts were passed through parliament, including an Act to regulate Repatriation Funds\(^\text{26}\), and several Premiers’ Conferences debated the administrative and legislative direction that Repatriation policy would take. A Federal War Committee was established in July 1915 to oversee Repatriation on a national level, and was supplemented by tiers at State and local levels. However, the Federal War Council held in Melbourne on 17 February 1916 was, according to Defence Minister and Senator George Pearce, the conference that “began the great work of repatriation of the returned soldiers which has been carried out throughout Australia in the subsequent years.”\(^\text{27}\) This meeting of the State and Federal governments formulated the basic soldier settlement scheme in Australia.

State Governments left the financial burden of repatriation to the Commonwealth, but protested vehemently when the Commonwealth interfered in what the states asserted was their domain – the utilisation of their land. Land settlement was, however, a major element in the Repatriation ‘plan’, so a compromise had to be found. As Ken Fry and others have noted, the States “insisted on retaining their rights to control the lands and administer the scheme.”\(^\text{28}\) The Commonwealth effectively funded the scheme, exercising little influence over the administration of the land, and the States were content to maintain this unequal relationship. Yet the difficulty for the Federal War Committee in drafting soldier settlement proposals was not only the obstructive nature of the states, but also the very important issue of making Soldier Land Settlement an attractive option for the very people it was aimed at. As Lloyd and Rees explain,

\(^{26}\) The fund to which I refer is the Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Fund. The Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Fund Act became law on 30 August 1916 to provide an organisation in which public donations could be administered. The Fund ultimately failed due to a number of bureaucratic factors, see D.I. McDonald, ‘The Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Fund. An Experiment in Social Legislation’, in J. Roe (ed.), Social Policy in Australia: Some Perspectives 1901-1975, Sydney, 1976, pp. 113-130.

\(^{27}\) G.F. Pearce, Carpenter to Cabinet, London, 1951, p. 139.

Soldier settlement should be generous enough to attract war veterans without straining an already formidable cost structure. The states were ready to allocate land for soldier settlement and administer a system of cash advances for making the land productive, provided the federal government under-wrote these improvements.  

The Commonwealth Government, despite recognising its responsibility for repatriation, still hoped partially to fund the scheme by private donations. Australians in 1916, Garton argues, had no real understanding of what it would take to fund repatriation successfully, hence the efforts to fund it through private charity. However, he notes that the realisation of the enormity of the problem “dawned quickly, brought on by more casualties and criticisms of the administration of the Repatriation Fund.” Plans for privately funded repatriation policies proved impossible and impractical so in 1917, the Hughes government introduced a bill detailing an extensive and publicly funded repatriation proposal. This course of action was initially discussed in a Premiers’ Conference in January where it was decided that pensions for soldiers and sailors would also become a Commonwealth function. As the full dimensions of the war dawned on Australia, it was logical that any comprehensive repatriation system be government funded.

**The Repatriation Act 1917**

We are embarking upon a scheme in which we have no precedent to guide us. We have no example from the experience of the past, and consequently we have to lay the foundation of this principle of repatriation, accepting an enormous responsibility, without any guidance whatsoever.

Tasmanian John Earle’s remarks to the Senate during debate over Edward Millen’s Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Bill were of a grand nature. They were

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29 Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, p. 46.
31 Lake provides evidence that Tasmanians at least understood that privately funded repatriation was not likely to work. *The Daily Post* argued, according to Lake, that “Wounded soldiers should be the charge of the Commonwealth instead of being dependent on the whims and caprices of voluntary donors.” Lake, *A Divided Society*, p. 14.
sentiments expressed consistently by members of both Houses of Commonwealth Parliament during debate on a variety of Bills designed with the returned soldier in mind. Never before in Australia, or indeed the world, had there been a comprehensive repatriation scheme framed on the scale and magnitude that faced sitting members of the Senate on 18 July 1917. There was no precedent or blueprint for the formation of a repatriation scheme of the type introduced by Senator Millen. Millen himself admitted to the Senate during the second reading of the Bill, the difficulties and complexities in framing what was, in many ways, pioneering legislation:

It is...commonplace to refer to repatriation as a big and vexed problem. It is all that, but, in addition, it is an ill-defined problem. There was no definition given of what is meant by repatriation. It is implied that we should do a fair thing for the returned soldier. But there were no clear instructions; nor were there any possible. Therefore, those intrusted with the problem - which is not one, indeed, but many problems - had to find their way rather than be in the position of following given directions.

Millen tabled his proposal for the repatriation of Australia’s returned servicemen and women before a largely sympathetic parliament, as every member was aware of the magnitude, difficulty and complexity of the issue. In addition, all members wanted to contribute in some way to the debate, and assist Millen in framing a workable and successful scheme, with calls for party politics to be left aside.

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33 The Labor Party had formulated their own thoughts on the Repatriation of the AIF, and tabled their ‘Soldier Policy’ to a Defence Committee on 18 July 1917. The key points were liberal financial policies that ensured no reductions in allowances, increases in others, and an obligation to keep returned soldiers on the payroll until they had been found employment. See ‘Minutes of Meeting of Federal Labor Party held 19/7/17,’ in, P. Weller (ed.), Caucus Minutes 1901-1949. Minutes of the Meetings of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party. Volume 2 1917-1931, Melbourne, 1975, pp. 39-43. As regards the comprehensive and generous nature of the Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Bill, the United States had been caring for its Civil War veterans for many years. Pension benefits were paid, and continued to be paid to veterans of the Civil War right up to the First World War, and allegedly, later. However, the pension benefits in the U.S. for Civil War veterans did not approach the scope of benefits and programs planned for returned Australian servicemen and women. For material on the welfare benefits of Civil War veterans, see, T. Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Their Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 102-151. 34 Millen to the Senate during the second reading of the Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Bill, 2 May 1918. CPD, Vol. LXXXIV, p. 4306.
G.L. Kristianson argues that the “early history of repatriation policy is one of hesitant experimentation.”\(^{35}\) The range of benefits available to returned veterans was complex considering the difficulties involved in drafting and legislating a comprehensive welfare system under the pressure of a wartime economy. They were also subject to modification – particularly by pressure groups such as the Returned Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA)\(^{36}\) and increasing returned soldier participation in political debates over repatriation policy. Vigorously expressed from the outset was that repatriation and all its attendant programmes (pensions, soldier settlement, housing etc.) were not charity-based – repatriation benefits were not a reward, gift or payment for war service, but part of a larger process in re-establishing the returned soldier to civilian life.\(^ {37}\) This notion was reiterated by both Millen and the RSSILA repeatedly in the ensuing years,\(^ {38}\) predominantly by the latter to legitimise their claims for special assistance for their members.\(^ {39}\)

Millen’s priority in devising his scheme was to provide an administrative and legislative framework\(^ {40}\) – a machinery bill – on which to build the individual functions necessary for the successful re-establishment of Australia’s returned ‘boys’. The specific detail of entitlements and eligibility criteria were not part of the Bill he introduced on 18 July, much to the disappointment of at least one member.\(^ {41}\) In his


\(^{36}\) Kristianson states that, “The R.S.L. is a welfare or benevolent body. Almost all of the financial resources of the League are devoted to providing direct welfare assistance to returned servicemen and their dependants, assisting them to secure repatriation benefits from government authorities, and participating in a variety of community projects.” See his, *The Politics of Patriotism*, p. xxi.


\(^{39}\) Loftus Hills, in his history of the RSSILA, argued that the League played an important role in developing and fashioning Repatriation policies, but that the League like everyone else felt their way forward in the face of such exceptional and pioneering work: The Repatriation project “presented such difficulties and unforeseen complications, and was altogether so unprecedented that it is not at all surprising that mistakes were made, things omitted, which were later found to be necessary, and injustices unthinkingly and unknowingly perpetrated” See, L. Hills and A. Dene, *The Returned Soldiers & Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia: Its Origin, History, Achievements and Ideals, Parts I & II*, Melbourne, 1938, p. 18.

\(^{40}\) Millen acknowledged in his opening speech: “[I]t is a machinery Bill, which is designed to create the organisation for this important work, and one which will convey the necessary power to the authorities to be created.” *CPD*, Vol. LXXXII, p. 183.

\(^{41}\) Lt.-Colonel Bolton, a returned soldier of Gallipoli fame, and future RSSILA president, criticised Millen’s Bill: “It gives no information; it contains no particulars. Even with the explanation of the Minister [Millen], we cannot get down to bedrock. The whole thing is a will-o’-the-wisp. When we reach out a hand to grasp it, we find that it has gone. There is nothing tangible. That is my opinion of the scheme.” *CPD*, Vol. LXXXII, p. 275.
introductory remarks, Millen outlined the purpose and function that the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Bill was to fulfil, and in doing so, defined 'repatriation' as it is now known in Australia:

When we speak of repatriation we mean an organized effort on the part of the community to look after those who have suffered either from wounds or illness as the result of war, and who stand in need of such care and attention. We mean that there should be a sympathetic effort to reinstate in civil life all those who are capable of such reinstatement. That is what we intend when we use the word "repatriation." 42

The reintegration of returned men back into civil life was to begin, claimed Millen, with the registration of the soldier, preferably before he entered society, or as soon as possible after his return. This reduced the risk of veterans approaching the system only when their own resources had been exhausted. The soldier could then be assessed as to his preferences of employment (returning him to his previous occupation was the favoured course), skills, training, and/or suitability for settlement on the land if he had so indicated.

Millen's Bill brought pensions for soldiers and their dependents under the larger repatriation umbrella instead of the Treasury Department, thus streamlining the administrative process. Support in education and training was pledged by Millen— all as part of the process of rehabilitating the returned soldier into society. Where a soldier's apprenticeship or education had been interrupted through enlistment, the Government would assist in vocational training and placement. Loans to purchase equipment and tools for employment and settlement were pledged, as was Government-endorsed employment schemes. 43 For the incapacitated soldier, rehabilitation and training programs were provided to help them "exercise wounded limbs or learn how to use artificial ones." 44 Totally incapacitated soldiers were to be

42 Senator Millen introducing the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Bill to the Senate, 18 July 1917. Ibid., p. 184. Similarly, in outlining the intention of 'repatriation' to a conference of Local Committees in Tasmania in May 1919, Chairman of the Tasmanian Repatriation Board, Frank Lindsay Gunn, reportedly described the term: "Repatriation was the organised effort of the community to place returned soldiers in civil life, so that as soon as possible they would be independent and self-supporting." See, 'Repatriation. Conference of Delegates at Hobart: Address by Chief Inspector', The Mercury, 19 May 1919, p. 3. Note Gunn's inclusion of the role of the community in the repatriation process.

43 Most notably attempts to employ returned men on forestry projects, the building of Canberra, and construction of Victoria's Great Ocean Road.

44 Lloyd and Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 80.
cared for in hostels and homes with free medical care and a special allowance paid; the same care was to be provided for tubercular soldiers. As Lloyd and Rees note, though, at this stage Millen gave no indication that repatriation hospitals were to be established for the care of disabled soldiers. Artificial limbs were procured, initially at least, from the United States, with an American expert imported by the Minister for Defence, Senator George Pearce, to assist in the establishment of local artificial limb factories manned by returned soldiers.

Soldier settlement plans, discussed at Premiers' Conferences in 1916 and early 1917, had been largely formulated, and Millen had obviously envisioned it as a major element of his repatriation scheme. Indications of approximately 40,000 returned soldiers wishing to settle on to the land had led Millen loosely to estimate a potential budget of £60 million for soldier settlement alone – a substantial figure, particularly in 1917, and under the strains of a wartime economy.

For the administrative day-to-day running of the scheme, Millen advocated a government department, with community support as a vital factor: "repatriation implied an effort on the part of the nation, speaking through its Department, to aim at, and as far as possible secure the satisfactory re-establishment in civil life of the returned soldier." This task would be entrusted to a board of non-political employees, of which two members of the RSSILA would take their place. Initially, seven members of a Repatriation Commission (with Millen envisaging himself as chairman) would co-ordinate the implementation of the scheme. Returned soldiers would naturally take their place on this commission, along with other citizens, all in an honorary capacity. The existing State War Councils would be replaced by a Deputy Commissioner and State Board in each state, with their administrative make-up planned along the lines of the Federal model – boards of seven honorary members, including returned soldiers, would deal with central policy. Each deputy

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45 Ibid.
46 House of Representatives member for Brisbane, William Finlayson, expressed in September 1917 his views that soldier settlement did not represent a substantial element in the whole repatriation scheme: "I think that land settlement is a very small feature in the whole scheme of repatriation, as compared with other avenues of employment which will have to be provided. It has been stated that 40,000 of our soldiers have signified their willingness to take up land on their return to Australia. That is about one-eighth of the total number of men who have gone to the Front." CPD, Vol. LXXXIII, pp. 2546-7. Finlayson was only using the numbers of soldiers as a guide in stating that soldier settlement was not a major element, however, the immense financial cost and administrative effort between the States and Commonwealth surely qualified soldier settlement as a 'major' element of repatriation policy.
47 Senator Millen, 2 May 1918. CPD, Vol. LXXXIV, p. 4309.
48 For more, see Lloyd and Rees, The Last Shilling, pp. 81-2.
commissioner would take responsibility for a range of functions, the “Registration of every returned soldier; general information and advice; vocational training; land settlement and housing; artificial limbs and other aids; care of dependants; post-medical treatment; and care of the disabled or chronically ill.” In Tasmania, that position was filled by Joseph Francis Humphris. Local committees were formed to deal with returned soldiers at a ‘grassroots’ level, who then reported to the State Boards in the capacity of ‘agents and deputies’. Government nominated members were also on these local committees as they may have had to handle considerable sums of money in their role of administering advances to soldier settlers. Millen also felt the need for the Commonwealth to accept responsibility for providing war service housing for needy widows and incapacitated veterans.

Senator Millen saw as advantageous the plan to house all of the repatriation services in one building in each capital city, alleviating confusion, aiding communication between services, and encouraging efficient practice in the department. Lloyd and Rees argue that these offices would serve to streamline the service to returned veterans leaving the forces as “The Repatriation Office in each city was envisaged as a general clearing house for soldiers from their return to Australia until they eventually faded into civil life.” Practical simplicity was undoubtedly foremost in Millen’s considerations for the administrative apparatus, and in relations between veteran and department. Sometimes, however, the practicalities were not so simple or straightforward.

Millen’s initial Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Bill was not an attempt to enshrine all of the small details of the repatriation scheme into law, but the bill did provide the necessary infrastructure with which to build a workable repatriation system. With minor amendments, the bill passed, and, by September 1917,

49 Ibid., p. 76.
50 Information on Humphris has been frustratingly difficult to access. Although his signature and influence appears in all facets of Commonwealth Repatriation policy in the State, it is difficult to track down tangible information about him, which is ironic considering his position as one of the most powerful bureaucrats in Tasmania. He was born in South Australia in 1868, served in the Boer War, was mentioned in Dispatches and received the DSO in 1900. He served in Commandant Training Camps in Australia during WWI attaining the rank of Honorary Colonel, before taking up the position as Repatriation Deputy Comptroller in Tasmania in 1918. He remains Tasmania’s longest serving Deputy Commissioner, retiring from the position in 1934. Humphris also “spent a good period as president of the Naval and Military Club, Hobart.” See, Department of Veterans’ Affairs (hereafter DVA) Files, Hobart: File 94-253: Administration – Departmental – History of ex-DVA Deputy Commissioners, pp. 1, 11.
51 Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, p. 82.
52 Ibid., p. 78
Millen had fashioned a repatriation scheme that was a curious hybrid, including public and private sector elements, strongly influenced by previous structures such as the War Councils and Repatriation Fund, largely dependent on drafting workable regulations and establishing a federal department.\textsuperscript{53}

Already Millen's structure contained the necessary principles for a successful repatriation scheme. While not infallible, Millen's vision nonetheless provided a blueprint from which the repatriation of Australia's servicemen could be built. Further consolidation of the scheme occurred during major amendments in 1920, but the seeds of the programme had been sewn.

**The Repatriation Department and Benefits**

If Millen provided the structure, it was up to the new Repatriation Department, established 8 April 1918, to fill in the details. Many of the principles that remain to this day were put in place. Pressure groups had already indicated what aspects they believed the reformed policies should encompass. So what were the major policies involved in the formation of the repatriation policy in Australia?

Undoubtedly, one of the most important features of the scheme was the provision of pensions for returned soldiers and their dependants. There was much debate and conjecture over eligibility and entitlement, particularly from the RSSILA. A tentative health system was established in the early period, later expanding into Repatriation Hospitals. For soldiers on a full war pension, care was provided by a special allowance to pay for further needs with homes and hostels built to accommodate them.\textsuperscript{54} Tubercular soldiers were cared for in these shelters. Artificial limbs for incapacitated soldiers were originally sourced from the United States until local factories were established to produce them, staffed largely by veterans.

Apart from the health system, employment was a major issue in repatriating the able-bodied soldier. Many only wanted the opportunity to pursue meaningful

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., pp. 84-5. For a deeper discussion of the contents of the Bill, see also pp. 79-82.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 80.
employment, and only wished for the department to assist them in their search. The RSSILA was particularly vocal in pushing for preference of employment for returned soldiers. This was partly because the survival of the League depended on being the most effective voice for the returned soldier, and because the “bulk of activity at national and branch level...was aimed at keeping returned servicemen in work.” Sekuless and Rees elucidate why Commonwealth Government sanctioned employment preference was so vital:

First, the national government was most vulnerable to pressure, especially in the defence and repatriation areas, as the Federal politicians had made the promises about preferment. Second, the Commonwealth public service was itself a large employer, especially of unskilled labour in public works and the Post Office, and the conditions applying in the Federal departments and instrumentalities were important precedents for other governments and private employers.

The Commonwealth Government accepted this principle and pledged preference in public service positions, although private enterprise was more likely to resist such a measure. As Michael McKernan notes, “Employers...were not eager to replace well-trained, hard-working men with ex-soldiers whose skills were rusty and who often found it difficult to settle down into the old routines.”

The most well known government policy for soldier employment was the Soldier Settlement scheme. Nearly 40,000 men obtained land under this initiative. The Soldier Settlement policy was a central tenet from the beginning because the

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55 Matthew Williams’ notes that “once the men returned and the cheering and the parades had ended, their efforts and sacrifices were largely forgotten and it was generally assumed they had re-entered the work force. [...] A very large component of the unemployment statistics of [the 1920s] were returned servicemen who believed they had been betrayed by the government and the people for whom they had gone to war.” See, M. Williams, *Australia in the 1920s*, Sydney, 1984, p. 10. Williams’ narrative to photos of Australia during the 1920s noted generally the situation facing returned soldiers after the war. His treatment however failed to acknowledge even the existence of the Repatriation Department, preferring to cite the Soldier Land Settlement Scheme. Nonetheless, in a broad sense, he covered the basic notion of returned soldier unemployment and dissatisfaction.

56 Sekuless and Rees, *Lest We Forget*, p. 57.

57 Ibid., p. 58.

58 The Labor Government made this decision in July 1915, that, according to Sekuless and Rees, applied to soldiers whether they were unionists or not, *Ibid.*, p. 2. As well, returned soldier organisations still agitated for employment preference in the private sector.


60 Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 118.
Federal Government was keen to open up vast tracks of the Australian ‘frontier’ for cultivation and economic benefit. Yet soldier settlement was to fulfil, according to Garton, a much larger responsibility: anxieties about the effects of war on men and their resulting ‘nervous’ conditions reinforced the need for these men to settle on the land away from the cities to ‘reinvigorate’ them. Within this milieu, “soldier settlement was not just an economic measure to create national wealth, but also a social measure to foster an appropriate Australian way of life and restore national vigour.”

Kent Fedorowich has made an important contribution to the soldier land settlement narrative by locating the scheme within the context of empire land settlement after the Great War, examining systems throughout the Empire’s dominions. The RSSILA also fought hard for, and won, a war gratuity payment in 1920. This was a ‘one-off’ payment of “one shilling and sixpence for every day of service.” It also brought Australia into line with war gratuities paid in Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain and South Africa.

The Australian Repatriation system in its first decade achieved tremendous results in assimilating returned men back into society. While this may be a simplistic appraisal to make about such a complex institution, the fact remains that if no scheme had been in place to assist in the transition from military to civilian life, further social, cultural, financial and psychological dislocation would have occurred. For instance, pensions, while not indexed to the cost of living, nevertheless enabled the survival of incapacitated veterans and their families where the traditional wage earner was incapacitated. Despite complaints as to their inadequacy, these pensions provided a safety net in times of economic anxiety like the immediate post-war depression and the crash in 1929. While the Repatriation scheme enabled many soldiers to reassimilate into civil life in a physical sense, for many others, the transition was a more difficult enterprise.

61 Ibid., p. 122.
62 See his, Unfit For Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire Between the Wars, Manchester, 1995.
63 For a greater treatment of the process of obtaining this war gratuity, see, Hills and Dene, The Returned Soldiers & Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia, pp. 20-24.
64 Garton, The Cost of War, p. 80.
Responses to Repatriation

In no single particular is repatriation adequate; in every direction we get little more than promises, promises! They are as plentiful and as satisfying as sand.65

While the repatriation legislation passed relatively smoothly through parliament in Millen’s skilled hands, its practical application had in the early years, a difficult ordeal. Garton notes that the relationship between the Repatriation Department and claimant was adversarial in nature, so it follows that there were many criticisms of the scheme on a number of issues, from all quarters. Complaints and criticism were made by returned soldiers and soldier advocacy organisations, the public, and the media whose vocal support on a number of issues reached at times, incredulous proportions.66 It was not long after the return of the triumphant Diggers that public discontent was first detected. The Federal Government’s pledge for employment preference subjected the returned men to “abuse and resentment” from some members of the public.67 This feeling can be better understood in context, for after the initial post-war boom, and with Australia’s unemployment rate at 11%, “the claim of returned-services organisations to employment preference threatened the livelihood of other Australians... Workers competing in a tight labour market feared that returned men would receive employment preference...”68 Unions were among those groups that opposed the government’s pledge on employment preference.

Employment preference was not only unpopular with sections of the public, but with some returned soldiers as well. A Returned Soldiers’ and War Workers’ Industrial Union in Sydney in 1919 condemned the Trade Unions’ disagreement with employment preference, stating, “the existing Trades Unions have refused to grant to

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65 ‘Urgency of Repatriation’, letter to the editor from D. McRae, Mercury, 8 January 1918, p. 3. Duncan McRae was a prominent early member of the Returned Soldiers’ Association in Hobart, and was vocal in his criticisms of repatriation policy and administration. McRae’s letters filled southern Tasmanian newspapers on a variety of issues, but were mostly on topics that concerned returned soldiers. Lake, A Divided Society, pp. 78-9, also identifies McRae as a leading returned soldier voice in the conscription campaign. His pronouncements and involvement in Tasmanian repatriation debate feature heavily in this study.
66 Smith’s Weekly from Sydney particularly, pushed for returned soldiers’ rights. Garton claims this newspaper was sensationalist, populist, characteristically racist, and misogynist, The Cost of War, p. 88. The Mercury in Hobart was more moderate, but still prone to champion the returned soldier as a measure of their ‘patriotism’.
67 Garton, The Cost of War, p. 11.
68 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
Returned Soldiers and their dependents those benefits to which, by virtue of their service to their country, they are undeniably denied. A rival Returned Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Labor League the same year in Brisbane was concerned to maintain a class consciousness, arguing that the majority of soldiers before the war were workers and would likely return to labour for their livelihoods. They lamented those returned soldiers who were “trying to separate themselves from other workers, trying to form themselves into a caste, and trying to obtain special privileges and advantages for themselves. This attitude is a clear sign that these returned soldiers do not understand their economic position.”

Ex-servicemen who received entitlements like pensions also faced resentment and animosity from the public due to the image of ‘welfare’ systems. Although Senator Millen had stressed that repatriation benefits were not a charity, Garton notes that the issue caused much anxiety; “Accusations that war pensioners were ‘bludgers’, and the long tradition of such popular resentments, go some way to explaining the returned-soldier obsession with ensuring that ‘repat’ was seen as a right, based on sacrifice, rather than a gift.” This ‘public relations’ issue was grounded in the idea that the pension equated to ‘welfare’, and that “repatriation benefits, particularly pensions, resembled other types of social welfare payment at a time when welfare was still integrally related, symbolically, to charity.” Regardless of the Government’s perception of repatriation, the ‘community’s notions’ could be vastly different.

Additionally, returned soldier groups agitated for an emblem to differentiate themselves from the public – a symbol of their status. Shop discounts were provided to men wearing the returned soldiers’ badge, but “newspapers reported that men were removing their badges to avoid getting ‘a rough time’ and were being jeered for having been ‘fool enough to fight’.” Some ex-soldiers also felt uncomfortable wearing their service medals for fear of attracting unwanted attention. More generally, as Garton has argued, for other veterans, “fighters felt the chilling

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70 Ibid., p. 40. I have no evidence of similar Politically-Left soldier-based organisations forming in Tasmania.
71 Garton, The Cost of War, p. 102.
72 Ibid., p. 103.
73 Ibid., p. 11.
atmosphere around them...for warmth they gathered together.”\textsuperscript{74} These perceived insular and introspective soldier attitudes aggravated relations between ex-servicemen and the wider community, and enlarged any gulf that was developing between the two groups.

Aside from making provision for the survival and resettlement of the returned soldier, Garton argues that repatriation was also a process of the restoration of gender. “Taking diverse forms, repatriation was cultural work aimed at ensuring the recovery of manhood in all its connotations...”\textsuperscript{75} This added a further dimension to the repatriation process perhaps not originally, nor directly, envisaged. The process of finding men employment, resettling them on the land in soldier settlement schemes, and the strenuous denials that benefits masqueraded as charity were all crucial elements of the repatriation scheme. It helped to reinstate in the civilian-soldier a sense of masculinity that could only facilitate a healthier readjustment in a psychological and financial sense. Public resentment over service pensions probably had their roots in the traditional Protestant work ethic, of which the man on welfare was not a part. As a man’s very masculinity was delineated by his ability financially to provide for his family, pensioned soldiers could not be part of this ‘work ethic’ – their manhood could not be re-established through welfare. The civilian soldier faced the paradoxical situation of resentment from the public over labelling as welfare dependents when receiving pensions, and further resentment at efforts that assisted in their independence from such benefits, for example, the employment preference issue. It was in some cases a ‘no-win’ situation.

What identity did the returned soldier see for himself? Did he see himself and his place in society in terms of class or socio-economic groupings, or did he see himself now as apart or outside of his former identity? As Ken Inglis asks,

\begin{quote}
What was the most appropriate and congenial social identity for the returned man? Should he join the union? The RSL? Both? Neither? Should he think of himself as a returned soldier all the year round, or only on one day of the year? Such questions concerned Australians in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p. 51.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p. 108.
the 'twenties and 'thirties and affected their political and social relationships... 

This passage indicates that returned soldiers did not take on a homogeneous identity, but were instead a fragmented group who reacted differently to the process of return. They did not always 'gather together' when they felt the 'chilling atmosphere around them.'

After partaking in what many Australians believed (and still believe) was the formation of national identity through her ordeal in Gallipoli, the soldiers' return was a very public one, and because of this, "they could not be left alone to their private and personal efforts to repatriate." Paradoxically, repatriation was also intensely private, and many returned servicemen had difficulty negotiating this public/private dichotomy. The State Repatriation apparatus could only provide the facilities and means to repatriate – the remainder was a psychological and personal experience.

Because much of the process of return was intimate, internalised and private, Garton argues that women bore much responsibility in the process of resettlement. Perhaps partly as a consequence of the stresses and tensions placed on familial life from a demographic brutalised by their war experiences, the period 1918 to 1921 saw the divorce rate double in Australia, and violent crimes such as rape and murder rose by approximately 20%. It is reasonable to assume that these statistics were related to the return of a sometimes restless and unfulfilled body of men whose expectations had changed since their departure, and who were not accorded the 'respect' that they felt they deserved. Higher crime rates and incidence of domestic discord were symptomatic, according to some, of a failure in the repatriation scheme and psychological distress resulting from wartime experience:

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76 Inglis, 'The Anzac Tradition', p. 40.
77 See also the 'Politics' chapter.
78 A whole historiography has grown up around this notion. See, for instance, a reference to this field in, B. Hippiou, 'War and Death', in M. Crouch and B. Hippiou (eds.), Essays on Mortality, Sydney, 1985, p. 66. The vastness of this field precludes the necessity of any sort of treatment here.
80 Ibid., p. 177.
81 Ibid., p. 197. Michael McKernan also provides the figures for divorce in Australia from 1918 to 1924. According to his figures, the war period saw a stable pattern of divorce with 1918 recording 721, before an increase in 1919 of 879, rising to 1,536 in 1924. McKernan argues that the "strain of the postwar years was a contributing factor" to this increase. See his, The Australian People and the Great War, p. 222.
Rates of crime, particularly that related to sexual assault and family violence, were taken by many returned-soldier groups, politicians, and reformers as clear signs of the social disruption caused by returned men and by repatriation policies that had failed to integrate them into civilian life.82

Certainly such a criticism is generalised but suggests a belief that the repatriation system had to some degree failed the returned serviceman and the wider community. Judith Allen has identified that the brunt of the inadequacies of repatriation provisions for these “disturbed young men fell disproportionately on Australian women.”83 She reports that ex-servicemen dominated prison and asylum populations as a consequence of their “manifest mental disturbance,” “aggression,” and “overexcitability.”84 Within the marital home the “deeper signs of mental disturbance,” brought about by the brutalising experiences of war-service, “emerged.”85 The effects of war service were felt deeply throughout the community, and imprinted themselves on the men, their women, and children.86

This Study

In Tasmania, like mainland Australia, the war wrought fundamental change to society. The patriotic response to the war effort waned as the casualty lists grew, and political and social strife was compounded by the war’s impact on local industry. At the beginning of 1916 Tasmania was governed by Labor Premier John Earle, yet by April, Sir Walter Lee and the Nationalists had formed Government. Lee remained Premier throughout the war and into the early 1920s. Due to local disagreements with Labour associations87 that increased after his election loss, Earle tendered his resignation of the Labor leadership, moving into Federal politics. For the next six

82 Garton, The Cost of War, p. 197.
84 Ibid., p. 130.
85 Ibid.
86 Allen compiles a strong argument of the violence and brutality of returned soldiers toward their wives, partners and girlfriends. She cites a number of cases where brutal rapes, murders and suicides were perpetrated on women by returned men. Ibid., pp. 130-138.
years, Tasmania was governed by Lee’s Nationalist Government. A short tenure as Premier by Liberal J.B. Hayes between 1922-23 was broken by the success of Joseph Lyons’ Labor party at the polls in 1923. The next six years saw Lyons’ Government try to reverse as much as possible the crippling debt, unemployment, and dearth of industry that led to the preparation of A.G. Ogilvie and Tasman Shields’ economic report, the ‘Case for Tasmania.’ The 1920s was described by W.A. Townsley as a ‘stagnant decade’ for Tasmania, as the small State did not enjoy the relative prosperity of mainland Australia. At the end of the 1920s, Lyons’ Labor Government was replaced by the Liberals led by J.C. McPhee. Within this period, Tasmania suffered economic and industrial depression, high unemployment, and an inability to remove itself from its poor predicament. It is within this context that Tasmania’s soldiers returned and were repatriated, and should inform the local perspective to this study.

When examining repatriation policies and responses to it, sources like archival material are primarily repositories of complaint and tension. Correspondence between ex-soldiers and departments are more likely to contain grievances than complimentary platitudes. This has certainly been the case for Tasmanian sources. As a consequence, grievances, criticisms and protests can skew the researcher into believing that the history of repatriation (and more specifically for this study, Tasmanian responses to repatriation) are overwhelmingly negative. The voices of those soldiers who managed to ‘repatriate’ themselves are frustratingly difficult to access, as it is the man who shouts loudest who is heard. Those who ‘shouted’ are the voices we find in archives and newspapers. Those who managed to rehabilitate themselves without recourse to the department raise important questions with regard to repatriation generally: what does it mean to be repatriated? What does it mean to the Department? What does it mean to the soldiers? When had a soldier been ‘repatriated’? When had adequate assistance been provided? Conflicts of perception regarding this very question largely constitute the material that fills archival collections and newspaper columns on repatriation. This interpretive question also drives our understanding of responses to repatriation. Yet, it is problematic and erroneous to consider negative consequences as the sole response to repatriation programmes. Employment, vocational training, health, housing and land settlement all registered successes and found appreciative ex-servicemen behind them. Does a

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88 For more on this Report, see, Ibid., pp. 311-317. I also discuss this Report in Chapter Four.
soldier’s satisfaction qualify as the criterion for being repatriated? Not especially – for there were always those for whom enough was never sufficient. ‘Drifters’ before enlistment were unlikely to find stability after the disturbing and profound experiences of active service. Men found jobs under employment programmes considered themselves ‘un-repatriated’ if they found themselves out of work 6 months later, and returned for more assistance. It is therefore the multiplicity of opinions and responses to this question that makes every soldier’s story unique, and makes it impossible to arrive at a satisfactory answer.

Over 15,000 Tasmanians answered the Empire’s call in World War I. This thesis involves the investigation of the repatriation of returned servicemen to Tasmania in the years during and after World War I, broadly from 1916 to 1929. The year 1916\textsuperscript{89} provides a good place to commence as authorities were beginning to discuss and debate repatriation policy in a serious way, while 1929 was decided as a general endpoint due to Justice Pike’s Report on the failure of Land Settlement Schemes across the country. This chronology is subject to flexibility depending on each chapter, as issues like employment, activism in politics, and housing became less of an issue as the early 1920s passed. Their subsequent focus, for instance, will be on the immediate post-war and early 1920s periods. It is pertinent to note that the majority of newspaper material covers the period from 1916 to the early 1920s in response to the prevalence of repatriation issues in the media. The issue did not go away, however, but public interest, as in Parliament, reduced the greater the distance from the war.\textsuperscript{90} The intervening years allow, nonetheless, sufficient time to trace the implementation of repatriation policies, and ample space to evaluate their impact and effects.

Over this period, as has been demonstrated, a comprehensive repatriation scheme was developed to assist the re-establishment of the AIF into civilian life, of which no comparable scheme existed before anywhere in the world. Some very good investigations of this scheme have been undertaken on a national scale. Clem Lloyd


\textsuperscript{90} Joanna Bourke notes the question of why returned servicemen appeared to lose the sympathy of the public and politicians, and argues that they no longer wanted to be reminded of the war and its effects. Returned Servicemen, and particularly their mutilated bodies, evoked a cognisance of the horrors of the war. See her, Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War, London, 1996, p. 70.
and Jacqui Rees' seminal administrative history, *The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia*, is crucial in understanding the administrative creation of the Repatriation policies and the Departments that administered them. By their own admission, its authors intended the work "as an administrative history and an interpretation of how public policy evolved."91 While certainly providing a solid foundation to understanding the Repatriation programme, it lacks a broader engagement with the social aspects and affects of the scheme. Stephen Garton's excellent thematic, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, discusses cultural responses to repatriation, and is a significant contribution to the field. Garton's work is far-reaching in its scope and in the realisation that complex issues regarding concepts of 'return' and 'returning', cultural constructions surrounding war service and its implications for repatriation policies, personal agency, and the vital difference between 'Repatriation' and 'repatriation' had to be acknowledged, and in this study, applied within a Tasmanian context. L.J. Pryor's 1932 unpublished thesis 'The Origins of Australia's Repatriation Policy: 1914-1920,' provides a political and administrative foundation for understanding the creation of Repatriation policies. It also provides a useful study of the early application of this policy on a national basis. Terry King's thesis, 'On the Definition of "Digger": Australia and its Returned Soldiers, 1915-1920', examines the formation of wartime digger rhetoric and the place of returned soldiers within this cultural milieu.92 Other studies have tended to take a more specific and/or regional focus on particular elements of Australian repatriation policy.93 Tasmania has generally been mentioned in passing in these texts, so the opportunity to engage with elements of repatriation policy and use the material to construct a uniquely Tasmanian narrative will contribute to a wider understanding of the field. Jeffrey Grey, in a recent contribution to the historical debate on Australian military history, highlighted aspects of this branch of history requiring more work – among them was new histories of peacetime, and the impact

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91 Lloyd & Rees, *The Last Shilling*, p. 3.
and experiences of demobilisation and military service. This thesis hopes to contribute to filling this perceived gap in studies in this area, and complement the work of prominent authors like Garton, Lloyd, Rees, Pryor, Lake, McKernan and Alistair Thomson, as well as the many theses that have engaged the process of returned and returning soldiers into Australia's landscape, and the consequent narratives that developed.

Kent Fedorowich has noted that unpublished Honours and Postgraduate theses provide a rich source of largely untapped scholarship on regional and local histories of Australian soldier settlement. For Tasmania, Chris Martin’s, ‘War and after War: the Great War and its Aftermath in a Tasmanian Region: the Huon 1914-1926’; and Mandy Reynolds’, ‘The Noble Failure: King Island Soldier Settlement, 1918-1930’, provide that same sort of regional and localised history. In addition, Quentin Beresford’s article on the failure of Tasmania’s Soldier Settlement Scheme represents the only solely Tasmanian contribution, in published form, to repatriation scholarship. The remainder of repatriation material on Tasmania has been as part of larger volumes on the national programme. No study has yet undertaken to provide a broader investigation incorporating the other major aspects of repatriation policy in a Tasmanian context. Investigating Repatriation policies and assessing its outcomes in Tasmania against a national context is the task of this study.

Chapter One will examine the intersection of repatriation and politics in Tasmania, as well as attempts by returned soldiers to engage in political debates and action. It will be shown that, while assertive and active, Tasmanian ex-servicemen did not engage in the same violent actions as their interstate counterparts. There was no repeat of the Red Flag riots, or clashes with police – only isolated incidents that occurred during the height of the conscription referendums. The creation of the RSSILA in 1916 and its flirting with political involvement will be appraised. The majority of material, and subsequently the focus, will be on the early period into the first part of the 1920s, when the ex-soldier ‘problem’ was at its height. Returned

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95 C. Martin, ‘War and after War’; and M.J. Reynolds, ‘The Noble Failure: King Island Soldier Settlement, 1918-1930’, Centre for Education, University of Tasmania, 1982. Martin provides a reasonably thorough treatment of the Tasmanian legislative process in establishing a land settlement scheme, and applies that to the Huon region. This study will utilise that basis, and direct its use to a broader Tasmanian context. For more, see the Chapters 5 and 6.
soldier participation in politics and political associations heightened their sense of place in a new post-war society, and in that regard, Tasmanian ex-servicemen demonstrated the same propensity as their comrades on the Australian mainland.

Chapter Two will observe the application of Health policies in the State. Health was essentially a Federal responsibility, and it is here that archival records trace the conflicts between the soldier and bureaucracy at its clearest. It will be shown that health policies operated in Tasmania in much the same way as interstate, but that small regional differences related to Tasmania’s geography signified the only real deviation from the national application.

Chapter Three will look at the War Service Homes scheme in Tasmania, and identify problems with the Tasmanian organisation that marked it out as one of the worst administrative divisions in the country. The work by the Department was reasonably short-lived, culminating in a Public Accounts Committee investigation in 1921. Its findings, the achievements of the Department, and the scheme’s administrative transferral to a Tasmanian administration will be explored.

Chapter Four will trace Employment policies and programmes from a national level to their practical implementation in Tasmania. As part of this, vocational training programmes will be assessed, and placed within the context of general unemployment in the State. Responses to employment preference and demands for special concessions raised the ire of some sections of the community, and the playing out of this narrative will highlight the sometimes heated path of this process in Tasmania. The weighing in of the RSSILA to the employment debate, as advocates and as an employment bureau, will also be appraised.

Chapters Five and Six provide in-depth coverage of the Tasmanian Returned Soldier Land Settlement Scheme. It was decided to devote two chapters to this topic owing to the enormity of the enterprise. The first covers the creation of legislation in response to national moves toward establishing a scheme, through to the end of a Parliamentary Select Committee’s damaging findings in 1921. The second chapter covers the period from 1922 through to Tasmania’s 1926 Royal Commission, to Justice Pike’s 1929 Federal Inquiry. Throughout the entirety, newspaper opinion,

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My sincerest gratitude is extended to the Department of Veterans’ Affairs for granting me access to closed-access Hospital and Medical Repatriation files. Personal material that could identify the soldier (like names and personal details) was requested by the DVA to be omitted from the thesis, and this has been complied with.
Annual Reports and archival material are incorporated to provide as complete a picture as possible. It must be noted, however, that the repatriation stories and experiences of Tasmanian nurses, and of dependants and children of soldiers, are not part of this study. This work examines repatriation as a process encompassing the return of the male combatant from war, and the deliberate omission of nurses and dependants as legitimate beneficiaries of Repatriation policies will sharpen the focus of the thesis.

The politicisation of the returned soldier body contributed to the retention of the repatriation issue in the public domain, and their participation in politics both nationally and locally enriched the political landscape of the nation. By examining these developments and processes, a more complete picture of the Tasmanian repatriation experience, and consequent flow-on to the national picture, will emerge. The opening letter to The Mercury in September 1921 proclaimed:

[W]e are back again now, all comfortably settled and well on the road to prosperity, and all that is necessary to complete our sense of security and contentment is somebody's kind permission to remain on earth and earn sufficient money to provide the bare necessities of life and solve the flesh-reducing problem of next week's rent.98

The derisory cynicism from this returned soldier implies that all was far from well, and that the years he had been home were not as fruitful or utopian as repatriation policies tried to achieve. He endured dissatisfaction, frustration and anger. The irony that peace would be as big a fight as war was not lost on the correspondent, and was typical of many Tasmanians' experiences at making that journey, not only physically and geographically, but psychologically as well. The return to Tasmania, to the community, and back to the lives soldiers left behind, was at times a traumatic and painful struggle. Some never fully made the transition, while others had an easier time assimilating. But for all, to varying degrees, it was a Long Road Home.

Prologue

When a digger gets into the Police Courts news ‘returned soldier’ invariably follows his name. It has been suggested when a civvie gets shot in for being drunk, disorderly, and refusing to fight, ‘not a returned soldier’ should be added to his moniker.

From the outset it must be acknowledged that the work of the Repatriation Department could only address the physical aspect of returning to the community life of Australia. Its policies sought, wherever possible, to redress the material prejudice suffered by enlisting. Programmes like employment assistance, retraining, education, and land settlement, as very public affirmations of rehabilitation, contributed to a public ‘return’. Yet, of equal import was the very personal phase of repatriation – the private process of ‘returning’. The problem, as Stephen Garton’s Cost of War reveals, was often as important in making the transition from soldier to civilian. This dimension of the repatriation process is not found in its policies, legislation, or correspondence. Nonetheless, cognisance of this ‘private’ element is vital in order to understand any narrative of the repatriation process in Australia. A failure to negotiate the ‘personal’ return very often dictated the entire process of effecting one’s repatriation and rehabilitation. Some made the adjustment better, and swifter, than others. Some never did.

Manifestations of the difficulty in negotiating the politics of ‘returning’ were exhibited in rises in crime, divorce rates, domestic violence, concerns of alcoholism, and suicide. Arguably, the dehumanising and prolonged exposure to violence at the

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1 ‘Notes’, The Tassie Digger, March 1920, p. 5.
2 R.G. Lindstrom argued that differences between soldiers’ wartime and post-war visions of Australia affected responses to homecoming. Their superficial image of an imagined/unchanged society “caused problems on return; so that for many men the collapse of the image of home was the last straw.” R.G. Lindstrom, ‘Stress and Identity: Australian Soldiers during the First World War’, MA Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1985, p. 145.
3 Willard Waller argues that ‘return’ constituted a difficult process of disengaging with the exigencies and practicalities of previous military service (and the external manifestations of conformity expected), to take a lead from their internal and personal conscience which had had to be subjugated during war service: “When the soldier returns to civilian life, he must learn once more to take up the burdens of personal and moral responsibility.” The negotiation of these personal and moral responsibilities was more difficult for some than others, and provides a context to understanding veterans’ difficulties in making the transition from soldier to civilian again. W. Waller, The Veteran Comes Back, New York, 1944, p. 25. Michael McKernan notes the impact war had on those at home as well as the soldier,
Front contributed to an increase in domestic violence. Tasmanian readers were regaled with Melbourne reports of the involvement of returned soldiers with domestic violence, murder and attempted suicide, and attempted murder, when a returned soldier slit his wife’s throat. Domestic violence was not only perpetrated against wives, shown by the case of F.J. Whelan who was charged with wounding his father with a revolver at Battery Point, Hobart. On two separate occasions, returned soldiers were involved in violent altercations at the Military Pay Office at Anglesea Barracks. Marilyn Lake argues that difficulties in repatriating saw a rising number of returned soldiers arraigned before the courts. In the Hobart Police Courts in January 1916, returned soldier Victor Holland was accused of stealing £4 10s. in bank notes, while in March 1919 the first of several prosecutions for the defrauding of the Repatriation Department by returned soldiers was heard. A returned soldier was imprisoned in 1918 for sheep stealing, which was even discussed in the House of Assembly. Offences usually arose from resisting arrest, drunkenness, disturbing the peace or indecent language, but their punishments were usually lenient, with either a conviction or a small fine imposed. The Tassie Digger noted with disgust that extending “beyond the front-line soldiers right into the homes from which...men and women enlisted. All those who served Australia in war would have some problems in resuming the lives they had once lived.” M. McKerman, This War Never Ends, Brisbane, 2001, p. xii. This is a problem that continues with modern serviceman to this day – a recent Tasmanian newspaper reported a Tasmanian woman’s struggle with the impact overseas active service had had on her husband. He had become violent toward her and their children, leading to a separation. See, Sunday Tasmanian, 31 July 2005, p. 7. Interestingly, Bobbie Oliver argues for an absence in violent crime attributable to returned soldiers after the war, but contrasts this to the public demonstrations of violence, demonstrations and riots during the war. See, B. Oliver, War and Peace in Western Australia. The Social and Political Impact of the Great War 1914-1926, Nedlands, 1995, p. 155.

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These were reported in Tasmanian newspapers. The Mercury, 13 December 1917, p. 8, reported that a returned soldier in Melbourne was charged with murder and attempted suicide after murdering a women whose husband was at the Front. He wanted to stay there with her, possibly an affair, but she would not let him stay. The Mercury, 27 March 1918, p. 3, reported in Caulfield that a returned soldier was charged with attempted murder after he slit his wife’s throat. She survived and returned home from hospital. ‘Police Courts: Hobart’, The Mercury, 15 September 1916, p. 7. Whelan was released on bail. See, The Mercury, 27 February 1919, p. 7; 28 February 1919, p. 4, 7; 17 April 1919, p. 7.


Lake, A Divided Society, p. 186. Lake cites the case of a returned soldier who assaulted a man, with his defence claiming shell shock from war experience. Despite having nine convictions recorded against him before he enlisted, the magistrate “chose not to inflict a penalty.” pp. 186-187. Another case from the Hobart Police Courts saw a returned soldier, swathed in bandages when facing the magistrate after an altercation, guilty of resisting the police. He was sentenced to one months’ imprisonment, suspended on the soldier finding sureties for good behaviour. See, ‘Police Courts: Charges of Resisting the Police’, The Mercury, 11 October 1919, p. 8. When returned soldiers were
returned soldiers were attracting ‘extra’ attention from Tasmanian police: “While it is desirable that members of the police force keep a kindly eye on returned men who are idle and knocking about town from time to time,” the Digger noted, “it is altogether reprehensible that diggers be baled up in the street and particulars peremptorily demanded of them as to their means of sustenance. This practice must stop!” It suggests that some returned soldiers were considered troublesome.

For others again, the ordeal of return and the facing of a new life after the strains of war service was too great a burden to bear. A. Tiveychoc noted that wounded soldiers faced extra difficulties in making the transition, as the psychological effort of overcoming their disability increased the struggle:

Most wounded diggers passed through [a] reactionary period and had recourse to drink, which delayed the healing of wounds, but gave some respite to their war tortured minds. The majority survived, some even returning to their pre-war standards; but, of the more seriously wounded, and particularly those addicted to drugs, many were taken in death or insanity before a few years had passed.

One returned soldier was found drowned in the Derwent River, and it was thought his rejected application for vocational training was the catalyst. Another man, seemingly adjusted to civilian existence, took his life by a gunshot wound to the head at Richmond. People who knew him were shocked as he had been well earlier that same day, and no one had suspected anything was troubling him. In another case, in Launceston, an alcoholic returned soldier poisoned himself by drinking a “corrosive fluid” used to treat wounds. The man was single, 39 years of age, and though an alcoholic he was not drunk at the time; a witness reported that “He seemed perfectly rational when he went to his room…” The Coroner recorded his death as suicide.

Garton notes references to a veritable ‘suicide epidemic’ after the war, and that

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the victims of criminal acts, as in another case in October 1919 when a man pleaded guilty to stealing a wallet containing £30 from ex-soldier E.G. Collis, the sentence was one year imprisonment – a strong indication that predatory behaviour against returned soldiers was not to be tolerated and was to be punished heavily. In contrast was the relatively light or suspended sentences against returned soldiers for their misdemeanours. The Chief Justice Sir Herbert Nicholls stated that “The offence of robbing the soldier was a bad one…” See, ‘The Supreme Court Criminal Sittings’ The Mercury, 15 October 1919, p. 3.

13 See, ‘Notes’, The Tassie Digger, March 1920, p. 5.
16 The Mercury, 2 August 1919, p. 3.
17 ‘Returned Soldiers’ Suicide’: The Inquest’, The Mercury, 26 September 1919, p. 2.
psychological and social problems contributing to these ends – divorce, violence, war trauma, alcoholism – are frustratingly difficult to access.\textsuperscript{18}

Concern over the fidelity of wives and girlfriends was a real anxiety for returning soldiers, compounding apprehension toward employment, retraining and repatriating generally. There was the real possibility that wives had not been as ‘patriotic’ in their commitment while their husbands had been at the Front.\textsuperscript{19} A small sample of Tasmanian divorce files concerning returned servicemen to mid-1922 alone, reveals that of 34 cases, 27 petitions were cited for the adultery of wives.\textsuperscript{20} In many cases, an illegitimate child was the result of her union.\textsuperscript{21} In other cases, the wife petitioned for divorce citing abuse and cruelty, although identifying whether this was a result of their husband’s brutalising experiences or some predisposition for domestic violence is impossible to know.\textsuperscript{22} Some soldiers struggled with alcohol, and were divorced because of drunkenness and cruelty.\textsuperscript{23} Judith Allen reports that returned soldiers were “over-represented among inter-war defendants charged with killing women,” adding that they tended to use “murder instead of divorce.”\textsuperscript{24}

The trauma of readjusting led some men to lassitude and apathy, while others “remained restless for renewed action and adventure.”\textsuperscript{25} The gap between combatants and non-combatants, Bernd Hüppauf argues, “brought about serious communication

\textsuperscript{18} S. Garton, \textit{The Cost of War}, Melbourne, 1996, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{19} This was a double-edged sword, for medical and hospital Repatriation files of Tasmanian soldiers reveal incidences of venereal disease contracted while on active ‘service’ – even in married men. This is one part of the Anzac legend that its proponents are less willing to disclose. Wives and girlfriends were also victims of Anzac promiscuity. See also, J. Allen, \textit{Sex & Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women Since 1880}, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{20} See series, Archives Office Tasmania [hereafter AOT]: SC 89/11-15 – Divorce Files.
\textsuperscript{21} For examples, see also: AOT: SC 89/11, no. 358; SC 89/12, no. 385; SC 89/12, no. 395; SC 89/12, no. 396; SC 89/12, no. 397; SC 89/12, no. 398; SC 89/12, no. 401; SC 89/12, no. 409; SC 89/13, no. 434.
\textsuperscript{22} One particular case saw a soldier return on 8 April 1918, and four days later his wife claimed violent behaviour toward her started. He claimed she was adulterous, and tried to force her to sign a declaration to that effect, and when she refused, he threatened her with a loaded revolver. He also attempted to force her into adulterous acts by bringing men around to their house. She claimed he was also adulterous, but could not prove her allegations, so the court found in his favour. Yet, without knowing the nature of their relationship before he enlisted, it is probable but not certain that war service played a part in his actions toward her. See file, AOT: SC 89/12, no. 400. These cases are reinforced by Judith Allen’s research into crimes against women in Australia. She argues that, “The ‘return of the soldier’ led to violent confrontations and ‘crimes of passion’ when women refused to give up new lovers. The proficiency of ex-servicemen with armed warfare apparently diminished their willingness to negotiate.” Allen, \textit{Sex & Secrets}, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{23} AOT: SC89/14, no. 461.
\textsuperscript{24} Allen, \textit{Sex & Secrets}, pp. 132, 133.
\textsuperscript{25} Lake, \textit{A Divided Society}, p. 186. Townsley also noted that, “Some ex-servicemen had difficulty in adjusting, a few were charged with disturbing the peace, still others were given up to apathy or restlessness.” See his, \textit{Tasmania: From Colony to Statehood, 1803-1945}, Hobart, 1991, p. 293.
problems and often deep distortions in personal relationships." This gulf in experience and a consequent inability to communicate/articulate their war experiences led to passivity and alcohol abuse. Some returned men exhibited an increasing predilection for drinking on their return, and special 6 o'clock closing measures were adopted in Tasmania partly to restrict soldiers' access to alcohol. Prominent RSSILA activist and temperance advocate Duncan McRae was particularly concerned by the threat alcohol posed, and ran on a Temperance platform in the 1919 State elections, while a Repatriation Conference held in Hobart in May 1919 discussed alcoholism and prohibition. The Third RSSILA Congress held in Hobart debated alcohol and returned soldiers, with McRae firm in his views, and other delegates vehement that the freedoms they fought to preserve should remain. At the Congress, Sergt. McKenzie felt that, "it was the want of proper repatriation which allowed men to drift, battling against the world when they were not fit, and who flew to drink, which was the natural thing for an Australian." He argued that the lack of an adequate repatriation network was responsible for some alcoholism among soldiers, while Captain Pike argued that the scale of the problem was overstated: "although it was the usual thing to cite a returned soldier as a horrible example, the percentage of drunken soldiers was very small." Nonetheless, a returned soldier who had appeared repeatedly in court for drunkenness earned the wrath of the Magistrate in October 1918, and received a firm lecture:
The Police Magistrate said there were some people who were a
disgrace to the battalions which had won honour and glory, and the
defendant was one of them. Any good that the defendant might have
done by going to the front was wiped off by the beastly behaviour to
which he pleaded guilty. He was a pest to society.\footnote{Police Courts: Hobart', \textit{The Mercury}, 28 October 1918, p. 3. The returned man was fined £1 in
default of 14 days' imprisonment, and for resisting arrest he was sentenced to one months' gaol. There
was no hint in the Magistrate's comments that the soldier's repeated arrests for being drunk and
disorderly may have constituted a genuine problem. There was no comment on rehabilitation, only
punishment, despite the fact that the soldier obviously had a problem, as a repeat offender. There
was no recognition that his experiences may have led to him to use alcohol as a coping mechanism, or any
acknowledgment that repatriation policies could deal with him. Similarly, there was no reference to
contact the Repatriation Department to consider assistance from them. For similar changes in opinion
in Victoria, see, M. Lake, \textit{The Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria, 1915-38}, Melbourne,
1987, p. 35.}

The comments and sentencing was protested by one \textit{Mercury} reader, who grasped a
sense of the difficulties this particular veteran was suffering. The comments were
derided as "extravagant and cruel," asking if this was "the way to reward or aid any
man whose will power has, perhaps, been weakened by his partaking, in our defence,
of the horrors of war?"\footnote{\textit{A Protest'}, letter to the editor from 'There is a Limit', \textit{The Mercury}, 31 October 1918, p. 3. The
respondent's letter continued: "Civil order should be maintained, but in instances like this, penalties
should be tempered with gratitude, and sneers withheld."}

The role of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia
helped some men greatly in overcoming feelings of estrangement and difference. In a
contemporary newspaper article on what the League hoped to achieve in 1919,
Secretary of the Tasmanian branch George Foster saw the League's role as assisting
veterans' repatriation into society – not classing them on pre-enlistment indiscretions,
but judging their war service as a cleaning of the slate:

\[W\]e in our endeavours to help a comrade back to good citizenship
and re-establishment in civil life, may be more forgiving or long-
suffering of his misdemeanours, thinking that unless we as his
comrade are prepared to give him a helping hand, we can hardly
complain of authority that might be deemed to deal harshly.\footnote{\textit{Soldiers' Grievances: Statement by R.S.S.I.L. Secretary: Some Typical Cases'}, \textit{The Mercury}, 11
August 1919, p. 4.}

This outlook suggests a more sympathetic response than from the Repatriation
Department. As well as an outlet for official repatriation complaints and grievances,
the League offered a sympathetic atmosphere to relieve internal struggles and
problems in adjusting. The League knew the problems its members were likely to
face, and afforded support and encouragement whenever and wherever it could. Their role expanded in the 1920s as they forged relationships with all levels of government to entrench their status as the pre-eminent returned soldier advocacy organisation. For those who eschewed the League, they either looked to families and friends, or turned within to cope introspectively.

Return posed varied social and emotional problems that the repatriation apparatus could not directly address. The focus on providing external solutions to the physical processes of repatriation—employment, land settlement, vocational training, and a focus of physical health, meant that the psychological process of 'returning' was a task largely undertaken by the individual. It was ultimately the individual that was responsible for negotiating the politics of their 'return'.

Chapter One

Repatriation and Politics

Political repatriation – repatriation made political, or as a political tool – was perhaps at its most effective, and effectively exploited, by William Morris Hughes. He went to the polls and won on the platform as the digger’s friend, and successfully used repatriation and the returned soldier vote as a catalyst for his continued incumbency in Australia’s most powerful political position. But politics and repatriation mixed in other ways too – returned soldiers, aware of the power of their vote and their supporters, organised themselves along existing political lines and in Tasmania made moves to strike out on their own. Politicians courted returned men, and made emotional appeals to them specifically during the May 1919 Tasmanian State election while other returned soldiers ran as candidates on a variety of issues. To assert that there existed a unified or common returned soldier voice is a myth – for intense disagreement on issues such as labour and temperance reform among Tasmanian veterans was fought out at the polls. Returned soldiers also exercised a political voice in a passive and indirect sense through bureaucratic sources like medical and repatriation case files, and land settlement correspondence. Their voicing of agency by participating in debates on their health (during medical examinations) or in negotiating land settlement conditions still constituted a contribution to a political and personal voice, even if it was not in an outright sense. It is problematic to attempt to consider returned soldier politics and the politics of repatriation as a distinct element from repatriation policies, for in the majority of instances, it was the political haranguing over repatriation policy that constituted some of the most overt (yet also indirect) politicisation.

1 Chris Martin argues that this phase had been reached by late 1915: “Towards the end of 1915 the issue of returned soldiers had quickly become politicised. Attempts to place these men above party politics had necessarily to fail. Some politicians no doubt saw the championing of the returned soldier’s cause as a means to parliamentary office.” C. Martin, ‘War and after War: the Great War and its Aftermath in a Tasmanian Region: the Huon 1914-1926’, Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1992, p. 21. The rise of ex-servicemen was noted as one part of a new and virtually unknown factor in post-war elections, see, I. Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900-1921, Canberra, 1965, p. 213.
Much has been written of the role of the RSSILA (later RSL) in Australia's post-war political balance, and their courting by conservative political elements to shore up the status quo. G.L. Kristianson, Kent Fedorowich, Stephen Garton and Michael Mrdak have all examined the RSSILA and their role as a pressure group for returned servicemen's issues, and their relationship and space within the Australian political landscape as an influential and frequently controversial political and social commentator. In the early years during and immediately after the cessation of hostilities in Europe in 1918, the RSSILA, as the official recognised organ of returned soldier representation (recognised by Hughes' Nationalist Government), conservative governments around the country attempted to appeal to, and forge links with, returned soldier groups generally, of which the RSSILA was arguably the most prominent. The political muscle that the RSSILA could muster by mobilising its members appealed to politicians; or acted as a deterrent to ignoring their demands. The political value of an association with returned soldiers was enormously attractive to the voting public, and in Tasmania in the May 1919 State election, this was exploited. Sir Walter Lee's Nationalists and Joseph Lyons' Labor Party both appealed to the returned soldier vote - to the men themselves, and to their supporters - and both camps fielded returned soldier candidates as an aid to their appeals. The incumbent conservative Nationalists were returned, echoing the forging of Hughes with the RSSILA and his political success in the national context.

This chapter proposes to examine the ways Tasmanian returned soldiers participated in the politicisation of their repatriation experiences, Repatriation policies, and politicisation of return. The political attractiveness of returned soldiers as an important group in domestic and local politics will be considered, as will the formation and affiliation of returned soldiers to advocacy groups, including the RSSILA and Sir

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1 In 1965, Michael Roe discussed the relationship between nationalism and the digger tradition. Roe argued that pre-war nationalism was associated with the ALP, unions and the political left, whereas after the war, Australian nationalism was identified with the political right. The co-option of the digger tradition - maintained by the RSSILA - with conservative political elements saw them aligned to the Right of the political spectrum. See, M. Roe, 'Comment on the Digger Tradition', Meanjin, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1965, p. 357; See also, M. Mrdak, 'Soldier – Citizen – Returned Servicemen and the R.S.L., 1916-1929', Unpublished Honours Thesis, University of New England, 1986, p. 59.

2 Interestingly, during the third National RSSILA Congress in Hobart, there were moves to register the League through a bill in Federal Parliament recognising “the RSSILA as the official organization of returned sailors and soldiers.” See, 'Returned Soldiers' Congress: Election of Officers: Official Welcome and Banquet', The Mercury, 5 March 1918, p. 2.

John Gellibrand's Remembrance Club (the forerunner to Legacy). The process of return gave returned soldiers a status different to normal civilians, and a consequent right to be political in ways that the civilian population could not. The expression of their personal demands through pressure groups like the RSSILA equated to a demand for a political voice, as these appeals were often directed toward the political authorities, even if only circuitously. Returned soldier participation in the political process as voters, candidates, and lobbyists for the extension of special privileges will be discussed. Their claims for special political representation in Tasmania gained currency only as long as memories of the war and their role in it were vibrant, fresh and directly appreciated. Their assertions for special political representation, and their status as a group targeted for special treatment because they were returned soldiers was confined specifically to the latter war years, and very early 1920s. The consequent focus on that period in this chapter is representative of that fact.

It must be remembered, however, that returned soldiers' participation in politics did not necessarily mean the politicisation of repatriation, but occurred only when the platform of politics and returned soldier interests intersected or when the soldier politician/candidate drew attention to his status as a returned man while proclaiming his position. Overall, this chapter seeks to look at the political notion of repatriation, and how repatriation as a policy was politicised, as well as how the experiences and demands after the war developed into demands for political participation. It proposes to complement the work carried out on groups such as the RSSILA on a national scale, and their political involvement in the repatriation issue and returned soldiers' rights.

5 Mark Lyons argues that in the early 1920s, there existed some strain between the leaderships of the RSSILA and Legacy, as the former felt intrusion into a field it called its own. Similarly, Legacy provided a more respectable public face to returned soldier organizations, as membership was exclusive, and members represented the business and professional fields of ex-serviceman employment. See, M. Lyons, Legacy: The First Fifty Years, Melbourne, 1978, p. 12. For Legacy in Tasmania, see my, 'Legacy', in, A. Alexander (ed.), The Companion to Tasmanian History, p. 213. Charles Bean argued that Legacy represented "one of the noblest efforts in any nation." C.E.W. Bean, War Aims of a Plain Australian, Sydney, 1943, p. 3.

6 A section dealing with Tasmanian returned soldiers lobbying for the Legislative Council franchise is covered later in this chapter. I use this section to illustrate a conscious demand by Tasmanian returned soldiers to claim special political privileges based upon their war services.

7 Willard Waller examined the experiences of American Veterans after the end of the Great War, and looked at the concept of veterans becoming 'politically dangerous'. See his, The Veteran Comes Back, New York, 1944, pp. 186-188.
Return and Difference: The Formation of Returned Soldier Identity

[N]o class or body of men [are] better entitled to representation in the Parliament of this country than the men who had fought and those who were still fighting for it.⁸

From the moment Tasmania’s soldiers began returning from the Great War, their presence in society was felt – only softly at first – but as their numbers began to multiply, they began to act in an advisory capacity over the Tasmanian public in the way in which patriotic sentiment should be directed.⁹ Returned soldiers were symbols of the hardy, virile and youthful Australian spirit that personified the nation, which had forged a new national identity at Gallipoli distinct from the Empire.¹⁰ K.S. Inglis has examined the formation of the Anzac tradition, and argued that returned soldiers saw themselves as the custodians of this tradition, and of desiring the transference of the wartime ideals of mateship and what was best for the country into a utopian peacetime application.¹¹ This arguably characterized their pre-eminence in society in the immediate war and post-war period. Due to the consciousness of what C.E.W. Bean claims was the birth of Australian nationhood at Gallipoli and other subsequent heroic deeds, they were venerated on their return and occupied a privileged position in society, while the more outspoken members asserted their right to take part in domestic issues that impacted on the conduct of the war – a right claimed through the sacrifice of their own youth and health, and the sacrifice on behalf of thousands of young Tasmanian soldiers already at the front. Marilyn Lake has argued that “A number of the fitter

⁸ This excerpt was reported as part of a speech made by Staff-Sergeant George Foster on the declaration of his standing for a Senate seat in the 1917 Federal elections. See, ‘Sergeant Foster’s Candidature’, _The Mercury_, 27 March 1917, p. 6.
⁹ For instance, a letter published in March 1917 from George Fisher, then-Secretary of the RSA, directed enquiries from women willing to march to support the association on Reinforcement Day to contact the sub-committee headed by the Hobart Council Mayoress. Fisher appreciated the support from Tasmanian women who were “anxious to help our association” and he used Reinforcement Day as an opportunity for them to show their support for returned soldiers and their association. ‘Reinforcement day’, letter to the editor from G. Fisher, _The Mercury_, 9 March 1917, p. 8. The Tasmanian RSSILA, as in other states, also took a leading role in the public’s commemoration of Anzac Day.
¹⁰ Patricia Grimshaw, Marilynn Lake et. al. wryly argued that “The special achievement of these richly rewarded men [the returned soldier] was that they had given birth to the nation. [...] Nations and men had to be proven and war was the ultimate proving ground of both. The achievement of Australian manhood was the achievement of nationhood. [...] Gallipoli was hailed as the nation’s birthplace.” See, P. Grimshaw, M. Lake, A. McGrath, M. Quartly, _Creating a Nation_, Victoria, 1994, p. 218.
¹¹ K.S. Inglis, ‘The Anzac Tradition’, _Meanjin_, No. 100, Vol. 24, Number 1, 1965, p. 41. Alistair Thomson’s case studies of WWI veterans demonstrated that many were willing to play their part in perpetuating this image. See his, _Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend_, Melbourne, 1994.
soldiers quickly took their place on the recruiting platform and became some of the most ardent supporters of the demand for more men. They spoke with the authority arising out of first-hand experience and self-importance. Their sacrifice for the Empire had earned them the right to speak and be heard, and the Tasmanian public listened to what they had to say. A letter to *The Mercury* from ‘Rohan’ all the way from Queensland urged returned soldiers to be involved in politics and the future of their country after finding the nation “in the throes of all forms of extremism,” employing the breath of “virility, health and vigour” and widened “minds and vision” their overseas service had given them.

Returned soldiers were particularly vocal in the recruiting and conscription campaigns of 1916, where they often took to the hustings, to spur on the shirker element to support their comrades in Europe. The RSA in Hobart was behind Reinforcement Day, held on 14 March 1917 – a day held to stimulate recruiting in Tasmania that had the blessing of the Governor-General, the Governor, the State Premier and leader of the Opposition. This high profile endorsement equated to the tacit support of the work of the RSSILA, giving their association political legitimacy in the eyes of the Tasmanian community. They were forceful in their opinions toward the activities of the community during wartime, and their opinions dictated the proper course of patriotic action during this period. In a letter from the ‘Dug-Out’, the then residence of the Returned Soldiers’ Association (RSA), the men suggested the closure of stadiums and racecourses on two counts: to “set a good example in self-denial and sacrifice by closing down for the period of the war, and investing their gambling cash in the war loan when appealed to.”

The many eligible men that attended these meetings, and worked in the industry without offering their services to the men at the Front caused frustration among the returned men in Tasmania. The RSSILA did not appeal to all, however. A meeting of approximately 100 returned soldiers met after the 1919 Tasmanian State election to discuss forming a Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council, after declarations that veterans were dissatisfied with the League and its non-representation. Evidence of fragmentation went further, as members of the meeting refused to join an association with civilians or

policemen. A Mr Leary\textsuperscript{16} felt that, "the returned soldiers were the 'mugs', and everyone was out to make what they could out of them."\textsuperscript{17} The sense of difference to their surroundings encompassed other returned servicemen and the wider community. In these conditions, insularity was preferred in the face of further disappointments from society.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Politicisation of the Returned Serviceman: The Formation of the RSSILA in Tasmania}\textsuperscript{19}

I most earnestly exhort all returned soldiers to stick together, and create such a powerful body that we can demand from any Government a fulfilment of the many promises of fair and just treatment that have been made to us, promises that till now have been flagrantly broken.\textsuperscript{20}

The desire to create a union of returned soldiers in Tasmania was clear soon after the first wounded and incapacitated men began returning to the State in 1915. Their formation owed much to a desire to ensure that promises made to them on their enlistment be kept, as well as a recognition of the differences their war experiences had effected in them from the remainder of the community to which they returned. This sense of difference and solidarity from the community, as members of a force that had seen active service overseas, represented the qualification for membership in the League – the point at which this sense of difference was most starkly realised. The formation of an association of returned soldiers with experience and understanding to speak on behalf of returned soldier interests was born out of this sense of difference.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{16} Nothing more is known of Leary, including his first name.

\textsuperscript{17} 'Labor Party and the Soldiers: Attempt to Draw the Men In: A Proposed Workers and Soldiers’ Council', \textit{The Mercury}, 24 June 1919, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{18} For a politically active returned soldier, whether a member of the League or not, they were proud of their returned soldier status. For others, their views of their own status was something that was personalised and internal. War service, however, was something they were always cognisant of.

\textsuperscript{19} The acronyms RSA (Returned Soldiers' Association), and RSSILA (Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Imperial League of Australia), and RSL (Returned Services League) were interchanged in contemporary media reporting of the emerging returned soldier organizations in Tasmania. As a consequence, references to the RSA, RSSILA, and RSL as a general rule, refer to the same body of returned soldiers, and their usage reflects when each acronym was used rather than an inconsistency in style.

\textsuperscript{20} 'Urgency of Repatriation', letter to the editor from D. McRae, \textit{The Mercury}, 8 January 1918, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{21} Testament to his admiration of the Australian ‘digger’, C.E.W. Bean wrote at the height of WWII that some of the finest movements that arose in the interwar years came into action “through the comradeship of returned service men, who organised themselves to ease to some extent the effects of the old rule ‘Devil take the hindmost.’ ” It was clear that Bean admired the soldier in wartime and when he assumed a role in society once again, proving themselves on the battlefields of Europe. See, Bean, \textit{War Aims of a Plain Australian}, pp. 2-3.
It was believed that, despite the admirable intentions of patriotic civilian assistance and sympathy, only returned men really understood. The RSSILA was by no means the only returned soldier body that formed, but by forging links with the Commonwealth Government and assuming a broad-based approach to representing veterans' interests rather than more sectional issues, they emerged as the pre-eminent returned soldier body. Kristianson argued this point had arrived by early 1919 when both government and public recognition and acceptance had been recognised.  

The first moves toward forming such a body in Tasmania took place at the end of February 1916, during a picnic at Montagu Bay (on the Derwent River, near Hobart) when the intention to establish a RSA was seriously discussed. The first day of March saw a formal meeting held in the Hobart Town Hall, attended by approximately fifty returned soldiers to form The Returned Soldiers' Association of Tasmania, adopting the regulations from the Victorian branch. The birth of the Tasmanian branch of the RSA, and thus the beginning of an organised returned soldier body in the State, could arguably be traced to this moment. Moves to form a similar body were also undertaken in the north of the State, and plans were well advanced by August.

In the first week of August 1916, a meeting held in Hobart signalled a shift in the way Tasmanian returned soldiers saw and interacted with their civic environment. A general meeting of the RSA discussed some important issues concerning the formation of a returned soldiers' representative body. Members of the Hobart branch of the RSA had met with several members of the Launceston branch, and the proposition was forwarded that these two branches affiliate in order to strengthen the position of the returned soldier in Tasmania. In addition, it was proposed that the Tasmanian branches of the RSA consider affiliating with the RSSILA being formed interstate, to “obtain by united action all [the] advantages which the separate branches or associations in each of the various States, or the members thereof, would have more difficulty in obtaining in their separate capacity.” Recommendations made concerning the affiliation of the Launceston and Hobart branches of the RSA were

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24 Ibid., p. 206.
25 Report by the *Mercury* on the General Meeting held by the RSA in Hobart in the Mayor's Courtroom on Saturday 5 August, 1916. 'Returned Soldiers: Site of the Rest Home; Protest from the Men', *The Mercury*, 7 August, 1916, p. 2. There is a two-day discrepancy between the date of the meeting reported by *The Mercury*, and reported in Broinowski's 1921 publication. *The Mercury* is more likely to be the more authoritative source on this matter, reporting contemporary to the events.
apparently rather advanced, having already decided that the headquarters were to be in Hobart, and that the Hobart and Launceston branches were to be known as No. 1 and No. 2 branches respectively.26

Of perhaps more importance, this meeting and the suggestions made by its attendees saw a marked shift toward the definite formation of a returned soldier consciousness. As the period and conditions of active service had altered forever the lives and experiences of returned servicemen, so they congregated together on their return with others who had experienced a period of life quite apart from any civilian experience. Through the gatherings of groups of returned men, even at a relatively early stage like this, a collective consciousness formed, and some realised that real and definite political action could result. The RSA were keen to protect the name of the returned soldier, and of their right alone to speak of their problems.27 In Hobart, the main political protagonist in late 1916 was crippled Gallipoli veteran Sapper Duncan McRae. McRae was a patient at the AIF Roseneath Base Hospital,28 and the same man who had corresponded with The Mercury on the issue of a returned soldiers’ rest home. McRae argued that the RSA should affiliate with all the Australian returned soldier organizations, and, as a consequence of this unification:

Sooner or later they must come in contact with politics. He did not mean that they should associate themselves with any party, but the time would come when they would number their members not by the hundred, but by the hundred thousand, and that they would then be in such a position that they could control Australian politics. They should have their own labour bureau, and endeavour to help each other. There

26 ‘Returned Soldiers: Site of Rest Home; Protest from the Men’, The Mercury, 7 August, 1916, p. 2. Voting on the affiliation of the two branches, and with mainland Australia’s new League however, was postponed. Of particular interest is the fact that any suggestion of animosity between the northern and southern branches raised in the meeting was consistently rejected, but this was more likely as a show of unity in the face of the north/south parochialism that was alive at this time concerning the location of the State’s capital. Gunner J. McGregor noted that “they were all one, and there should be no North and South feeling.”

27 This is particularly evident during discussions over the proposed site for a rest home in the city of Hobart. One returned soldier wrote of his anger and disgust at suggestions returned men were morally weak, and might consort with prostitutes in the area of the mooted rest home. He claimed that returned soldiers generally deserved better than to face that sort of criticism. Duncan McRae responded, and angrily claimed that none except the RSA had the authority to make pronouncements on returned soldiers as a body except themselves. This was an audacious claim, considering that the RSA had only been in existence in Tasmania for less than a month. See, ‘The Rest Home: A Soldier’s Request’, letter to the editor, Daily Post, 19 August 1916, p. 9. McRae’s response can be found, Daily Post, 22 August 1916, p. 3. McRae said that the writer had “absolutely no authority” to speak in the name of returned soldiers.

28 For more on Roseneath hospital and its use as a military hospital in the treatment of Tasmanian veterans, see the Health chapter.
was a lot of cheap sentiment being talked in Australia at the present time, but it did not amount to much. They should get a better deal.29

McRae’s speech is interesting for a number of reasons. He obviously recognised the power of a unified body of returned men, and the subsequent impact that they could have in shaping their own place in society. But rather than seeing this as a local or regional struggle, McRae envisioned a broader application for this movement. McRae was an advocate of the notion of self-sufficiency – that returned men should have their own labour bureau and help each other. These sentiments found an outlet later in the sympathetic atmosphere of the RSSILA.

Perhaps McRae’s most notable and radical statement concerned the role of the returned soldier in Australian politics.30 McRae intended to put the returned soldier at the forefront of Australian political consciousness, and to influence political policy in Australia – something that the RSSILA became highly adept at in later years. While McRae may very well have corresponded with other active returned personnel in other parts of Australia, his was most certainly the brightest and most assertive opinion on the role of returned soldiers in Tasmanian and Australian society at that general meeting on 5 August 1916. He became an influential member of the Association in the following years, eventually using these strong ideas in a more official capacity when he ran as a candidate in the 1919 State elections, and when he occupied a role on the State Repatriation Board a few years later.31

Once formed, the RSA developed quickly into a formal group holding regular assemblies to discuss issues relating to returned soldiers. Its growth in membership and vocal status in the community concerned some unionists who suggested at an April 1917 Tasmanian Labour Conference that returned soldiers be formed into unions. The growth of their Association was viewed as “usurping with increasing arrogance” the traditional function of the trade union, which concerned them, particularly as demand

30 McRae appeared to typify K.S. Ingles’ argument of participating in politics and the affairs of the country because they were returned soldiers – because they had made such an important contribution to the Empire – taking on the principle that they were returned soldiers first and foremost, eschewing the traditional divisions of the political spectrum and class system.
31 McRae was a member of the State Repatriation Board in 1921, alongside Charles Pringle and Chairman Frank Lindsay Gunn. See, The Federal Guide–Index to Departmental Activities, Melbourne, 1921, p. 39.
for employment preference was damaging to the wider membership of the union
movement.  

Of immediate concern to the fledgling Tasmanian RSA was affiliation with the
returned soldier movement interstate. It sent delegates to the first National Congress of
the League in Brisbane in September 1916, and hosted the third National Congress in
Hobart in March 1918. The early unification with the national body of the League put
Tasmanian returned soldiers at the forefront of national developments pertaining to
veterans’ rights, and the formation of the national repatriation machinery then under
construction. The relationship between the League and Prime Minister Hughes placed
them in the position to advise upon the formation of repatriation policy, as well as
Anzac Day and other patriotic commemorations. The RSA were able to capitalise on
public compassion that ran high for returned soldiers during the period of its formation
and establishment in 1916 and 1917.

The RSA took an active role in the social life of the community, like the social
held in January 1917 to thank members of the public for their support on Gratitude
Day, and a social picnic to Brown’s River via the Derwent River in the SS Cartela for

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32 Lake, A Divided Society, p. 102.
33 The Tasmanian RSA was fully affiliated at this first Congress, alongside delegates from Victoria,
South Australia and Queensland. See, L. Hills and A. Dene, The Returned Soldiers & Soldiers’ Imperial
34 At the third National Congress, the pervasive issue of national defence was raised whereby the creation
of an Australian Army Reserve was discussed. After a speech by Colonel MacKay, the Congress agreed
to support such a measure by appealing to their members to support a Reserve force. The force was to be
constituted by returned soldiers, which was why the support of the RSA for the measure was so
important. See, ‘Returned Soldiers’ Congress: Address by Director-General of Army Reserve: Question
35 After attending the second annual RSSILA Congress in Sydney, Tasmanian delegates George Foster,
Duncan McRae and T. Wise reported that Prime Minister Hughes had desired the co-operation of the
League in facilitating the administration of the Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Fund, as well as Anzac
1917, p. 7.
36 The Hobart branch took advantage of offers of temporary accommodation for meetings in the Town
Hall and Masonic Hall until prominent Hobart personality Robert Nettlefold kindly let them the ‘Dugout’
in Macquarie Street, Hobart for their business. They eventually raised sufficient funds to purchase
permanent clubrooms in Murray Street Hobart, of officially opened by Governor Sir Francis Newdegate on
7 December 1918; Broinowski, Tasmania’s War Record p. 206. The Launceston sub-branch moved to
follow Hobart branch’s lead and move into a room of its own, in order to provide a leisure space, and
attract members; ‘Returned Soldiers’ League: Launceston Sub-Branch’, The Mercury, 17 November
1917, p. 7.
37 ‘Returned Soldiers’ Social’, The Mercury, 18 January 1917, p. 6. Gratitude Day was a fundraising
effort for the benefit of the Returned Soldiers’ Association. The funds raised on Gratitude Day by locals
(raised at various locations eg. markets, the Town Hall, stalls and kiosks) were donated to the Returned
Soldiers’ Association so that they could procure clubrooms. It is not entirely clear when this day was
held, although the fund was noted in The Mercury 6 December 1916, and by the 22nd of the same month,
some £1,676 had been raised. See, The Mercury, 22 December 1916, p. 3.
the ladies of the Dugout to thank them for their work in assisting the Association.\(^{38}\)
Launceston sub-branches in conjunction with the Rejected Volunteers’ Association\(^ {39}\)
and interested women met to establish an Anzac Memorial Hostel in Launceston,\(^ {40}\)
which became an important fixture for returned soldiers visiting and living in Launceston.\(^ {41}\)
The RSA published a thank you notice to all of the associations that had
supported them during and after the war.\(^ {42}\)
The importance of these public
pronouncements of gratitude from returned soldiers should not be underrated as it
maintained the community’s generosity of spirit, while simultaneously maintaining a
public profile.

As more soldiers returned to other parts of the State, they too desired to form
associations, and a little over twelve months after the affiliation of the Tasmanian
branch with its interstate counterparts, soldiers on the north and west coast of Tasmania
began to form sub-branches.\(^ {43}\)

By mid-1918, the growth of the League in the State had
seen branches form in all regions, prompting President David P. Young’s plea to his
members to avoid any parochial spirit, as “the man in the backblocks was entitled to
equal consideration with the man from the city.”\(^ {44}\)
The recognition of this factor was
vitally important to the survival and organization of the League in the State. The
RSSILA continued to enjoy the goodwill of large sections of the community, an

\(^ {38}\) *The Mercury*, 15 March 1920, p. 6. The ladies they refer to were patriotically-minded women who
assisted the RSA by selling buttons, fundraising, and generally helping the returned veterans.

\(^ {39}\) Rejected Volunteers’ Associations were established by rejected AIF volunteers to deflect criticisms
that they had ‘shirked’ their duties by not enlisting.

\(^ {40}\) *The Mercury*, 20 July 1918, p. 8.

\(^ {41}\) While the Tasmanian State RSSILA headquarters were at the ‘Dug-out’ in Murray Street, Hobart, the
Launceston sub-branch, ‘The Possy’, was at the National Theatre Buildings in Patterson Street.

\(^ {42}\) See, *The Mercury*, 17 July 1918, p. 5. The Tasmanian branch of the League wished to note to the
people of Tasmania their gratitude of the assistance rendered from the Australian Comforts Fund, On
Active Service Fund, the YMCA Field Service Fund and all other institutions of the same ilk. The Red
Cross received special recognition and thanks.

\(^ {43}\) Burnie, Ulverstone, and Wynyard formed their own branches, while soldiers in Zeehan met in late
September to form a branch, with sub-branches in Wynyard, Queenstown and Ulverstone formed by
November 1917. Devonport branch clubrooms were opened on 11 September 1918, and branches in
remoter areas like Gould’s Country and were in operation by the 1920 State Congress. Smaller urban
sub-branches like that at Claremont (in 1921) were also established. See, *The Mercury*, 20 September
1917, p. 3.; *The Mercury*, Monday 24 September, 1917, p. 6.; *The Mercury*, 12 September, 1918, p. 5;
*The Mercury*, 30 August 1921, p. 8. A branch on the Tasman Peninsula was established by Eric
Benjafield, who had apparently fitted back into life “with ease.” P. MacFie, ‘World War I and Tasman
Peninsula’, *Tasman Peninsula Historical Society*, No. 1, September 1986, p. 34. A King Island sub-branch was formed in July 1919, yet Mandy Reynolds notes that during
the 1920s enthusiasm for it waned. It finally came onto a firmer footing with a solid base of returned
soldier support. See her, ‘The Noble Failure: King Island Soldier Settlement, 1918-1930’, Unpublished

\(^ {44}\) ‘Returned Soldiers’ Association: A Conference at Launceston: Army Reserve and Other Matters’, *The
Mercury*, 10 July 1918, p. 7.
example being Bothwell Municipal Council's willingness to grant their local sub-branch free use of Council rooms.\textsuperscript{45}

The Tasmanian RSSILA published their own monthly journal, The Tassie Digger, which publicised League business, published articles and letters topical to returned soldiers, and advertised businesses sympathetic to the veteran's cause.\textsuperscript{46} The dearth of extant copies of this journal allows only a glimpse into the activities of the Tasmanian RSSILA, although clearly local members were active and keen to foster an environment of co-operation in business, and retain the exclusive bonds of camaraderie. The Digger covered such issues as were important to returned men, such as Repatriation news and regulations, returned soldier businesses to patronise, poetry, whimsical news pieces, informative stories, and a column by 'The Diggeress.'

The RSSILA in Tasmania, in line with its interstate colleagues, assisted Repatriation Committees in administering repatriation policies, but were quick to criticise those same committees when they felt that the interests of returned men were in jeopardy. Despite acknowledging in early 1917 the vagueness of the state of repatriation benefits, the League's State organiser George Foster expressed regret that local authorities "seemed to interpret the regulations in a most conservative way" than the practice on the mainland.\textsuperscript{47} The RSSILA's role as a pressure and advocacy group at times brought conflict when such criticisms were aired. Before April 1918, a large part of these criticisms were directed at the State War Council.\textsuperscript{48} The State War Councils were part of a hierarchical structure intended to facilitate the provision of repatriation benefits to returned soldiers. Their predominant work involved liaising with businesses to place

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{The Mercury}, 18 May 1920, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{46} Subscription cost 3/6 per annum, and the Editor advertised in each issue for news items and thoughts pertaining to ex-soldier welfare. See for instance, \textit{The Tassie Digger}, April 1920, p. 4. Copies of \textit{The Tassie Digger} have proven to be exceptionally difficult to obtain. Extant copies held in public libraries and collections number very few, with approximately two years' worth of issues in the State Library of Victoria, and only one copy in the Tasmaniana Library. The author managed to acquire a handful of copies thanks to Adrian Howard, and the author’s sincerest appreciation to him must be recorded.

\textsuperscript{47} 'Returned Soldiers' League: Report of State Organiser', \textit{The Mercury}, 21 May 1917, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{48} All work undertaken by the Council was in an honorary capacity, and its most enduring supporter – both in terms of defending it against criticism, and in terms of service given to it – was Chairman Frank Lindsay Gunn. Gunn took upon in his duty the unenviable role of liaising with the bullish and assertive RSA under Duncan McRae and George Foster, and many times a public stoush was fought in the print media between these protagonists. The Council's first meeting was held on 21 October 1915, and its predominant work "centred around the question of recruiting, control of patriotic funds, and the disbursement of the Repatriation Fund." 'Defunct War Council: Premier Entertains Members', \textit{The Mercury}, 27 April 1918, p. 4.
ex-soldiers in employment, but they had other responsibilities, including investigating available land for settlement and distributing financial and ameliorative assistance.\textsuperscript{49}

In August 1917, State War Council Chairman, Frank Lindsay Gunn, attended a meeting of the philanthropic Australian Natives' Association (ANA).\textsuperscript{50} During this meeting, Gunn revealed some of the problems he faced in his work with the RSSILA. He noted that whenever recommendations for assistance were forwarded to the RSSILA for guidance as to suitability of granting applications for assistance, in "no case had any application...been returned with a recommendation that it not be granted, while two of the most glaring cases of failure were those in which two men were granted £75 each on the advice of the secretary of the association."\textsuperscript{51} He criticised the RSSILA method of working, in that it secured the interests of its members and returned soldiers’ generally first, while worrying about the risks involved to the State second. An angry George Foster, in his capacity as State Organiser of the RSSILA, indignantly rejected any assertion that the League misled the State War Council for the benefit of returned soldiers. He conceded that the northern sub-branch secretary had indeed provided advice to the Council he believed to be correct, but which had subsequently proved to be inaccurate. However, for Gunn “to seek to disparage the work of this association,” Foster thundered, “and to suggest that our recommendations are unreliable, is, to say the least of it, extremely unfair.”\textsuperscript{52} He signed off with a swipe at Gunn’s organisational ability, with a negative comparison of the Tasmanian and Brisbane State War Council models. As a consequence a very public row developed between Gunn and the RSSILA.

**RSSILA Relationships**

As State War Council Chairman, Frank Lindsay Gunn complained that when he approached the RSSILA for assistance to decide ex-soldier suitability for assistance as a way to avoid losses, the result was that substantial funds were lost. The League had

\textsuperscript{50} The relevance and importance of this meeting lays in the fact that the State War Council Chairman F.L. Gunn, and members of the RSSILA attended, with a public spat developing out of comments made at the meeting.
\textsuperscript{51} ‘Repatriation: Further Discussion by the A.N.A., *The Mercury*, 8 August 1917, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{52} ‘Returned Soldiers’ League and Repatriation’, letter to the editor from George Foster, *The Mercury*, 9 August 1917, p. 7.
not provided the level of assistance Gunn required. George Foster had publicly impugned the work of the State War Council in the press, and the swift escalation in feeling found an outlet in the newspaper letters column. Gunn responded to Foster’s pointed criticisms in a letter published in early August 1917, noting that

the War Council wished to work amicably with the Returned Soldiers’ League and take advantage of any assistance the league could give it, but that when the league will only give a report on an applicant when it can speak in his favour, and will not divulge any information that might prejudice his application, the league’s reports are of doubtful value.53

To criticism of the War Council’s administration, Gunn reminded Foster (and the public) of Foster’s seat on the Council as the representative of the RSA, and his attendance at only three meetings since his membership. Criticisms therefore were impotent if Foster would not take the time to attend and remedy the Council’s administrative deficiencies.54 This small public conflict is evidence of the RSSILA’s struggle in defining its role in relation to returned soldiers’ interests, and its responsibilities in facilitating the best possible outcomes for returned soldiers by a smooth interchange of ideas and co-operation with relevant authorities. Whether it should singularly adopt the role of a pressure and advocacy group or take up a more official advisory function was still to be ascertained within the Tasmanian branch of the League, and is borne out by the constant realigning of their boundaries through conflicts with official bodies. Certainly, the State War Council recognised the value of a relationship with the returned soldiers’ representative body by enabling contact with the very people the Council was meant to assist. Gunn’s letter proclaimed an intention to “clear the air” between the two bodies, “recognising as I do the importance of the cooperation of these bodies to secure the successful repatriation of our returned men.”55

These disputes helped define the role of the RSSILA in Tasmania in relation to official organs of the repatriation system, but for some returned men, constant vigilance on the repatriation problem was still required to keep the issue in the public eye.

Duncan McRae, ever vocal and opinionated, spoke of the RSA’s disgust at the continued delays in repatriation that had still not seen the emergence of an official

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54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
department by the beginning of 1918. “Up to the present,” McRae wrote in January, “the Federal Government have handled this matter with a degree of procrastinating incompetence which fills me with dread for its success in the future.”

McRae targeted health, employment, and administration as completely inadequate policies that failed to achieve what they were designed for. He argued that the RSA had a superior record in employment placement to the State War Council’s efforts. A future portent of the position the League was to take nationally as a pressure group was an appeal by McRae to his fellow returned soldiers to unify as returned soldiers. McRae’s appeal came at least twelve months before Kristianson argues that the League became a legitimate and recognised representative of returned soldiers in the eyes of the Federal Government, suggesting that the Tasmanian membership of the RSSILA was as active as any other.

As in the case of Foster, Gunn defended the State War Council’s record in its work for returned men. Gunn felt accusations of “supposed” assistance from the Council as distinctly unfair, and rolled off a list of statistics to support his position.

Gunn asked McRae, as a representative of the RSA, to work with the Council, just as he did with Foster:

Both the Returned Soldiers’ Association and the War Council have the same end in view, viz., the effective and sympathetic repatriation of our fighting men on their return to Australia, and I ask Sergt. McRae to consider whether this end cannot be achieved better by a united effort than by discussing whether one organization has done more or better work than the other.

McRae’s vision for the League as a provider of repatriation benefits was a more insular and introspective one than the “unified effort” suggested by Gunn, independent as far as possible from the “procrastinating incompetence” of Federal Government action on repatriation until the time organised and sincere provisions were instituted. Gunn tried

56 ‘Urgency of Repatriation’, letter to the editor from D. McRae, The Mercury, 8 January 1918, p. 3.
57 Ibid.
58 Kristianson argues that by early 1919, the League had achieved this status. See, Kristianson, The Politics of Patriotism, pp. 12, 14.
59 Gunn noted that over 65 per cent of the returned men registered with the Council had been found employment, while he also reminded McRae of the Council’s relationship with the League in advising of other employment opportunities for veterans. Some 225 applications for assistance from the Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Fund had been sought from returned soldiers to the Council, with 137 granted involving “advances by way of gifts and loans totalling £5,636.” Among the uses for the money were fishing boats, furniture, horses and carts, small businesses and other “necessitous cases.” ‘Urgency of Repatriation’, letter to the editor from F. Lindsay Gunn, The Mercury, 21 January 1918, p. 3.
60 Ibid.
to forge links with the RSA and remove the fractious relationship the RSA had with the State War Council so as to preserve a united front on returned soldier issues. Physical incapacity from service at Gallipoli, a lack of adequate repatriation support policies, and an inherent mistrust through perceived broken promises perhaps informed much of McRae’s negative attitude toward repatriation administrators. In turn Gunn utilised his considerable diplomatic skills to convince the RSSILA they were not alone in caring for returned men. With the dissolution of the State War Council in April 1918 and the formation of a new administration to dispense repatriation benefits, Gunn became Chairman of the new Repatriation Committee61 and his work for the repatriation of Tasmanian returned soldiers continued in this more official capacity.

The Federal Nationalist Government’s patronage of the RSSILA – “their willingness to grant a measure of official status” as reflected by the “League’s increasing domination of the returned soldier movement”62 – ensured that they maintained a high profile in the community during the war years. The Federal Government too required the support of the League for its “wartime policies and…in furthering the growing repatriation system,”63 demonstrating a reciprocal, yet shrewd arrangement that remained in place until the end of the war. The Tasmanian branch’s annual meeting for 1920 stressed that they hoped to win over Prime Minister Hughes with their proposals for pensions. They cited his “interest” in all things concerning the League as a key factor in their hope.64 Assisting the relationship between the League and the Government were the high numbers of returned soldier politicians holding seats in the Commonwealth Parliament as well as in State Parliaments.

The politicisation of repatriation, and the extent of the RSSILA’s involvement in politics was an ongoing debate. The RSSILA’s relationship with government at all levels led to suspicions that the League had contravened its avowed non-party political status. The contravention of a-political status was brought into prominent focus when

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61 A summation of the State War Council’s work appeared in The Mercury in late April 1918. All members acted in an honorary capacity, and Gunn in particular was singled out for his fine contribution: “At all times he [Gunn] worked indefatigably, and the good work done was to be attributed to some considerable extent to his devotion to duty.” As well, final statistics as to recruiting work carried out and benefits from the Repatriation Fund distributed were also added: 361 applications received; 91 granted by way of loans £6,115; 113 granted by way of gifts £2,245; 11 taken over by the Closer Settlement Board; sixty-one refused and the remainder withdrawn or informal. ‘Defunct War Council: Premier Entertains Members’, The Mercury, 27 April 1918, p. 4. The Repatriation Committee took over the role of the old State War Councils under the general reorganisation of Repatriation activities since the official Repatriation Department came into operation on 8 April 1918.
63 Ibid.
the Nationalists courted them. Returned soldiers in Tasmania ran for Parliament under the banner of the Nationalist flag, most prominently when well-known RSSILA member George Foster successfully stood for Denison. Kristianson argues that the RSSILA "has always been a political pressure group," but has "tried to be a 'non-partisan' body, avoiding involvement in the party process or attempts to take over the reins of government, but it has always been very 'political.'" The same struggle over the level of political involvement occurred in Tasmania. Foster's success in claiming a Senate seat did not sever his relationship with the League, for he wore his League badge proudly in his official parliamentary portrait, as well as being elected alongside Major-General Sir John Gellibrand and Robert Eccles Snowden, at the League's 1920 State Congress. Snowden was a sitting MHA in the Tasmanian parliament. League members undoubtedly blurred their Association's distinctly non-party political platform.

When Tasmanian League members met to discuss the formation of a soldiers' party in 1919, those present were unequivocal that the League should be separate from any political entity. The 1919 RSSILA State Conference in Burnie also moved to distance itself from the mooted formation of a soldiers' party, despite a large proportion of its members likely to have been sourced from the League. The Labor Party and other critics of the Nationalists and the relationship it held with the RSSILA felt that the League's non-party political policy was compromised— a claim that the League itself had to defend in the early 1920's. Despite the direct participation of League members...

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65 Nationalist Premier of Tasmania, Sir Walter Henry Lee toasted the RSSILA Congress delegates at a banquet to celebrate the third RSSILA Congress in Hobart. According to *The Mercury* 's report of proceedings, Lee recognised and made specific reference to the fact that "politics were banned", yet his attendance, toasting, congratulations and support of the formation of the RSSILA suggests somewhat cynically that Lee was shrewd enough to recognise the political potential of the League. See, 'Returned Soldiers' Congress: Election of Officers: Official Welcome and Banquet', *The Mercury*, 5 March 1918, p. 2.


68 *The Tassie Digger* congratulated Snowden's re-election as Hobart City Council mayor, and the work he did for the returned soldier. They were certainly cognisant of the value of the returned man in politics, expressing their best wishes under the heading: 'The Digger in Politics.' See, *The Tassie Digger*, January 1921, p. 12.

69 See, 'Soldiers and Politics: Formation of a Third Party: Hobart Branch's Decision', *The Mercury*, 3 July 1919, p. 6. This is also dealt with in further detail below.

in politics, to what extent could they speak on behalf of fellow members – their constituents?

Of approximately 9,700 Tasmanian returned soldiers, the membership of the Tasmanian RSSILA never reached any higher than one-third of its membership potential, barring the initial post-war spike in membership experienced nationwide. Mark Lyons has attributed the federal trend in post-war membership to a “strong desire for independence”, a “reaction to the discipline and hardship of war”, and a “reflection of a spirit of individualism which was encouraged by economic conditions prevailing in the early 1920s.” Kristianson’s figures of RSL financial membership show some interesting trends regarding membership rises and declines that coincide with the initial phase of demobilisation and return, and the subsequent drop in interest when the majority of veterans were repatriated. Kristianson equates this fall in membership to greater personal and financial responsibilities laying claim to their time and money, the League’s association with conservative politics, and domestic sub-branch divisions. Tasmania’s peak membership of approximately seven thousand members by late 1919 plummeted to 2,071 by the end of 1920, reflecting a national trend. The gulf between the RSSILA’s actual and potential membership made them acutely aware that they could not hope to speak for every returned soldier; they acknowledged a multiplicity of veteran opinion that was not necessarily represented by the League. Tasmanian RSSILA Executive member Mr Reynolds communicated to Prime Minister Hughes in 1919 that, “Even among returned soldiers there is a difference of opinion in regard to many matters, especially between members of the League and those outside it. We of course naturally think that all returned soldiers should be members of the League.” The League’s incapacity to speak for more than nine per cent of returned soldiers nationally by 1924 did not diminish their determination to lobby for all returned

71 Colonel A.G. Butler, The Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-18, Volume III. Special Problems and Services, Canberra, 1943, p. 717.
72 Lyons, Legacy, p. 3.
74 Ibid., p. 37.
76 Ibid., p. 21.
77 Ibid., p. 36.
soldiers’ rights with all levels of Government. This raises the key issue of what kind of ex-serviceman was represented by (and was presumably a member of) the League. Men who were interested in retaining the exclusivity of returned soldiers in society certainly drove the Tasmanian RSSILA, and they desired to see that their interests were not ignored. They exhibited a broader care for the plight of the veteran in society, cases that existed strictly outside of the envelope of care provided by Repatriation authorities.

The national rise in membership experienced toward the onset of the Depression was reflected in Tasmania as well, and may partly be a response to the onset of economic and social difficulties requiring League guidance, protection and intervention, a desire to affiliate with familiar surrounds in a time of global uncertainty, or, as Mrdak notes, the seeking of camaraderie with fellow veterans once the process of re-establishment had been completed. Legacy saw an expansion in their Clubs during the Depression as well, indicating a correlation between economic and social stress, and a greater desire for support networks. Tasmanian RSSILA membership density between actual and potential percentages between 1920 and 1929 saw Tasmanian membership figures consistently higher per capita than the far larger States of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Yet, apart from the post-war 1919 increase, the comparatively low membership appears disproportionate to the public profile and political influence the League enjoyed in the State during these years.

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78 See also, Mrdak, ‘Soldier – Citizen’ – Returned Servicemen and the R.S.L., 1916-1929’, pp. 52-55. Mrdak discusses the gulf between potential and actual membership percentages, and the League’s authority to speak on behalf of all returned men.
79 This is particularly notable in articles and letters to the Tassie Digger. Concerns over alcoholism, pension entitlements and employment were recurring themes in issues consulted by the author. The journal exhorted the care and responsibility for the less fortunate digger on those who could help, recalling the ideal of comradeship under combat conditions. In the March 1920 issue of The Tassie Digger, the editorial exhorted “every known method to help returned soldiers should be tried, and new ones should be invented.” The Digger’s editors were heartened by the response to an appeal for Private A.J. Fulton, who lost both his legs. “On Trial,” Editorial, The Tassie Digger, March 1920, p. 4. They also cautioned against the evils of drink, noting, “to the man who cannot control his drinking proclivities, either by reason of hereditary tendencies or otherwise, drinking is a mug’s game, and best left alone, always remembering the sage advice, if drinking interferes with your business – give up your business.” See, “The Drink Question”, The Tassie Digger, January 1921, p. 5. Bobbie Oliver considered the League’s attraction to returned soldiers, noting: “It is not surprising that many returned servicemen joined the league, for it must have seemed their only champion in a bleak and confusing world strewn with shattered dreams.” Offering solidarity and a welcoming atmosphere in a time of inconsistent employment, financial insecurity and an altered post-war world, the League would undoubtedly have appealed to many. See, B. Oliver, War and Peace in Western Australia. The Social and Political Impact of the Great War 1914-1926, Nedlands, 1995, p. 145.
81 Lyons, Legacy, p. 57.
The RSSILA in Tasmania in the post-war period continued to work on behalf of returned servicemen’s rights. The 1919 State Conference held in Burnie for instance, acknowledged this new and more mature outlook, turning their energies from the war “to the building up of this great country of theirs, and the proper repatriation of those who had suffered.” They trod a path of negotiation between the needs of their constituency, and the best method of obtaining favourable outcomes for them. Soldier land settlement records for instance show that the RSSILA collaborated with the Tasmanian Returned Soldiers’ Land Settlement Department in providing information about settler-members, and represented and assisted ex-soldiers’ cases with correspondence from the settler to the department. The RSSILA appeared to have a solid relationship with the Repatriation Department, and invited Deputy Comptroller Joseph Humphris to the RSSILA’s State Conference in 1920 to speak on Repatriation matters. The RSSILA appealed pension decisions resulting from medical examinations, and assisted in the general process of support for the veteran in their attempts at reintegration, instituting for instance, their own labour bureau for placing returned soldiers.

**Patriots and Shirkers: Recruitment, Conscription and Returned Servicemen**

By mid-1916, the original fervour and excitement of the war had been replaced in Tasmania by a lethargy and lack of enthusiasm that translated into a dramatic slowing of recruitment rates. Recruitment nationally had seen a downturn, but, as Lake argues, in Tasmania the situation was worse. Labour associations had emphatically declared their opposition to any form of compulsion, citing it as “working class subjugation and the destruction of trade unionism,” and with particular union strength in Tasmania’s west coast mining districts, the incorporation of conscription

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84 Humphris (or Humphries, as he was cited as in *The Tassie Digger*) was invited the Conference held in the Hobart RSSILA Clubrooms on 10 and 11 February, 1920. A “hearty vote of thanks” was given to Humphris “for giving up so much of his time in attending the Congress, and for the lucid explanations given to the many questions brought forward.” The thanks to Humphris was carried “with acclamation.” See, *The Tassie Digger*, March 1920, p. 14.
85 Lake, *A Divided Society*, p. 64.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., pp. 65-66.
there would have caused immense fractures. Prime Minister Hughes returned to Australia from a British visit and energised pro-conscriptionists through his renewed fervour to prosecute the war. Only massive Labor Party and trade union opposition prevented Hughes from instituting conscription, so the fulfilment of a quota was the only way to avoid a referendum on the issue. Tasmania experienced a “revival of patriotic enthusiasm” following speaking tours throughout the State in September 1916, but the response, while an improvement, was disappointingly low. The public’s respect, adulation and gratitude toward returned Tasmanian soldiers presented an ideal opportunity to utilise the soldiers’ unique social status to aid the new recruiting drive.

Opinion was polarised on whether conscription was necessary. The white feathering and shirker rhetoric was played out in the Letters to the Editor columns of The Mercury, which favoured conscription. The Daily Post, championing labour philosophy, fiercely criticised Hughes’ referendum proposals, and defiantly proclaimed that if there was to be conscription of life, so there must also be in wealth. It felt that compulsion was not the correct measure, adding that, “There must be no conscription—or-nothing policy even in these times of stress.”

In this climate, returned soldiers were particularly useful recruiting tools, and were often at the forefront of recruiting drives to increase supply of Tasmanian soldiers to the Front. Returned soldier functions in August and September were held to discuss the best means to facilitate the requirement for increased recruiting figures. The use of returned soldiers for recruiting was a distinctly political decision. The State War Council was under pressure to fill the quota to the extent that meetings were held to best define a method to do so. Premier Walter Lee, Opposition leader John Earle, and other parliamentary figures attended meetings and spoke in order to improve recruiting rates. However, perhaps the most successful method was the image of the Anzac. As Terry King has argued, “as the status of the digger grew – reflecting not just

88 Ibid., p. 68.
89 Ibid., p. 69.
90 ‘Is it Conscription...or What?’, editorial, Daily Post, 28 August 1916, p. 4.
91 ‘Compulsory Defence...Where?’, editorial, Daily Post, 31 August 1916, p. 4. See also their editorials of 29 September 1916, p. 4; and 2 October 1916, p. 4.
92 The Mercury, 2 September, 1916, p. 5.
93 Marilyn Lake has examined the notion of John Earle as a ‘Labor Rat’, and argues that his policy in supporting conscription was merely the application of his idea that Labor should support action that represented what was best for the national interest. “Earle opposed conscription because he considered it would harm Australia’s ‘national interest’ and he only decided to support it when persuaded that the same national interest was threatened without it.” This caused a split with the parliamentary Labor Party, and an eventual alliance with Hughes and his Nationalists in the Senate. See, M. Lake, ‘John Earle and the Concept of the ‘Labor Rat’, Labour History, Number 33, November 1977, p. 36.
an appreciation of the exploits of the AIF but also an awareness of how the glorification of the soldier could assist recruiting – so too did that of his uniform and all its various accoutrements." The RSA used the image of the Anzac and the deeds at Gallipoli and the Western Front as a powerful image of what the Australian soldier could achieve, appealing to the prospective recruit's masculine sense of vigour and adventure in support of the men already in the trenches. Lake too has argued that, "the returned soldier represented a new and powerful figure in Australian society. He assumed the roles of instructor, mentor and policeman all in one; he was also the supreme repository of patriotic values." The State War Council used this status to employ returned soldiers as public speakers to stimulate recruiting before the announcement of the referendum, with great acclamation and success.

The returned soldiers' actions and authenticity of experience added a valid and genuine voice to the recruitment drive by the simple fact that he had been there; he had done his bit for the country. The fêting of soldiers on their return, despite many being invalided home through illness and injury placed them in a conspicuous position in the community, particularly in 1916. Returned soldiers nationally had taken part in recruiting and conscription debates in the war – reports from Sydney in late July 1916 told of a large anti-conscription meeting disrupted by a "fairly strong contingent of men in khaki." An anti-conscription meeting held in Launceston saw MHR Frank Anstey heckled by a returned soldier, and an anti-conscription meeting of up to five thousand people on Hobart's Domain descended into a brawl following altercations between returned soldiers and the public. Anti-conscriptionists on the platform were often

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95 Lake, A Divided Society, p. 69. One can see a recognition and adoption of this unique position through the RSA's direction of patriotic activities.
96 Lake notes that Colonel Cyril St Clair Cameron was "a popular speaker" and was requested on numerous occasions for speaking engagements. See, Lake, A Divided Society, p. 69. See also, 'Tasmania's Quota: Country Meetings: Arranging for Speakers', The Mercury, 14 September 1916, p. 5. Cameron was said to be "in such demand that they [State War Council] find impossible for him to visit every locality."
97 The pro-conscription Mercury reported through its North-West Coast correspondent that in that region, "Returned soldiers are splendid recruiting agents and soon bring a waverer to the right decision." See, 'North-West Coast: The Toll of War', The Mercury, 26 August 1916, p. 8. See also, The Mercury, 5 September, 1916, pp. 5-6. The returned soldiers spoke of any young men that were undecided on whether to go should do so to protect the Empire and their fellow countrymen at the Front against the 'Hun'.
99 The Mercury, 6 October 1916, p. 4.
jeered, abused and interrupted, with invective frequently coming from returned soldiers. Returned soldiers were howled down from recruiting platforms during the conscription debates, with one incidence at Geestown in 1916 forcing three ex-servicemen to leave the platform. Prime Minister Hughes toured the State during the campaign and gave rousing pro-conscription speeches at Hobart and Launceston, further stimulating the ‘Yes’ supporters. While not on the same scale as events in Sydney in July, forceful interactions between returned soldiers and civilians still occurred in Tasmania, following a similar pattern as interstate. Returned soldiers who made their presence felt in a symbol of defiance by taking their seats in the middle of the hall, loudly booed anti-conscription and unionist speakers in Zeehan.

An anti-conscription meeting held on Hobart’s Domain on 8 October 1916 resulted in a case going before the Police Magistrates Court two days later. One returned soldier was arrested for bad language, but, according to evidence, events were somewhat rougher than that with a brawl between soldiers and civilians. “The soldiers as a body,” the court was told, “resented some of the speakers’ remarks, and got very excited.” Antagonistic insults were traded, and “blows were being exchanged between soldiers and civilians,” with reports one soldier was knocked to the ground and set upon. The defendant assisted him against the “mob” and was himself “rather badly handled.” Another returned soldier and Secretary of the RSA, Private L. Collis, had his glasses broken and face cut by a blow to the face. Defence counsel argued that “the soldiers were subjected to all kinds of terrible epithets by a gang of roughs, who were apparently there for that purpose.” The defendant, Walter Thirley, was reportedly incensed by jeers and abuse, being called “a Cairo street walker”, which

100 Lake, *A Divided Society*, p. 74.
101 See, C. Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 44. The soldiers were “hooted down each time they attempted to speak. To widespread cheers these three ex-servicemen were eventually forced to leave the stage.” See also, *Huon Times*, 24 October 1916. Similarly, A. Tivychoc argued in 1935, that: “At the time of the conscription campaigns, returned soldiers, many of them disabled, came in for much humiliating abuse from those who preferred to keep the home fires burning.” Tivychoc attributes this as the probable reason why inmates at the Randwick Hospital in Sydney voted for compulsion. A. Tivychoc, *There and Back: The Story of an Australian Soldier, 1915-1935*, Sydney, 1935, p. 249.
102 The pro-conscription supporters in Tasmania also had the Premier Walter Lee and Labor Leader of the Opposition John Earle in support of conscription, which Lake argues accounted for the surprise majority ‘Yes’ vote in the West Coast electorate of Darwin that encompassed the union strongholds of the mining districts – incredibly producing the largest ‘Yes’ margin in the State. Lake, *A Divided Society*, p. 80.
103 Ibid., p. 74.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
Similarly appalled the Magistrate. The Magistrate was sympathetic to Thirley’s predicament, expressing his disgust that a Gallipoli veteran should be subject to such atrocious language from men “who were too frightened to go themselves.” Despite the Magistrate’s obvious sympathy and admiration for Thirley, a conviction was recorded for bad language. Interestingly, the police at the demonstration arrested none of the roughs. This suggests sympathy for the anti-conscriptionists when their meeting was interrupted by returned soldiers keen on disturbing their assembly.

Despite a marginally invigorated response in Tasmania following the recruiting drive, the response was well down on targets in all States, and Hughes’ referendum on conscription was called. The fiercely emotive nature of the conscription issue produced the expected polarisation of public opinion, with accusations of pro-German or pro-murderer banded about. Not supporting conscription saw the Labor Party equated to traitors in the conservative press, where anti-conscription equated disloyalty. The Daily Post in Hobart was reported to be the only daily newspaper in

\[\text{103} \text{ ibid.}\]

\[\text{104} \text{ The Domain fracas and Magistrate’s decision was discussed in Parliament where Labor members aired accusations of improper conduct over the whole issue. Anti-conscriptionist MHA Benjamin Watkins attacked the Magistrate, declaring him “guilty of bias of the grossest kind.” While deploring the Magistrate’s attacks on the speakers at the rally as allegedly inciting the violence, he cited communication from Lance-Corporal F.T. Henshaw from the RSA stating that the Association did not approve of violence, nor incited it, “as the returned soldiers desired to hear both sides of the argument.” Labor member Joe Lyons believed that while the returned soldiers as a body did not cause the disturbance, some did, while fellow Laborite James Ogden raised the popular suspicion that returned soldiers were deliberately sent to “smash meetings.” At an overflow meeting held at the Town Hall, Ogden stated that a returned soldier “repeatedly pushed the [anti-conscriptionist] speaker from one step to another.” As several MHA’s were present as speakers at the Domain, the debate dissolved through conflicting opinions on responsibility and the employment of personal abuse. The involvement of returned soldiers in anti-conscription meetings, whether forceful or otherwise, was an overt political action, and viewed as such by Labor MHAs. For more, see, Lake, A Divided Society, p. 78; ‘Disturbance on the Domain: Attack on the Police Magistrate: Heated Debate in the Assembly’, The Mercury, 12 October 1916, p. 2; The Daily Post believed that attempts to interrupt the meeting “came mostly from men in khaki or returned soldiers...” Daily Post, 2 October 1916, p. 2. A Mercury editorial recorded that the debate on the Domain disturbance took up two hours of parliament’s time “in discussing the rights and wrongs of the case, and some violent criticisms were made.” ‘Sensitive Anti-Conscriptionists’, editorial, The Mercury, 12 October 1916, p. 4.\]

\[\text{105} \text{ During September 1916 in Tasmania, there were major difficulties in deciding how to fill Tasmania’s quota of soldiers by an October deadline. Approximately 3000 men were needed by the end of October, while Tasmania’s quota for September alone was 1,100. See, The Mercury Saturday September 16, 1916, p. 8; also Lake, A Divided Society, p. 68. By September 16, 1916, only 141 men had enlisted, requiring another 959 men by the end of the month. Nationally, there was a shortfall of 28,807 men by the end of September alone. See, The Mercury Tuesday September 19, 1916, p. 6. In response to the deficit in recruits, Premier Lee allowed Tasmanian public servants to enlist to arrest the gap: “The Government realises that this is a time when sacrifices must be made, and feels sure that if, as a result of the State employees enlisting there is a curtailment of some of the services of the State, the public will readily accept the inevitable.” The Mercury, Tuesday September 19, 1916, p. 6.\]

\[\text{106} \text{ Lake has also argued that in Tasmania at least, the anti-conscription movement was a working class struggle in which the State’s Labor Party moved left to align itself with working class interests, thus alienating its leader John Earle. See her, ‘John Earle and the Concept of the ‘Labor Rat’, p. 38.}\]
Australia that did not support conscription,\textsuperscript{112} while \textit{The Mercury}, also in Hobart, cultivated support for returned soldiers by advocating compulsion.

The Hobart RSA affirmed their support for conscription, and the Launceston branch also affirmed its support of the conscription campaign, vowing to “do all in its power to bring about an affirmative vote.”\textsuperscript{113} While there was a definite belief among the Tasmanian RSA that conscription could cure the dearth of reinforcements and the speedy conclusion of the war, there was a sense that the shirker would also be made to endure the suffering that the returned soldiers had tolerated. There was a tangible sense of resentment of the choice others had made in not enlisting, and conscription was the method to remedy that.

Duncan McRae expressed opinions on every issue concerning returned soldiers, and when engaging the pro-conscription issue, he did so on the axis of class and politics:

Some, who call themselves Socialists, but don’t know the first thing about Socialism, profess to see in conscription an instrument devised by capitalists to enslave the workers. They seem to believe that when a man becomes a soldier he says good-bye to his convictions. Well, I have been in the Army two years, and, so far from abandoning my belief in the necessity of Socialism, my experience has but served to strengthen it, and I venture to say that the majority of men will leave the Army better and sounder democrats than when they entered it.\textsuperscript{114}

Notwithstanding these pronouncements, McRae was a fierce advocate of compulsion to reinforce Australian troops at the Front. In early October, as Treasurer of the RSA, he wrote a letter to organisers of anti-conscription meetings requesting the right to speak at them:

Gentlemen,- At your meetings you advocate a course of action which we returned soldiers are diametrically opposed to. You may be right; on the other hand you may be wrong. Gentlemen, I ask you to accord to returned soldiers the right to speak for twenty minutes at the end of

\textsuperscript{112} Lake, \textit{A Divided Society}, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{The Mercury}, 12 October 1916, p. 6. RSA speakers for the Launceston area also volunteered to speak in favour of conscription. Kent Fedorowich has also argued that the RSL exerted a powerful influence in the ‘Yes’ campaign during conscription debates and recruitment drives. See his, \textit{Unfit For Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire Between the Wars}, Manchester, 1995, p. 157.
\textsuperscript{114} ‘Soldiers and the War’, \textit{The Mercury}, 11 October 1916, p. 6.
your meetings. We have bought this right with our blood. Will you
grant it to us? 

The adoption of returned soldiers for the recruiting platform was a logical and inspired
move, and towards the end of 1916, Lake contends, "the returned soldier began to exert
a powerful influence as a public speaker both for the cause of recruiting and of
conscription." 

The same returned soldier voices were heard yet again on the issue with Duncan
McRae and George Foster both advocating compulsion on behalf of the RSA. McRae,
a popular platform orator," was particularly vociferous in his attacks on anti-
conscriptionists, employing language and argument befitting the emotive nature of the
conscription debate. Lake has argued that, "Appeals to the emotions meant all in the
referendum campaign; there was perhaps never a time when moderation and reason
counted for less." Returned soldiers better than most exploited this emotion.
"[E]very vote against conscription," McRae argued, "is a stab in the back to our
comrades in France - a stab more deadly than all the German batteries and machine-
guns on the Somme." The rhetoric of anti-conscription equalling traitor was in full
currency. A vote against conscription amounted to desertion of the men at the Front,
and any man who died because of a lack of reinforcements from a 'No' vote had his

115 'Returned Soldiers and the Referendum', The Mercury, 9 October 1916, p. 7. The Daily Post also
reported that McRae spoke at Conscription meetings on behalf of the RSA. See, 'Pro-Conscription:
Meeting at the Mayor's Courtroom', Daily Post, 3 October 1916, p. 2.
116 Lake, A Divided Society, p. 69. At referendum meetings across the southern part of the State, Hobart
RSA members spoke at length in favour of voting 'Yes' in the referendum, while the same was true of
Launceston members in the North. In two days beginning Monday 23 October, returned soldiers spoke
at referendum meetings at the Memorial Hall, Hobart; Bellerive; New Norfolk; and Taroona, in southern
Tasmania alone expressing the absolute necessity of reinforcing their colleagues in the trenches by a
117 Lake, A Divided Society, p. 79.
118 Ibid., p. 75.
119 'Soldiers and the War', The Mercury, 11 October 1916, p. 6. McRae came back to this point again in
a speech to the RSA on 27 October. "Those who voted 'No' would be just as responsible for many...deaths as if they had stabbed them in the back with a knife. It was infinitely more cowardly to
stab them in the back with their vote than to risk stabbing them with a knife. If they voted 'Yes' they
would write the name of Australia in letters of gold across the pages of history, and would make it
honoured throughout the world." See, 'Returned Soldiers' Meeting: Their Reasons for 'Yes': Some
Vigorous Speeches', The Mercury, 28 October 1916, p. 5. Trooper Rose, a unionist who also spoke at
that meeting claimed that people who voted 'No' "could only be classed with Judas and Pontius Pilate."
120 When Lance-Corporal F.T. Henshaw toured the township of Hamilton with Leader of the Opposition
John Earle, rumours circulated that he had advised people to vote against conscription. He rejected it
completely. "Had I been guilty of doing such a thing," Henshaw argued, "I should have been a traitor to
my comrades whom I left behind, and a traitor to my country." See Henshaw's letter of defence,
'Returned Soldiers and Conscription', letter to the editor from (Lance-Corporal) F.T. Henshaw, The
Mercury, 28 October 1916, p. 8. See also his letter to editor on the same matter, Daily Post, 27 October
1916, p. 2.
death - his murder - on their consciences.\textsuperscript{121} McRae appealed to women specifically,\textsuperscript{122} and claimed that unionists in the returned soldier ranks were supporting conscription.\textsuperscript{123} RSA meetings in support of conscription saw returned soldier unionists speak in favour of conscription.\textsuperscript{124} An official appeal from the Hobart Committee of the RSA assumed representation on behalf of the soldiers fighting at the Front, and claimed a 'No' vote would dishonour Australia, make the returned soldiers ashamed of the country, and make the 'No' supporters responsible for the deaths of men who were not relieved by reinforcements.\textsuperscript{125} An irate McRae fired off an angry letter to the editor of the non-conscriptionist paper the \textit{Daily Post} in late October to correct some inaccuracies regarding returned soldiers' views and their unity on the conscription issue, as well as McRae's role as spokesman for returned soldier opinion in favour of conscription. They did not publish it.\textsuperscript{126}

Lake feels that in 1916 at least, most returned soldiers supported McRae's stance.\textsuperscript{127} The politicking on this issue alone says much on the divisive role the RSA played in the conscription referendum in Tasmania, and the arrangement into pro-conscription and anti-conscription press that either wholly supported or questioned returned soldiers' unanimity on the issue. The intensity of the issue was reaching a head as the 28 October vote drew near, as is demonstrated by the increasingly

\textsuperscript{121} 'Referendum Notes: What Our Soldiers Say', letter to the editor from D. McRae, \textit{The Mercury}, 20 October 1916, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{122} For an investigation of the role of propaganda directed towards Australian women in the conscription referendums of 1916 and 1917, by both pro and anti-conscriptionists (including organs of the RSA nationally), see, Carmel Shute, ‘“Blood Votes” and the “Bestial Boche.” A Case Study in Propaganda’, \textit{Hecate}, Vol. II, No. 2, July 1976, pp. 6-22. Shute argues that appeals to women were made on the grounds of their sex and roles in the domestic sphere, and of the threat of the contamination of the white Anglo Saxon Australian race from the vacuum of white males' compulsory military service.

\textsuperscript{123} ‘Referendum Notes: What Our Soldiers Say’, letter to the editor from D. McRae, \textit{The Mercury}, 20 October 1916, p. 8. Citing pro-conscription unionist returned soldiers was designed to induce in fellow unionists the right of conscription, and the belief that union and party should be subjugated for the good of the country. This was a point McRae made in a later speech about the British conscription example at the RSA referendum meeting on the night before the vote.

\textsuperscript{124} At an RSA meeting early in October, Chairman Sgt R. Phillips admitted to being a unionist and a Labor supporter, but still supported conscription. At the same meeting, a Sgt-Major Crisp claimed he had “Labor sympathies”, but, “He was a man, and was doing a man's part, and advocating the course his conscience approved.” The Labourite E. Dwyer-Gray was present at this meeting. See, 'Returned Soldiers and Conscription', \textit{Daily Post}, 3 October 1916, p. 5. In a meeting in late October, a Trooper Rose claimed as a unionist he still had to support conscription. See, 'Returned Soldiers’ Meeting: Their Reasons for ‘Yes’: Some Vigorous Speeches', \textit{The Mercury}, 28 October 1916, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{125} 'Appeal to the Citizens of Tasmania: By the Men Who Have Returned From the Front', \textit{The Mercury}, 25 October 1916, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{126} The \textit{Daily Post} did not publish his letter, and so the pro-conscription \textit{Mercury} did. \textit{The Mercury} published McRae's letter in their 26 October 1916 issue, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{127} Lake, \textit{A Divided Society}, p. 79.
provocative pronouncements from the RSA. In the monopolising of returned soldier opinion, little was heard of the non-RSA affiliated returned soldier voice.

The Tasmanian public strongly supported the 1916 conscription vote, polling 48,493 in favour, and 37,833 against—a majority to the 'Yes' vote of 10,660. Despite the Tasmanian success, the support of the RSA and their adoption of the position of arbiters of knowledge on the issue was incapable of ensuring national success. The bitter referendum campaign had polarised and divided the country.

Despite the failure of the 1916 conscription referendum and attempts to revitalise voluntarism in Tasmania, recruitments continued to fall below requirements. In the face of the poor recruiting levels nationally, Hughes introduced the reinforcement campaign on 7 November—a second conscription referendum under a different name. With the calling of this new vote came another opportunity for returned soldiers to go "once more unto the breach" on the issue of compulsion.

The second campaign did not enjoy the virtually unanimous support of the 'Yes' campaign from returned soldiers in Tasmania, marking a definite shift from the 1916 campaign. Some veterans in Launceston organised an anti-conscription Committee, although generally Tasmanian returned soldiers did not form associations to oppose conscription, but rather, as Lake has noted, "worked individually alongside...

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128 In support of a unified returned soldiers' position, the Hobart RSA held their final meeting of the referendum campaign at the Hobart City Hall the night before the referendum. Returned soldiers McRae, Henshaw, Rose, Williams and Foster all spoke and were accorded the predictable support in their diatribes against anti-conscriptionists. On the day of the referendum vote, McRae published a letter in the sympathetic Mercury for the public to ponder. He invoked the principle of the 'last man and the last shilling' to back the compulsion argument, and attacked the selfishness of unionists who considered their own battles on behalf of labour to the detriment of the fighting man: "I tell you, workers, that if you refuse to send those men relief, you are the vilest 'scabs' that ever disgraced unionism." 'What the Soldiers Say' letter to the editor from D. McRae, The Mercury, 28 October 1916, p. 8.

129 This may be because of the fact that there was relatively few returned soldiers in Tasmania by October 1916, and those that had returned had sought shelter with their own in the RSA.

130 Figures from Appendix, Lake, A Divided Society, p. 197.

131 Labor Senator and anti-conscriptionist Rudolph Ready's inclusion on the Tasmanian Recruiting Committee drew howls of protest from the Tasmanian RSA, who were offended that an anti-conscriptionist could take on such a position. Ibid., p. 84.

132 Shakespeare, Henry V, Act 3, Scene 1.

133 Sergeant George Foster was the returned soldier representative on the Tasmanian Reinforcements Referendum Council, while a meeting of the Hobart branch of the RSA convened after the announcement of the campaign endorsed the Government's position. George Foster, now an MHA, explained that some "mainland" soldiers were being organised to oppose the conscription proposals, but the Hobart branch of the RSSILA was unanimous in its support. Three members: H. Barrett, B. Rolls and Captain Chaplain Rentoul were appointed as representatives of the league on the Southern Tasmanian Referendum Council. In more general efforts to secure a 'Yes' vote, a committee of ten soldiers was appointed by the League to assist in the organising necessary to bring about a successful outcome. 'Returned Soldiers' League: To Support the 'Yes' Campaign', The Mercury, 22 November 1917, p. 3.

The RSSILA’s realisation that it could only speak on its own behalf rather than for all returned men led the Hobart branch to include in its public appeal that returned soldiers should remember the duty they owed to their friends rather than their treatment at the hands of the Federal repatriation authorities. The “great deal of dissatisfaction” it was feared, would prejudice returned soldier support for conscription. Lake argued that this indeed contributed to the splintering of the returned soldier vote in Tasmania, as the “reason most often given for voting ‘no’ was their poor treatment at the hands of the repatriation department.” George Foster provided evidence of this when he referred to a Private Geard speaking at an anti-conscription rally out of bitterness of not getting a fair deal.

A major public rally in support of conscription was held at the Hobart Town Hall, and notably there was a definite attempt by the RSSILA to distance their support for compulsion from party politics. Returned soldier Captain Chaplain Rentoul spoke on the platform because The RSSILA “was unsectarian, and secondly, because it was non-political.” McRae, who had recently had a Gallipoli souvenir of some Turkish shrapnel removed from his spine, begged the crowd to vote ‘Yes’, “not because any political party demanded compulsion” but rather out of a desire to assist comrades at the Front, echoing the same arguments of a year earlier. RSSILA attempts at distancing

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135 Lake, *A Divided Society*, p. 127. News of a New South Wales No-Conscription League of Returned Soldiers during this campaign brought a hasty response from the Tasmanian RSSILA, who moved to distance themselves from its pronouncements. Leopold Bronowski from *The Mercury* attacked the NSW anti-conscription League, but in doing so, inadvertently discredited the Tasmanian RSSILA, and the League’s right to speak of its special experience: “[I]t does not necessarily follow at all that a returned soldier has necessarily any particular and special knowledge of the principles of warfare, and still less that he is in a position to express some particularly valuable opinion on the subject of compulsory service.” ‘Returned Soldiers and the Referendum’, editorial, 6 December 1917, p. 4. Conversely, the Tasmanian RSSILA’s appeal from C.N. Atkins and G. Fisher in 17 December’s *Mercury* claimed the very same right: “We returned soldiers base our appeal to you on our knowledge of the existing conditions on the Western front.” ‘What Our Boys Say – Vote ‘Yes’, *The Mercury*, 17 December 1917, p. 5. McRae and Foster, as representatives of the League, had preserved the right to speak on behalf of the necessity of conscription because of their experience of conditions at the Front, but Bronowski’s unintentional blow was damaging to their claims. Paradoxically, Bronowski lauded the RSSILA’s pro-conscription speeches: “There were, without exception, men who knew from experience what battle means, and most of them bore scars to testify.” *The Mercury*, 19 December 1917. It appears that returned soldiers were praised when they shared *The Mercury’s* own moral position, and lambasted when they did not. The RSSILA, fortunately for them, had proven their patriotic credentials in supporting the ‘Yes’ campaign.


137 Ibid.


140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.
themselves from political parties was explained out of a greater desire to support their comrades, but also perhaps from a realisation that they had become too closely allied with a particular political faction.

Returned soldiers who thought about their own personal grievances above repatriation to vote ‘No’ earned Foster’s wrath, as he said they were thinking more of themselves than their pals in the trenches.\textsuperscript{142} In a follow up letter, Foster further admonished those Tasmanian returned soldiers who did not stand with the rest for conscription. He only knew of “half-dozen or so” in Tasmania who were “talking the other side”, but “they are of a negligible quantity” and all had some grievance against the Defence or Repatriation Departments.\textsuperscript{143} By negating an insignificant minority and trivialising their grievances, Foster was able to present a united front, the solidarity of patriotic returned soldiers in favour of conscription. Any public splintering of this front was potentially damaging to their public image and to the campaign, so discrediting the perceived minority’s arguments concerning the conscription question was the RSSILA’s intention.

A letter from the Acting General Secretary of the RSSILA in Melbourne, W. Burns, to George Foster at the Tasmanian branch, confirmed this policy, emphatically stating the importance of the League’s solidarity on the issue of conscription. Foster forwarded a copy of the letter to The Mercury to be published for the public’s edification. According to Burns’ letter, information in Melbourne had found that Federal Anti-Conscription parliamentarians in Tasmania had publicly stated that the returned soldiers’ movement was divided on the referendum proposals. Burns attempted to discredit rogue soldiers by disassociating them from the League – physically and politically. The League’s selective policy of membership qualification was based on overseas service, barring home service soldiers. It was this latter group

\textsuperscript{142}Interestingly, present at the meeting was Lieut.-Colonel Dr. H. Nairn Butler, who was the Chief Medical Officer in the Tasmanian branch of the Repatriation Department. The irony of discussing the shortfalls and grievances of returned soldiers with the Repatriation Department while one its employees attended was most probably lost on the assembled veterans. The notion of returned soldiers’ “weak pleadings” due to ungenerous treatment at the hands of the Repatriation Department as a valid reason to vote ‘No’ was the topic of discussion by L. Broinowski’s Mercury editorial on 8 December. Broinowski heavily criticised these men.

\textsuperscript{143}‘Staff-Sgt. Foster, M.H.A., and the Referendum’, letter to the editor from George Foster, The Mercury, 13 December 1917, p. 3. The RSSILA’s appeal to the public to vote ‘Yes’ stated that “not more than 1 per cent.” of the forty thousand returned soldiers in Australia were opposed to the Government’s proposals. See, ‘What Our Boys Say – Vote ‘Yes’, The Mercury, 17 December 1917, p. 5.
that Burns felt was responsible for anti-conscription pronouncements in returned soldiers' names:

Their home service counts for nothing with this organization, and, as there is a good number of returned men that have been refused admission into the various branches of this league, it is only to be expected that they would try to find a camp somewhere, and, as a consequence, some discredited men have taken it upon themselves and have formed what is called the Returned Soldiers' Anti-Conscription League, and are bluffing the public by misrepresentations, and in some cases stooping to very mean acts of deception.\footnote{Retumed Soldiers: An Official Denial', \textit{The Mercury}, 17 December 1917, p. 5.}

Such a view was perhaps simplistic and overtly political in its exclusionary tactics in order to present a publicly unified face on returned soldier opinion. For instance, to only acknowledge soldiers' disagreement with the RSSILA's position when they had a grievance, appeared to dismiss the possibility of a cogently informed moral decision. The importance of instituting conscription was more imperative now than it had ever been, the RSSILA argued, because of the collapse of the Russian Front and the blows against Italy. Both would see Germany stronger with more resources to throw against the Western Front.\footnote{In one last attempt to sway voters, the ever-persistent Duncan McRae, writing from his hospital bed, reaffirmed the validity of the soldiers' opinion. His letter was published on the day of the poll. He cited the following figures – “the verdict of soldiers who know their comrades want help”:-

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{lll}
 & Yes & No \\
W.A. & 570 & 3 \\
Victoria & 4226 & 336 \\
Tasmania & 221 & 16 \\
Queensland Hospitals & 214 & 26 \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Source: ‘Letter on To-day's Poll’, letter from D. McRae, \textit{The Mercury}, 20 December 1917, p. 2. Where, or how, McRae arrived at these figures is unknown, as were the reasons why responses from New South Wales and South Australia were omitted. Regardless of their integrity, these figures were used by McRae to convince voters to compulsorily reinforce the Western Front. The miniscule numbers in the ‘No’ camp said all that McRae needed to say.}

The 1917 campaign for compulsion – the reinforcement referendum – again saw a ‘Yes’ majority in Tasmania, but slashed to only 379 votes: 38,881 in favour, and 38,502 against.\footnote{Figures from Appendix, \textit{Lake, A Divided Society}, p. 197.} Nationally the referendum was defeated. The second conscription referendum damaged the RSSILA's political influence and their public credibility, as their participation in the debate had not returned a positive outcome. However, whether returned soldiers tired of the jingoistic rhetoric second-time around, or took a political stance, or grew mistrustful of Hughes such a massive swing in Tasmania from the 1916
The issue of recruitment continued to be an important one right through to the termination of the war. After the conscription and reinforcement referendums were defeated, the recruiting figures further fell in Tasmania throughout that year, and, because compulsion failed, returned soldiers were of more value to recruiters than at any time past. The use of returned soldiers as stimulants to recruiting brought home firsthand the importance of reinforcing Australian soldiers at the Front. During welcome-home celebrations in Tasmania as late as April 1918, recruiters were hoping to utilise the potency of the Anzac image as embodied by returning wounded heroes to invigorate recruiting. William Williams, MLC, was part of the hearty gathering at Hobart Town Hall in April 1918, welcoming veterans home as a representative of the State Recruiting Committee. "The recruiting committee was anxious to get all the recruits possible," Williams was reported to have told the assembled throng, "and no one could do more in that direction than returned soldiers, so he hoped they would do their part in persuading men to take their places on active service." The fact that recruiting officers were present and spoke at celebrations welcoming soldiers home only confirms that returned soldiers remained the most dynamic and influential method of recruiting.

By instituting a Welcome Home Committee in June 1918, the State Recruiting Committee hoped to inspire recruiting rates by a public reception for returned soldiers on their arrival. The second conscription referendum had shown that some men would not support the campaign to assist recruiting (even compulsorily) because of the treatment on their return from the Repatriation Department or civil authorities. The feting of Tasmania’s returned soldiers to stimulate recruiting acted in two ways: it showed to prospective recruits that they would be idolised by a grateful society on their return, and it was more likely that returning soldiers would mount the platform to speak.

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147 Ibid., p. 129.
148 Lake argues that Hughes' eagerness to win the issue was his downfall: "Where his passions were involved, he seemed incapable of acting with prudence." Labor Senator O'Keefe felt after his tour around the State that "the autocratic attitude of the prime minister was resented by all shades of political opinion." Ibid., p. 130.
149 Ibid., pp. 134-135.
150 'Welcome to Returned Soldiers', The Mercury, 20 April 1918, p. 7.
151 In Tasmania, 6 o'clock closing of public houses and concerns by Temperance advocates that soldiers (returned and in camp) were prone to alcoholism raised their ire, and was a contentious issue during the Third Annual RSSILA Congress in Hobart in 1918.
in favour of recruiting, citing their good treatment on return as an added incentive to duty and honour. The elevated status of returned soldiers led Lake to argue that “These facts account in some part for the singularly prominent and privileged position of returned soldiers in Australian society after the war.”\textsuperscript{152} It certainly would have contributed to the strengthening of the RSSILA’s profile and position in the community, and complemented the patronage by Hughes and the Federal Government through to 1919 and beyond.

\textbf{The Returned Soldier as Politician}

In late March 1917, that prominent member of the Tasmanian branch of the RSA, Staff-Sergeant George Foster, announced his intention to stand as an Independent Senate candidate for the “National and khaki interests” in the 1917 Federal elections. Foster was a very good public speaker, and had previously been promised a place on the Liberal ticket before the confusion over Liberal amalgamation with the emerging Nationals.\textsuperscript{153} His decision to run as an Independent was reported by \textit{The Mercury} to have been made so as not to split the Nationalist vote and therefore allow Labor to capitalise on that. He stood on a platform of representing returned soldier interests in Australia — a “desire to have control of the affairs of the country for which they had fought”\textsuperscript{154} — and also for the national interest more generally through his vigorous support of recruiting campaigns to assist the war effort. Yet only days after announcing his candidature, Foster withdrew from the Senate battle, with the Nationalist-supporting newspaper \textit{The Mercury} lauding his selfless decision, in order that the Nationalists had a stronger chance of keeping Labor members from being elected.\textsuperscript{155} Interestingly, even the Labour newspaper the \textit{Daily Post} admired Foster. They took the opportunity of attacking the Nationalists for not endorsing Foster for pre-selection at their Round Table Conference, arguing that “A man who had braved the terrors of Gallipoli is not

\textsuperscript{152} Lake, \textit{A Divided Society}, p. 152. She cites the raised position of Australian soldiers in comparison to their conscripted colleagues in other nations.

\textsuperscript{153} For confusion over the position of the Liberals with the Nationalists in Tasmania, see, \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 94-5.


\textsuperscript{155} This editorial was written by L. Broinowski from \textit{The Mercury} office, who also coincidentally, wrote the 1921 publication, \textit{Tasmania’s War Record 1914-1918}. See, ‘A Genuine Nationalist’, \textit{The Mercury}, 3 April 1917, p. 4. Foster’s ‘selfless’ decision was also supported by letter writers A.M. Howell and F.J. Burbury who wrote to express their appreciation of Foster’s actions on the issue. See their letters, \textit{The Mercury}, 9 April 1917, p. 3.
likely to quail before the displeasure of a few political place hunters, or the advocates of the press.”\textsuperscript{156} Lieutenant James Hurst enjoyed the support of the Labor Leagues in his candidature, but, the \textit{Daily Post} argued, if they had withdrawn support for him as the Nationalists had not supported Foster, the labour paper claimed it could not have conceived of the response if it did so. The labour newspaper paid the Nationalist Foster the ultimate compliment when they published effusive praise:

\begin{quote}
With Mr Foster’s politics we are not in agreement, believing as we do that Labor policy is best for Australia… We regret that Sergeant Foster is not with us politically, as we fully recognise the sacrifice he made and the greater sacrifice he was prepared to make for Empire and liberty… Lieutenant Hurst, like Sergeant Foster, can fairly claim that he has given earnest of his loyalty, of his desire to win the war…\textsuperscript{157}
\end{quote}

Labor had seen the value in utilising returned soldier Hurst in their campaign, and they reasoned that no questions of loyalty or sacrifice could be levelled at him.

Having withdrawn from the Senate contest, Foster took the opportunity to run for a State seat in Denison after the death of William Burgess, which he ultimately won. Foster’s desire to enter politics was nothing unusual, as many returned soldiers, even before the war’s end, ran for parliament in order to have a greater say in the running of their country. Their enthusiasm to enter politics was born out of the same desires that led returned soldiers to take a leading role in public affairs in their communities around the country – that they had a greater conception of their role in society, and their experiences had had such a profound effect upon them that they were no longer content to be led, but wanted to be leaders.\textsuperscript{158} Returned soldiers took their places in Parliaments around the country, with a number being particularly vocal in Federal politics: the most distinguished being the prominent League President and Gallipoli

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\textsuperscript{156} ‘Win-the-War Patriots… and a Returned Soldier’, editorial, \textit{Daily Post}, 30 March 1917, p. 4.  \\
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{158} Tasmanian Victoria Cross winner J.J. Dwyer also pursued a political career. In the early 1920s he became involved in local politics on his native Bruny Island becoming a Councillor. His State parliamentary career began in 1931 when he was elected to the House of Assembly as an ALP for Franklin, holding the seat until his death. Dwyer held the position of Minister for Agriculture in the late 1940s, and even had a short period as Deputy Premier. As his political career began outside of the time frame of this study, his career has not been documented in this work. See, L. Wigmore, B. Harding, \textit{They Dared Mighty}, Canberra, 1986, pp. 59-60. A discussion with Dwyer’s son in August 2005 revealed that Dwyer had a soldier settlement property on Bruny Island in the early 1920s before starting a sawmilling business in new Norfolk with his brother at the end of the decade.
\end{flushright}
hero Col. Bolton. Within this context Senator Millen introduced his Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Bill to the Parliament.\textsuperscript{159}

Some ex-soldier participation in politics was further motivated by a belief that politicians did not know the special requirements of veterans, which was Foster's own motivation. He felt that the majority of returned soldiers were not represented and could "only be adequately represented by one whose sympathies were with them, and who had seen and felt what war really meant."\textsuperscript{160} He claimed in another speech that Tasmania was the only state in which "the soldiers had no Parliamentary representation," adding that "there was no class so deserving of it."\textsuperscript{161} This construction of returned soldiers as a separate 'class' contributed an added complexity to soldier political involvement and further emphasised the focus on difference, with the belief in the inadequacy of the existing political patriarchy driving their participation in politics, a belief that was echoed by civilian electors.\textsuperscript{162}

The concept of a unified or common returned soldier voice was imaginary, as political opinions among returned men were varied as for any other demographic. Standing against Foster and his Liberal sympathies was wounded ex-serviceman Lieutenant James Hurst, an official Labor candidate.\textsuperscript{163} Of Hurst, Foster felt that while "he had proved his loyalty", he "was in bad company."\textsuperscript{164} The exclusion of returned soldiers who did not fit within the League's view of the returned soldier was at times made very public, as in this case of Hurst's nomination as a Labor candidate. Duncan McRae, voicing the League's position, vehemently distanced the Association from

\textsuperscript{159} Tasmania also had Lieut.-Colonel George John Bell in the House of Representatives seat of Darwin. Bell served in the Boer War, Gallipoli, Egypt, Sinai and Palestine. He returned to Australia in June 1919, and took his seat in the House. He was defeated in 1922. See, \textit{Commonwealth of Australia, Biographical Handbook and Record of Elections for the Parliament of the Commonwealth, Fourth Issue. Published by: The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1923.}

\textsuperscript{160} 'The Semite Selections: Staff-Sergt. Foster Retires: Meeting at Town-Hall', \textit{The Mercury}, 3 April 1917, p. 6. Reading the pronouncements from contemporary politicians, returned soldiers largely had that sympathy already.

\textsuperscript{161} 'The By-Elections: Denison', \textit{The Mercury}, 15 June 1917, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{162} With George Foster's revelation that he would stand for the by-election House of Assembly seat of Denison, correspondent F.J. Burbury pledged to "show our appreciation of his actions by doing all we can to secure his being returned as our soldier member. A man with the ability and experience of S.S.F. [Staff-Sergeant Foster] could do much to help solve the returned soldiers' problems..." See, 'Election Candidates', letter to the editor from F.J. Burbury, \textit{The Mercury}, 9 April 1917, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{163} Hurst was eventually elected MHA for the seat of Darwin. See, Bennett & Bennett, \textit{Biographical Register of the Tasmanian Parliament 1851-1960}, p. 87.

\textsuperscript{164} 'The Senate Selections: Staff-Sergt. Foster Retires: Meeting at Town-Hall', \textit{The Mercury}, 3 April 1917, p. 6. While Foster was making his withdrawal from the election campaign public, Hurst was campaigning in Launceston under the Labor banner alongside Senator James Guy. See, 'Lieut. Hurst's Candidature', \textit{The Mercury}, 3 April 1917, p. 6. The 'bad company' statement was in reference to Hurst's Labor Party affiliation. 'Good' returned men, in Foster's view, were obviously Nationalists.
Hurst’s candidature as an official Labor Party candidate. McRae did not want any public confusion that Hurst’s position represented the opinion held by loyal returned soldiers. ‘Loyalty’ was accorded to those who were members of the League, and/or possessed Nationalist sympathies. Hurst’s political amputation from the League came about from Labor’s non-support of conscription and the subsequent failure of the campaign, which struck a bitter chord with many Tasmanian returned servicemen.

The second National RSSILA Congress, reportedly “representing 20,000 returned sailors and soldiers”, moved a resolution that deplored the result of the national service referendum and its “unutterable contempt” for those men behind its failure, the Labor Party among them. McRae argued that the resolution represented the views of the vast majority of returned soldiers, and that Hurst’s relationship to Labor – “those public men who have been instrumental in staining our public honour” by not supporting conscription – was viewed with extreme regret. Even more zealously, McRae felt that

The regret is all the more keen when we recollect that Lieut. Hurst, upon his return home, before he had been subjected to any influences, held views similar to our own upon compulsory service. By his action in associating himself with those who opposed compulsory service, we feel that he has been false to our comrades in the trenches.

By running as a Labor candidate, Hurst had distanced himself from the loyal and patriotic affiliation between the RSSILA and the Nationalists who sought to introduce conscription as a means to support comrades at the Front, and had thereby disgraced himself through his patronage from the Labor Party – a party who were later accused of harbouring Bolshevist tendencies. Lake argues that Hurst was Labor’s greatest hope for a Senate seat in the 1917 elections, but that even his war experiences as a badge of honour and loyalty could not protect him against the slurs of being controlled by external bodies on the position of conscription. Hurst was unsuccessful in his Senate candidacy, so turned his attention to the by-election for the Tasmanian House of

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166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Lake, A Divided Society, p. 98.
Representatives seat of Darwin. While the RSSILA in Tasmania, through McRae, were content to exclude Hurst from their general support, they did not do the same with the Nationalist Foster. The alarming ease with which a fellow returned man, a comrade, could be rejected on such a political basis was astounding, yet representative of the heady and uncertain days of early 1917.

The spate of elections and by-elections in Tasmania during 1917 saw the decimation of Labor and an uninterrupted succession of Nationalist victories. Despite returned soldier candidates fielded by Labor, none could break the Nationalist/Liberal stranglehold, probably due to both their anti-conscriptionist stance in 1916, and the suspicion with which their union ties were viewed. Lake argues that "The campaign to return a Nationalist government was fought in Tasmania mainly by Nationalists and returned soldiers." The inclusion of veterans within this formidable anti-Labor bloc was not surprising considering the general stance on conscription taken on the issue by Tasmanian returned men, led by McRae's fierce pronouncements. The fact that returned soldiers were split down ideological lines was not at all surprising, for while they generally returned with a greater sense of what they had fought to defend – Bolshevism was one force they perceived as undermining the institutions they had risked their lives for – pre-war allegiances to unionism, capital or labour were often far stronger than their allegiance to a mythical and all-encompassing returned soldier consciousness.

While there was indeed evidence of exclusivity and separation, and a focus on difference manifested by some veterans as a returned soldier consciousness in a very broad sense, others believed the notion of returned soldiers for returned soldiers

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169 Lieutenant Hurst, despite polling the most votes for a Labor candidate in the 1917 Senate elections, witnessed the Nationalists annihilate his party. With the death of C.R. Howroyd in the Federal House of Representatives seat of Darwin, Hurst turned his attention to contest it. As a Labor candidate, despite securing the majority of votes in the traditional working class and union strongholds of the western mining areas of the State (Queenstown, Srah, Zeehan, Gormanston etc.), Hurst lost the election to W.G. Spence, a 'fly-in' Nationalist candidate (Labor until 1917) from Darling in New South Wales. Hurst's status as a returned soldier and a native of the area could not overcome the Nationalist juggernaut, suggesting that party politics and a suspicion of the commitment by Labor to winning the war was far stronger at the ballot box to electors than his status as a returned soldier. Lake, A Divided Society, Melbourne, 1975, p. 103, discusses Spence's election candidature and victory. See also, 'William Guthrie Spence', J. Rydon, A Biographical Register of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1901-1972, Canberra, 1975, pp. 202-203.


171 Lake, A Divided Society, p. 96.

172 Lloyd Robson argued that the prevalence of the RSSILA in the community contributed to this sense of exclusivity: "Returned men formed a divisive elite in the society and the word 'Anzac' was sacred." L.L. Robson, A History of Tasmania. Volume II: Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980's, Melbourne, 1991, p. 407.
possessed little currency, or certainly was of insufficient strength to sway their vote. Hence, the standing of a returned soldier candidate did not automatically mean that he would attract the returned soldier vote on a returned soldier platform alone. Yet it was precisely this approach that George Foster adopted when he ran for the seat of Denison in the 1917 by-election. Foster enjoyed the support of a newly formed Soldiers, Patriots and Political League because returned soldiers felt that they did not have sufficient representation in State Parliament,\(^{173}\) despite the general alliance between the RSA and the Nationalists. Foster openly noted that the Soldiers and Patriots League was a vehicle through which more power could be gained for himself and other returned soldiers\(^{174}\) by “direct representation in the State Parliament for the returned soldiers and their dependents.”\(^{175}\) It took as prime platform issues the demand for a more effective and efficient repatriation programme and the stimulation of an increasingly stagnant recruiting campaign. The existence of such an association demonstrates that returned soldiers not only actively partook in political debate and issues in Tasmania, in line with their interstate colleagues, but recognised that contemporary political parties, and the RSSILA as a non-political association, did not adequately appeal to an increasing returned soldier political participation. F.T. Henshaw and McRae justified the formation of this Political League after *The Mercury* attacked their desire to form a third ideological column:

> The discontent of the returned soldiers with existing political conditions, and their present demand for a share in shaping the conditions of the future, are due to the fact that we believe politicians and political parties to-day are not displaying that honesty of purpose and firmness in execution which, necessary at all times, is doubly so now.\(^{176}\)

Henshaw and McRae’s requirement for affirmative action on repatriation and the execution of the war prompted the Political League’s formation. They felt that indecisiveness from Labor and even the Nationalists on issues of national security and the vitally important issue of repatriation was too important to the welfare of the nation.


\(^{176}\) ‘Returned Soldiers and Patriots’ Political League’, letter to the editor from F. Henshaw and D. McRae, *The Mercury*, 5 June 1917, p. 3.
not to act. Their particular disgust at Senator Millen's handling of the Repatriation portfolio during the campaigning for his Senate seat was another driving factor in the League's creation. They saw his perceived lack of sympathy for the plight of returned soldiers as demonstrating the inability of politicians to do the right thing by the men, with the League believing that the best guarantee of obtaining such sympathy was "to send a certain number of returned soldiers to Parliament." The existence and aims of this Soldiers', Patriots and Political League substantially modifies the traditional ex-serviceman-Nationalist alliance postulated by Lake. While enjoying RSSILA support, Foster's political push was driven out of a greater sense of affirmative action for returned soldiers, and the incumbent conservative Nationalist ideology did not provide the level of support he desired.

Responding to accusations that they were creating a new factional organisation, the Soldiers', Patriots and Political League felt that their association should appeal to all "genuinely national and patriotic electors" because of its "genuinely and inherently non-party" status, so their group should appeal to all Tasmanians. The special conditions that returned soldiers endured allowed them to shape political views without "pretence or compromise", conditions "conducive to clear and honest thought upon the problems in which our country's welfare is bound up." The League felt they had a justifiable claim toward contributing to a new vision of Australia's future born out of the unique reflective conditions of their military service. This conservative approach did not appeal to all returned men nor all members of the public, despite requesting the support of all patriots, which many would have claimed to be.

Of particular note during one meeting of the SPPL on the formation of a Sandy Bay branch, Duncan McRae, in supporting Foster's claim for Burgess' Denison seat, reportedly declared that the RSL would not agree to Foster standing down from his role.

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177 The League felt that repatriation, as a policy designed to eventually encompass up to a quarter of a million soldiers and their dependents, was "vital to the welfare of Australia." Ibid.
178 The Mercury, in an editorial on the state of repatriation to the beginning of 1918, also criticised Millen (but in somewhat milder terms) for the delay in putting a Repatriation Department in operation. "There are so many things requiring of Ministers that if they are too busy with politics to attend to the affairs of their departments, delays and confusion occur, to the undoubted detriment of the Commonwealth and of the Empire. Without doubt it is these political activities which have delayed Senator Millen in getting his scheme of repatriation into working order." The Mercury, 2 January 1918, p. 4. It was to be another three months before the Repatriation Department officially came into being.
179 Returned Soldiers and Patriots' Political League", letter to the editor from F. Henshaw and D. McRae, The Mercury, 5 June 1917, p. 3.
180 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
182 A suburb in Hobart.
as their Secretary\(^{183}\) despite his intention to move into politics, thereby compromising the RSSILA's status as a non-party political organization. While the Soldiers' and Patriots' Political League was short lived, it served one of its intentions by supporting Foster in the by-election victory for a place in the State's House of Assembly.\(^{184}\) Like Bolton in the Federal parliament, Foster was a prominent member of the RSSILA and a member of State Parliament, thus blurring the distinction between the RSSILA and its non-political\(^{185}\) status. It is worth noting, however, that contesting a by-election on such a narrow focus within the context of an appeal to patriotism and the immediacy of the dangers of a war not yet won were vastly different from a peacetime reconstruction election, when the support for returned soldiers and the immediacy of what they stood for was not seen as pressing.

Foster's success in the Denison by-election saw him lobby for returned soldier interests in the lower chamber. During the Address in Reply, Foster revealed that his status was as a representative of the returned men pledging his assistance to the Government in any way possible to expedite legislation to assist returned soldiers' repatriation. He then immediately used his new position as an MHA to bring to the attention of Parliament the gross inadequacies of the hospital system and in particular, the deficiency of Roseneath hospital as an institution dedicated to the ameliorative and palliative care of Tasmanian returned men.\(^{186}\) He was also forthcoming in his opinions on the constitutions and the administration of various Boards and Committees, particularly when the issue was of such importance to veterans and involved the handling of significant sums of Tasmania's share of Repatriation funding from the Federal Government. Returned Soldier Land Settlement was foremost in his mind in this sense. His election for the interests of returned soldiers sat incongruously with his election by a large sector of the electorate that would have derived little directly from his platform mandate. Foster had made an immediate impact, raising the profile of

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\(^{183}\) There is the potential for confusion in *The Mercury*'s report of McRae's pronouncements, as his comments may also be interpreted as a desire of the RSSILA not to stand down from the Denison by-election in light of his role as Secretary of the RSSILA. Foster of course, had been asked to step down from the Senate elections some months earlier by conservative elements keen to not split the conservative vote and allow Labor success.

\(^{184}\) It is interesting that the league was able to propel a returned soldier candidate to a parliamentary seat on such an apparently narrow support base, but the general sympathy and support for returned soldiers in 1917 would have garnered votes perhaps not available at other times.

\(^{185}\) In such contexts, 'non-political' really meant not tied to a particular political party.

returned soldier interests in Parliament, and through Parliament, the propulsion of ex-
soldier welfare from the public to the political domain. 187

A Queenslander, N.R. Worrall visited Tasmania in July 1918 to assess support
for a Tasmanian branch of the Returned Soldiers' Political Federation. Branches in
Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria had already been formed, and the object of
this non-party federation was to assure national security in the reinforcing of troop
numbers and elimination of "pro-Germanism and disloyalty," as well as the creation of
a strong military. 188 Domestic social policies were also tabled – the reduction in
national debt, electoral reform to remove party strife, a uniform railway gauge,
decentralised ports and infrastructure, and water conservation and irrigation. Returned
soldiers had taken their claims of special status and engaged issues outside of their
specialist experience to propose policies for the nation as a whole. Proposals to form a
Tasmanian Division were discussed in a public meeting in the capital on 19 July 1918,
where Worrall's suggestions were unanimously supported. Colonel Robert Snowden
presided, and stressed that the Federation was not in any way affiliated with the
RSSILA, but it emerged that the real reason for its formation was because of a desire by
returned soldiers to transplant their spirit of comradeship and unity formed in the
trenches to the political life of the country. Returned soldier "disgust" at the state of
national politics on their return prompted the creation of this Federation. Senator John
Earle attended, and commented upon the Federation's avowed aim to remove party
politics, expressing amusement that they were forming another party. 189

The Mercury defended the rights of soldiers to form their own party, but used
the editorial 'Is a Soldier's Party Needed?' to attack the labour movement. The
editorial revealed that there was support in Tasmania in 1919 for such a party, and a
letter from 'Soldiers' Friend' advocated that all returned soldiers read the editorial and

187 Returned soldier members in Parliament, despite claims by the RSSILA, were not the only ones who
staunchly defended veterans' interests. Some members with no obvious link to active servicemen were
ferocious in their defence of returned soldier rights and fierce in the ventilation of returned soldier
grievances. The Mercury dedicated an editorial to the latter point, noting that in full flight, politicians
"are apt to be carried away by the violence of their just emotions, and perhaps do more harm than good."
They were responding to the parliamentary airing of a recent spate of returned soldier grievances, and
The Mercury was concerned not to create a false impression of the treatment of veterans so as to
prejudice recruiting, or unduly concern friends and relatives of soldiers returning or returned. See,
'Returned Soldiers', The Mercury, 24 August 1917, p. 4.
188 'Returned Soldiers' Political Federation', The Mercury, 16 July 1918, p. 6. Discussions about this
Association with Michael Roe lead the author to presume that this organisation was, at the least, ultra-
conservative in character.
189 'Soldiers and Politics: The Political Federation: Tasmanian Branch Formed' The Mercury, 20 July
1918, p. 8.
vote in the 1919 elections for candidates willing to assert their interests. The Red Flag Riots in Brisbane in March 1919 were seen by The Mercury as further proof of the treachery of the Labor Party by allowing Bolsheviks to prosper in Queensland, thus forcing returned soldiers and patriotic citizens to seek some way of ridding the red menace from their community. The newspaper drew parallels in Labor’s fortunes in Tasmania to those in Queensland, with returned soldiers unlikely to support Labor: “It will be remembered on polling day that in Hobart, no less than in Brisbane, the red of revolution and anarchy is the chosen colour of Labor.”

By the time of the 1919 State elections, many more soldiers were back in Tasmania with a consequent desire to find employment. The six months’ furlough for the original Anzacs had coincided with the Armistice, so all of the soldiers on their way home to rest found that their journey was to be one way. The growing awareness of the power of the returned soldiers’ vote was apparent to one Mercury reader who prophesied that it would constitute an important element in the campaign to come; “With the coming elections [State Election May 1919], there is no doubt that there will be a lot of sweet nothings chanted for the ears of returned soldiers, but the matter would be better fixed before that event.”

The realisation that returned soldiers, and their supporters, like the Fathers’ and Mothers’ [of ex-servicemen] Associations, could constitute a potentially decisive component in the election result represented one of the first great political opportunities for returned soldiers in the State, and the RSSILA by extension. In a letter to The Mercury, W. Revell Reynolds recognised that politicians would court returned soldiers with pledges of assistance and sympathy to their plights.

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193 ‘Repatriation’, letter to the editor from W. Revell Reynolds, The Mercury, 15 March 1919, p. 11. A father of three, writing of ‘Labor’s smoojde’ to returned soldiers, viciously rejected Labor’s appeal for the returned soldier vote, and hoped that they would “treat the Lyons political army the same as they did the Germany army, and politically wipe them out.” ‘Labor’s Smoogde to Soldiers’, letter to the editor from Father of Three, The Mercury, 16 May 1919, p. 2. One soldier, Percival Knights who was under the age of 21 years was angry at not getting the vote, after an oversight from Premier Lee in not enrolling soldiers under the age of 21 for the election. Knights felt bitter that he could vote in the conscription referendums, but not in his home state’s election. See, ‘Soldiers and Franchise’, letter to the editor from Perc. Knights, The Mercury, 7 June 1919, p. 12.
194 Bass MHA James Newton was President of the Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Fathers’ Association, and was a strong representative of returned soldiers’ rights. He was a driving force behind the 1921 Select Committee into the Tasmanian Returned Soldier Land Settlement Scheme, as he recognised that an evaluation of the scheme, even at that early juncture, was necessary to help avert catastrophe. For his parliamentary career, see, ‘James Corcoran Newton’, Bennett & Bennett, Biographical Register of the Tasmanian Parliament 1851-1960, p. 124.
This contrasted with George Foster's claim that only a returned man could provide the requisite sympathy because a comrade would know what he had endured. Politicians, sensing returned soldier frustration over inadequacies and ineptness in the administration of repatriation policies, attempted to work for their votes, and this realisation further strengthened the latter’s position.

The 1919 Election Day was 31 May, with a large returned soldier candidate turnout. Lake notes that three returned soldiers — Sapper Duncan McRae, Staff-Sergeant George Foster and Colonel Robert Eccles Snowden — were candidates in Denison alone. Post-war fears of Bolshevism and pressing domestic issues like employment were major election issues. Joe Lyons made employment of returned soldiers part of his political platform, arguing that his Labor party would aim to see that all returned men would be found employment — but arguably more difficult to achieve was his desire that no unemployment would result from the return of the soldiers. Labor candidate for Darwin L.A. Bennett declared his anti-conscriptionist position (in opposition to the Tasmanian RSSILA’s position), yet affirmed his intention to assist the employment of returned soldiers, particularly in light of his son’s enlistment: “No preparation had been made during the absence of our gallant men,” Bennett proclaimed, “to have industries ready to find employment for them when they returned to civil life.” Other candidates also used returned soldier employment as part of their political platforms, with Snowden outlining the crucial need of absorbing returned soldiers for the State’s future. Returned soldiers desired employment rather than charity according to Snowden, and their re-employment and reintegration into Tasmanian society should be managed, as Lyons also suggested, without displacing the present labour force. Snowden criticised the restrictions on vocational training opportunities and business assistance — issues that could only truly have appealed to the returned soldier community. Despite Snowden’s attack on Labor’s policy on recruitment, both sides occupied similar political space with regards to returned soldier employment, which indicates that they were aware of the capacity of the ex-soldiers’ vote to influence the outcome of the election. Senator Earle urged returned soldiers not

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196 J. Lyons' speech on Labor Party Policy, General Election, as reported in *The Mercury*, 17 April 1919, p. 6.
to be taken by the entreaties of politicians seeking to make “political capital out of them” during the State elections.199

Lake notes that the 1919 election was unusual in the “large number of pressure groups involved.”200 In addition to the three Nationalist returned soldier candidates in Denison, the Labor Party fielded returned soldier candidates, Thomas Keogh in Franklin,201 and James Hurst in Darwin. The three Nationalist candidates found support from the Loyalty League, and McRae was also supported by the Temperance Alliance. The RSSILA’s support of the three Nationalist Denison candidates did nothing to support their claim of distance from party politics within the State. The RSSILA reportedly came under fire from the labour press with claims of hypocrisy on the issue.202 Returned soldiers with Labor sympathies within the League reportedly claimed that Foster used his position as Secretary of the RSSILA to further his re-election campaign by utilising the clubrooms as campaign headquarters, and disseminating pamphlets at League socials.203

As more soldiers returned to Tasmania, the RSSILA’s standing and membership had grown along with dissatisfaction with the repatriation apparatus. The RSSILA’s unique position as a pressure group with a close relationship with the Federal Government and a shrewdly avowed friend of the digger in Hughes imbued them with a special sense of authority that appealed to disgruntled ex-soldiers. As Lake has argued, “As more soldiers returned home the larger and more demanding their official body

200 Lake, A Divided Society, p. 181.
201 Keogh did not win a seat, and during a later RSSILA meeting, one member stated that it was because of the Franklin electors that Keogh did not win a seat while three ‘cold-foots’ did. Keogh wrote to correct that statement, and noted that his failure to win a seat was that: “I was a stranger, practically unheard of by the majority of electors, until my name was announced as a candidate five weeks before the election took place. Immediately after entering on my campaign I took ill, with the result that I was able to visit 23 out of something like 180 polling booths. The fact that I was runner-up for the third seat reflects every credit on the loyalty and genuineness of the Franklin Labor electors.” Keogh did have someone in mind to explain why he had even less of a chance. Keogh’s health was not the only disability – he also felt that “had the R.S.A. shown more comradeship and less partisanship, on that occasion, the result might have been very different.” ‘Labor in Franklin’, letter to the editor from W.T. Keogh, The Mercury, 8 July 1919, p. 2.
202 Lake, A Divided Society, p. 182. In 1916, the Daily Post reported claims of an association with political parties, and that it had political leanings. The stated that they had “no intention of standing idly by and allowing the comforts and rights of returned soldiers to be made the battledore and shuttlecock of politics.” In order to defend the non-political position of the Association, the Daily Post published the eight rules of the RSA’s platform, including the policy that, “The Association is NON-POLITICAL and NON-SECTARIAN.” The Daily Post’s noble proclamation of their defence came to naught as the relationship between members of the RSSILA and political parties arguably transcended the reasonable protocol of the Association’s “non-political and non-sectarian” policy.
203 See, Lake, A Divided Society, p. 182. See also, The World, 28 May 1919.
became.” If true, Foster’s manipulation of this fact for his own political purposes, while not strictly in line with the founding principles of the RSSILA, was a masterstroke in a 1919 election campaign characterised by accusations of disloyalty, bolshevism, and militant unionism. It did not, however, get him re-elected. In the final results, Snowden won a seat in Denison and Hurst for Labor won a seat in Darwin, while Foster and McRae failed to win a seat after preferences were counted, despite polling well. Later in the year, Foster ran again for a Senate seat under the Nationalist banner, succeeding in winning the second Tasmanian seat on 30 December 1919.

In these 1919 Federal elections, Hughes appealed specifically to the returned soldier vote, and the rabidly anti-Labor L. Broinowski of *The Mercury* estimated that in Tasmania “9 out of 10” soldiers supported the Nationalists. Foster’s election pronouncements, running in partnership with John Dunlop Millen, were more low key than his State election bid, although he still spoke on a platform of repatriation moderated with broader issues attractive to the average voter. Colonel Cyril St Clair Cameron also ran for a Senate berth as an Independent, but failed to be elected alongside his fellow returned soldier in the Federal Upper House. Following his work on Repatriation Committees, a committee of returned soldiers nominated Henry Hector McFie as a Nationalist in the House of Representatives seat of Wilmot. He failed to

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204 Lake, *A Divided Society*, p. 145.
205 Snowden was also elected Mayor of Hobart City Council on 12 December 1919, capping off a successful political year for him. He served as Mayor from 1920 to 1922. He was “Able and popular [and] described as on the side of progress and new ideas, yet not impractical and extreme. He was also elected to parliament, becoming Chief Secretary then Agent-General in London...” A. Alexander and S. Petrow, *Hobart 1846-2000: A History of the Hobart City Council*, Hobart, forthcoming publication, ‘Elections’ chapter, p. 6.
207 *The Mercury*, 30 December 1919, p. 5.
208 *The Mercury*, 3 December 1919, p. 4. Polling Day was the 13th of that month.
209 Not to be confused with the Minister for Repatriation, Edward Millen. Senator J.D. Millen was the Tasmanian member of the Public Accounts Committee that investigated the War Service Homes Scheme in 1921. See, ‘John Dunlop Millen’, in Rydon, *A Biographical Register of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1901-1972*, p. 159. Rydon incorrectly attributes Millen as a South Australian Senator. For Millen’s participation in the Public Accounts Committee’s investigation into the Tasmanian War Service Homes Scheme in 1921, see the War Service Homes Chapter.
210 Cameron was a veteran of campaigns in Afghanistan, India and the Boer War, as well as administrative support at Gallipoli. He was a Senator on two separate occasions; 1901-03, and 1907-13. See, S. Bennett, ‘Cyril St Clair Cameron’, in A. Millar (ed.), *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate, Vol. I: 1901-1929*, pp. 221-223.
gain the seat, but it is nonetheless instructive to note the intervention of returned soldiers in this process.

Foster’s Senate career was not a successful one according to Shayne Breen. Despite being elected as a Digger Senator and speaking on issues related to repatriation and of the interest of returned soldiers, Foster was largely absent from the Senate during his incumbency. “He was a frequent speaker during 1920 and 1921,” Breen notes, “but thereafter attended the Senate irregularly, gave no speeches and failed to participate in the deliberations of the one select committee of which he was a member.”

Foster had been hospitalised in 1920 with a nervous breakdown, perhaps deriving from his war experiences. He was cited as co-respondent in a divorce case in St. Kilda, and there was also a suggestion that he drank heavily “to alleviate his emotional pain.” He resigned four months before the 1925 election, but apart from his work in the first two years of office, he failed to discharge his parliamentary duties. His post-Senate life was spent variously in obscurity, working at Melbourne Zoo, and running a Temperance house in Sydney for destitute returned men, but it appears his foray into politics at the highest level had been the last shout for a man who demonstrated much political promise for the returned soldier cause at State level. His unsuccessful Senate career and premature withdrawal from the political arena was a distinct blow to the aspirations of Tasmanian ex-servicemen, and returned soldiers generally.

The Formation of a Soldiers’ Party

In the aftermath of the May 1919 State Election, returned soldier dissatisfaction with the RSSILA found a political expression, with approximately 100 returned men assembling to consider forming a Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council. Former Labor candidate Thomas Keogh revealed that he had not joined the RSSILA because “he did not think its initiative was sufficient.” When asked why, Keogh remarked that as a

214 In contrast, Foster’s running mate for the election, John Millen, remained in the Senate until 1938.
member of the Labor Party, he could not countenance joining due to their self-proclaimed non-political status. The RSSILA’s support of Nationalist League members like McRae, Foster and Snowden, would have seen a clash of personal politics in any case, aside from the inherently contradictory nature of their involvement with Nationalist candidates. A Sergeant Michael proposed uniting all returned soldiers to “hit back until they formed a majority in the House of Assembly and formed their own Government.” Many attendees at the meeting were RSSILA members, interested in following events from a potential rival political association. Disappointingly, Keogh had been asked to call the meeting, yet noted that those who had asked him to do so were all absentees. Difficulties over accepting the term ‘worker’ in the proposed Council’s title also stymied progress, and the meeting dissolved with very little achieved – not least the lack of even confirming enough support for the Council’s existence.

The Mercury triumphed in the failure of this “Bolshevik” model of organisation, and, while not averse to the concept of soldier participation in politics, felt that the League should continue in its non-political capacity as a “moderating and useful influence in the State.” Overt political involvement would only “injure its influence, lose the sympathy of the public and create disorder within its own being.” While The Mercury had claimed that the Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council would “smash” the League, T.F. Donovan (late AIF) assured readers that nothing could be further from the truth. Dissatisfaction with a non-political stance was more the reasoning, and Keogh and supporters had merely desired the League’s support in forming a political body, which, Donovan felt, “will come sooner or later.” With the returned soldier assertiveness demonstrated at the elections, their membership of both conservative and progressive associations, and (as discussed in Chapter Four) the furore with the Hobart

216 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
218 Attendees rejected the use of the term workers as it has union connotations and because unionists had refused to load ships crucial to the war effort by striking, and as a consequence, had not supported the boys at the Front.
220 Ibid.
221 ‘Soldiers and Political parties’, letter to the editor from T.F. Donovan, The Mercury, 27 June 1919, p. 3. The Mercury attacked Donovan in an editorial for daring to question the conservative Hobart paper’s report of the meeting. They also did not enjoy the fact that he had sent a copy of his letter to the labour newspaper The World, claiming that The Mercury would not publish his letter to them. The politicking and bias behind the scenes was rather nasty, and demonstrates the political hostilities current in Tasmania at this time. See also Lake, A Divided Society, passim.
City Council over the Whittle employment preference case which was then occurring. Donovan’s assumptions concerning 1919 looked increasingly likely.

The proposed Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council had jolted the Tasmanian RSSILA Executive out of its complacency and demonstrated the need for a political outlet for returned soldier political assertiveness. A meeting of the Hobart branch of the League in early July 1919 dissected the problem ahead of them. Despite Foster, McRae and Snowden’s support from the Nationalists, the League were, as a body, suspicious of the motives of the two political parties and their genuineness regarding soldiers’ interests. Simply running a soldier as a candidate in one of the parties was not conducive to working in the soldiers’ interests, McRae argued, as he was likely to become a “party representative rather than a soldier representative”; the outcome of the State election had showed that it was not the way to assert the interests of the Anzac. Sergeant Michael attributed Foster’s failure to be re-elected in Denison to the fact he had exhibited too much soldier and too little of a partisan. As such, he did not appeal to a broad enough section of the voting public. The formation of a third political party was the only way the interests of the returned soldier could be adequately represented, the group argued, and the League meeting voted for the formation of such a party, independent of the RSSILA proper. As Michael argued, the two parties “would crawl on their bellies to get the votes of the soldiers to keep in office,” and then renege on their promises – much as they felt the Federal Nationalist Government was doing. A faction at the meeting expressed sincere concern of the devastating impact a soldiers’ party from the League could cause. A.P. Crisp acknowledged that members had tendencies in different directions, and that a political party would likely split the organisation, causing a worse position than present. Foster warned that, if such a thing occurred, the Tasmanian branch of the League would most likely have to be

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222 The returned soldiers threatened to boycott the Peace Celebrations over the issue, when a VC-winner was not granted employment preference over another candidate for the position of Mount Wellington Park ranger. This case will be discussed at length in Chapter Four.

223 This point was expressed in very much the same way by a Mr Brown, at the meeting.

224 'Soldiers and Politics: Formation of a Third Party: Hobart Branch’s Decision', The Mercury, 3 July 1919, p. 6. This was an interesting point by McRae in light of his candidature for the Nationalists, and support from the Loyalty League and Temperance groups in the recent 1919 elections. It must be assumed then that his first service was to the soldiers, with party ranking second.

225 Ibid.

226 In 1919 the war was over and the danger had passed. The voting public arguably wanted a more moderate candidate than Foster.


228 Ibid.
amputated from the national body for directly violating the non-party political status. McRae also rejected the League’s transformation into a political body. Yet most accepted that without political representation, their demands were unlikely to be met. Clearly they had little faith that the RSSILA’s advice to incumbent Governments would be enough to secure returned soldier’s demands. Reynolds noted acerbically that “when the war was on the soldier was a good fellow; now he was regarded as an infernal nuisance.”

He advocated a militant party to prevent Australia’s unpreparedness for another war. By the conclusion of the meeting, two points were clear: members were concerned that the League’s good work and standing would suffer as a result of its politicisation, yet that a Soldiers’ political party was required to obtain the promises and treatment they felt they deserved. A compromise was moved – that a soldiers’ party be formed independent of the League. It was carried with only a few dissenters. The soldiers’ affirmative action did not please *The Mercury*, which was concerned that a third party would complicate not only the political system, but also the soldiers’ demands. They regretted this new move, but felt that “in its own time it will die, or be merged in some other political party.”

This so-called People’s and Soldiers’ Party faced immediate criticism, but McRae was obstinate in its defence. The new party was born out of the dissatisfaction with both Labor and Nationals and their promises to implement policies that favoured the returned soldier. The first meeting on 8 July saw a small turnout and the lack of definite action on the party’s formation. A reasonable level of support was required before deciding to move forward, although the new party had attracted as its Chairman a disgruntled former National Federation member, D. Rees. It appears that this same party met again in another guise in the first week of August, although it did not as yet have a definitive name. This meeting of around thirty returned soldiers discussed the possibility of forming a third party but pragmatically, was reticent to move in any direction unless the returned soldier community’s wishes could be ascertained.

Moves toward forming an official soldiers’ party appear to have been stillborn, as no further evidence can be elicited as to their creation. The entire concept of forming a

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229 Ibid.
231 ‘People’s and Soldiers’ Party: The First Public Meeting: A Lively Discussion’, *The Mercury*, 9 July 1919, p. 7. It appears that the name was christened by *The Mercury*, but the Party themselves had not decided on an official title.
Soldiers' Party tells us something of the demands of a vocal minority of veterans. Foster's failure to be re-elected in Denison meant that he could not push his returned soldier agenda in Parliament, and, possibly viewing the Nationalists as less interested in pursuing the vision of Australia he held, Foster, McRae and others saw their only opportunity to follow that vision by appealing directly to returned soldiers from their own party. The lack of progress in their efforts says much about the changed political context in 1919, versus that which existed two years earlier.

A new phase in returned soldier political involvement in Tasmania grew out of the 1919 Melbourne riots, when returned soldiers participated on the side of "Disorder." The Mercury conveniently explained that these disturbances were the attitude of "a very few" returned soldiers, as the majority were well drilled in the necessity of discipline and order. Darwin MHA, Lieutenant James Hurst, warned Tasmania that, while so far free from disturbances like the scenes in Melbourne, the non-fulfilment of promises made to returned soldiers in Tasmania could see similar action in the State. The fight for the Legislative Council franchise was but one issue that angered soldiers. Even as a Parliamentarian and Labor member, Hurst's proclamation would have pleased the State RS SILA when he warned that

We had gone abroad and fought there for what we considered to be our rights, and now we were back were prepared to fight here, and if necessary, with the same weapons. I am not an advocate of violence, far from it, and am merely trying to point out what may occur unless the promises made are kept, and the generous treatment promised given us.

The Mercury responded with alarm over this perceived threat. The Melbourne riots had demonstrated to some Tasmanian ex-soldiers (those with grievances or a political yearning) the potential of the threat of militancy to achieve their demands. The Repatriation Department's perceived policy failings were only one part of the problem;

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233 'Soldiers and the Riots', editorial, 23 July 1919, p. 4.
234 Ibid.
235 Despite this, one letter from 'A Soldier' still had a strong dislike of Labor members, and preferred to seize on remarks made by them concerning membership of the RSA as being predominantly of single men. He challenged Labor MPs to enlist so on their return the RSA could count more married men in their number. "I am sure it would suit us returned men better to see this carried out than all the talk about a vote for the Legislative Council. I can assure Mr Becker [ALP MHA for Bass] he need not worry about the soldier's vote, we will remember when the time comes." 'Soldiers and Legislators', letter to the editor, The Mercury, 15 December 1916, p. 2.
the lack of respect, the perceived reneging of promises and the failure to be accorded a square deal from Tasmanian politicians and community had inflamed a very political minority to write agitated letters to newspapers.

The conservative Hobart newspaper's shift in opinion toward returned soldiers echoed exactly the fears expressed by Reynolds during the League's discussion of the formation of a third political party - that once the spectre of war had evaporated, their proclamations for a better deal were nothing but an unwelcome nuisance. *The Mercury* was uncertain in its support for returned soldiers when they continued vehemently to demand and show distinct dissatisfaction with their treatment - treatment that *The Mercury* felt was their due. However, their experiences and outlook had changed from their war service, and *The Mercury* was not keen to acknowledge the fact that the war had effected enormous social and political change across the world. Their attitude remained that of the preservation of conservative and constitutional ideals without conceding that change had indeed made its way from Europe to Tasmania in the form of the soldiers who had survived the carnage. The Melbourne riots and the subsequent threats from local veterans prompted the newspaper to state that "the people have no longer that absolute certainty of trust that hitherto has marked their attitude to the men who fought for them."237

*The Mercury* firmly accused the RSSILA of failing to restrain these returned soldier elements that dared to threaten society - that instead of constituting the "solid and reliable buttress of the law", their silence had somehow made them complicit in the disturbances and threats.238 The paper thus demonstrated outright hypocrisy in demanding a public refutation from the League. Doing so would have contravened its non-political status (the paper had previously opined that it should remain neutral), yet it was requested to participate in political proclamations to quell conservative fears. The state RSSILA President angrily refuted these claims, reaffirming the League's loyalty to the Crown and the constitution, further adding that "It is our opinion that your journal is quite unnecessarily trying to disturb the tranquillity of the community, and at the same time most unjustly damage the prestige of the R.S.S.I.L.A."239 The League had inadvertently been drawn into the debate on the side of conservatism.

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237 "Soldiers and the Law", editorial, *The Mercury*, 26 June 1919, p. 6. Further, the editors questioned the quality of the men by arguing that "Among the soldiers there are a few who were good fighters, but have always been bad citizens. There are others who were bad fighters and worse citizens." The negative aspersions as to the soldier's personal condition in this context served only to further inflame events.

238 Ibid.

While it is true that the League has generally occupied a space to the political Right, as Fedorowich has argued, the newspaper, had used alarming and wayward statements, to force the League to adopt an openly conservative stance in order to defend itself against attacks of radical political influence. The celebrated and respected General Sir John Gellibrand weighed in to the debate, appraising the arguments covered thus far:

Judging by opinions expressed on recent events there appears to be a tendency to regard the returned soldier eventually as a man with grievances, mostly imaginary; as a claimant to rights and privileges that are altogether inconsistent with a proper management of public affairs; and, lastly, as an element that may develop into a danger to good order.

He further prophesised that:

If motives and views are ascribed to our men lacking foundation of facts, fairly observed, want of confidence will follow, and with it bitter resentment. The question is not one of injured feelings or hurt dignity, but the cardinal one of whether the deal was fair.

Gellibrand's contribution was not to the conservatives' liking, as it merely reinforced the very real grievances and demands for a greater participation in the political and social life of the nation by virtue of their military service and contribution to the safety and welfare of the country. In addition, Gellibrand was also involved in the Tasmanian branch of the RSSILA, so he was likely to support his comrades.

Gellibrand's views were consistent with this statement, Mark Lyons argues, as he was "fearful that 'bolshie' elements in [the RSSILA] might damage the reputation of the soldier." The Mercury's disappointment with his position was palpable. Expecting a repudiation of radical soldier demands, Gellibrand defended them. Gellibrand was accorded too much respect to be criticised, so again the League were negatively appraised. The RSSILA "consistently ignore all that has been done for the

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242 "Ibid." Gellibrand's claims accorded very closely with the claims of C.J. Dennis' character, Ginger Mick, in calling for a 'square deal.'

243 M. Lyons, Legacy, p. 4.
soldiers, harp on their grievances, and snap at all who attempt criticism\textsuperscript{244} – views that obviously did not demonstrate an understanding or appreciation of what the League was standing for and representing. The change in attitude towards the RSSILA was marked and astonishing both in its swiftness and ferocity. As long as returned soldiers were content to defend the status quo and remain within the clearly defined parameters as decided by conservative elements in society, their war service would be celebrated as upholding the great institutions of Empire and society. When their demands moved beyond those comfortable boundaries, they became a threat to the established order and were no longer a buttress against disorder – they were perceived as constituting a dangerous threat. Conveniently, as Chris Martin has argued, “just as soldiers were used as pawns in War, so they were in the politics of peace.”\textsuperscript{245}

**Conservatism, Returned Soldiers, and the Legislative Council Franchise**

The relationship between repatriation, politics and returned soldiers in Tasmania was also fought on party lines outside of elections. As previously noted, during the war, the Labor Party was not generally supported by returned soldiers – at least those with some association to the fledgling RSA. The lack of Labor Party support for conscription rankled with Tasmanian RSA members, with returned soldiers, the Government and the conservative press alike, accusing Labor of treachery, prolonging the war and being pro-Kaiser. However, to behave in a more conciliatory way towards returned soldiers and to disrupt the Conservatives, Labor members introduced a resolution in December 1916 to grant the Legislative Council franchise to returned soldiers.\textsuperscript{246} Qualification to vote for the Upper House in Tasmania at this time was restricted to ownership of property with an annual value of £10, occupancy of a property with an annual value of £30, or the possession of professional qualifications like doctors, lawyers, and officiating ministers.\textsuperscript{247} The desire to obtain the vote for a


\textsuperscript{245} Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 216.

\textsuperscript{246} Government members believed that Labor was using the resolution as a means to stimulate recruiting.

\textsuperscript{247} Mr George Becker, in moving this amendment to the constitution, declared that returned soldiers arguably had a better right to vote for the Legislative Council than officiating ministers, and he hoped at some time in the future, all male and female adults would have the franchise. See reports of the House of Assembly debates 13 December 1916, *The Mercury*, 14 December 1916, p. 7.
broader group of citizens was perhaps related to Lloyd Robson’s claim that “real power resided not in the people but in the Legislative Council.”

Property qualification, Labor argued, meant less than the sacrifices made by returned soldiers, as their war service “established better citizen rights than the possession of a few acres of land.” This was one issue where members of the Soldiers’ and Patriots’ League, and RSSILA, supported the Tasmanian Labor Party in opposition to the conservative Tasmanian government. Consequently the issue became largely party-political. When the motion was initially introduced in December 1916, Labor accused Nationalist Premier Sir Walter Lee and other government members of political hypocrisy in talking of democracy, yet denying returned soldiers the Legislative Council vote. Lee responded that the Government was doing enough for returned soldiers through the land settlement scheme. Sensing their opportunity, Labor pressed forward against a clearly unprepared government with returned soldiers being used as the political weapon.

The Mercury attempted to defend the conservative position by claiming that most of the support for Labor’s motion consisted of mere “talk”, and that through the Government’s land settlement scheme, a portion of returned soldiers would qualify for the franchise through property ownership in any case. But those who did not go on the land would have remained politically voiceless in deciding the Legislative Council’s membership.

When the House of Assembly sat again in the new year, Labor members including Joseph Lyons continued to declare their support for the measure, while opposition to it generally ran along party lines – Herbert Payne and Frederick Burbury, both conservatives, were particularly outspoken in denouncing the resolution’s intent. The Conservatives, who posited themselves as friendly toward

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252 Payne was a freemason, who owned The Burnie Emporium. See, ‘Payne, Herbert James Mockford.’ Bennett & Bennett, Biographical Register of the Tasmanian Parliament, 1851-1960, p. 131. Herbert Payne’s son, Leslie Payne, was a returned soldier and member of the House of Assembly for Denison. Leslie Payne was also a member of the RSL. See, ‘Payne, Leslie Herbert’, Ibid., p. 131.
253 Burbury’s opposition arguably came from his landed background. As a life member of the Tasmanian Farmer’s, Stockowners’ and Orchardists’ Association, a prominent landowner (he owned properties in the Midlands (‘Ashgrove’ and ‘Hilly Park’ for instance), and sheep farmer, he had the Legislative Council franchise and wanted to see it remain with propertyed persons who therefore had a greater stake in the running of the State. See, ‘Burbury, Frederick.’ Ibid., p. 24.
returned soldiers and their demands, found no room for movement on this issue. Payne argued that wealthy landowners had “given their sons just as freely as those who were not so well off,” adding that he believed the soldiers “would not thank them for the vote."^{254} Burbury attacked Labor’s association of the extension of the franchise to an increase in recruiting, declaring it an “insult to the patriotism of the men.”^{255} James Belton stressed the simple logic of not understanding why an officer who had never been to the Front could have the vote for the Legislative Council, but a wounded soldier could not.^{256} When put to the vote in the House, the motion was carried fifteen to ten.

*The Mercury*'s editorial cautiously approached the topic, reticent to support changes to the constitution that would open the franchise to soldiers and would then see its probable extension to all. The editorial reported Labor claims that men were refusing to enlist when their names were not on the Legislative Council elector rolls, and that Labor felt men were justified in doing so.^{257} Labor had shrewdly sensed the newly awakened political demands of returned soldier groups, and used an issue of political inequality to lever itself a position opposite the Government that was attractive to returned soldiers (as voters). *The Mercury* later firmed in its position on the Legislative Council franchise to declare its hostility towards extending it to returned soldiers outside of the current arrangement in line with the conservative politics of the incumbent Party.

The assertive Soldiers’ and Patriots’ League under the guidance of the outspoken McRae and Henshaw also weighed into the Legislative Council franchise debate in a letter to *The Mercury* in June 1917. Responding to *The Mercury*’s general hostility to the new political league, the authors repudiated the newspaper’s attack on their support of the extension of the franchise to returned soldiers with good discharges. While returned soldiers had perhaps just done their duty as *The Mercury* asserted, McRae and Henshaw felt the franchise was deserved “when so many have failed in that respect, [and] that we, who have with our bodies maintained the liberty of our country, and have therefore preserved our very Parliamentary system itself, are entitled to full

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^{255} Ibid.


^{257} *The Mercury*, 18 January 1917, p. 4.
citizenship rights." Fighting for the preservation of the society in which they lived when others had not arguably entitled returned soldiers the extension of the franchise at the very least, and under the auspices of the RSSILA, later entitled them to make similar demands on a wide variety of issues. Soldiers' sacrifices in the name of the Empire may have prejudiced their ability later to qualify for the franchise on their return due to incapacity or loss of earning power, McRae and Henshaw reasoned, "which means that the true citizen will be penalised and the slacker rewarded." Their service to the Empire led them to argue that they had earned the vote, and "have more right to it than some who now possess it." At the end of October 1917 the Government acceded to pressure and intimated to move to extend the franchise for the Legislative Council to returned soldiers. Premier Lee agreed to introduce legislation during that session of Parliament. Yet, by October 1918, the amendment to the Constitution granting the franchise to returned soldiers had still not been passed, finding fierce resistance to it in the Upper House.

Premier Lee's reversal on the issue was dictated not by any moral readjustment or true sense of democratic principle, but by the pressure brought to bear by the National Federation's adoption of it in their political platform, fearing it would prove a disadvantage in the General Elections. Lee's hands were thus tied, yet still The Mercury persistently opposed the amendment, despite the fact that it now had the support of both political parties. In addition, the Tasmanian RSSILA had taken on a more assertive role and were no longer content to be used as political pawns by the Labor Party or the Nationalists. It seems that the only major element not in support of the measure was the conservative press, and they, as well as the Legislative Council in rejecting the Government's Bill, kept the issue alive.

In the face of bipartisan parliamentary support and seeing their last political ally bend to public opinion and Federal Parliamentary dictates, The Mercury hardened its resolve to maintain the status quo on the Legislative Council franchise. "This proposal to give a vote for the Legislative Council to every returned soldier emanated from the

258 'Returned Soldiers and Patriots' Political League', letter to the editor from F. Henshaw and D. McRae, The Mercury, 5 June 1917, p. 3.
259 Ibid.
260 Ibid.
262 The National Federation Executive supported the extension of the franchise, and made it part of their policy. Regardless of Lee's personal views, he was obliged to adopt this policy to preserve Nationalist uniformity.
Labor Party,” their 4 October editorial asserted, “and therefore should be looked upon with suspicion.” 263 The Legislative Council’s rejection of the Government’s Constitutional Amendment Bill would also “be used by the Labor Party for political purposes,” without doubt “to hinder recruiting.” 264 Maintaining a fundamental principle that people who have a permanent interest in the State should have special representation, the newspaper questioned whether it was “worthwhile upsetting the whole Constitution for the sake of a very small number of the men who have been in military service, and who probably are not those best fitted to exercise the franchise wisely.” 265 This last comment angered returned soldiers, and perhaps contributed to their even more forceful claims for the franchise. The Mercury, a traditional and sympathetic ally to returned soldiers, had rejected their claims for this special representation because the franchise was being offered by the Labor Party “as a cheap vote” for the Legislative Council, and because it subverted the fundamental, conservative and propertied principles underpinning the Upper House franchise. 266 The paper would not yield in its defence of the maintenance of the existing structure, as granting the franchise to returned soldiers would inevitably and unthinkably see its extension to all classes.

By early 1919, the issue had still not been resolved, and the debate entered a new and nastier phase. With the war’s conclusion, The Mercury drew a curtain of even greater conservatism that further contracted liberal democratic values, defending the restricted franchise of the Upper House:

Our soldiers are good citizens and intelligent enough in every instance to know that the State must be run on sound lines if it is not to come to grief; and if they will but think the matter out for themselves and refuse to be misled by the claptrap of ignorant babblers and tricksters, they cannot but see that it is a good thing, and in the interests of a sound Democracy, to have a Second Chamber elected on a more restricted franchise than the First is, and to have it represent the taxpayers in particular. 267

The tenacity with which they defended their position was surprising considering that the political tide had long moved in favour of returned soldiers’ franchise, although the

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263 'Soldiers and the Franchise', editorial, The Mercury, 4 October 1918, p. 4.
264 Ibid.
265 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
267 Ibid.
Legislative Council’s continued rejection of the Bill obviously gave them hope. The continued belief that the returned soldiers were somehow being ‘used’ by the Labor Party also underpinned The Mercury’s suspicions of the issue, but their direct statement to the returned soldiers declaring the absurdity of an unrestricted franchise was obviously not supported by the RSSILA’s George Foster. The Mercury muddied the waters further by latchi ng on to comments made in the Labour press that there existed some form of relationship between the RSSILA and labour. Suggestions of Bolshevik revolution were also aired.

MLC Ellis Dean was reported to have defended the Legislative Council by claiming it was all that stood between the property owners, Bolshevism and IWWism268 – a none too subtle criticism of what would happen should all classes possess the franchise. He reportedly desired the defeat of the amendment to preserve the exclusivity of the Council. Duncan McRae felt that a largely unrepresentative body like the Legislative Council flew in the face of returned soldiers who had risked their lives to preserve Australia’s institutions and who did not possess the vote:

The existence of a class with power to veto the wishes of the majority is not democracy; it violates the essential principle of democracy; it constitutes an oligarchy. If a class insists upon its privileges, and maintains that attitude until the patience of the majority reaches the breaking point, all the constituents of revolution are provided.269

McRae was not advocating revolution per se, but suggested that if the Council persevered with exclusivity and class arguments, it might provide fertile ground to sow revolutionary ideas.270 Speaking as the State Secretary of the RSA, Foster refuted any links with Bolshevism or labour because they desired the Legislative Council franchise. He reaffirmed the soldiers’ claims as arising from their war service: “While this league is non-political in a party sense, we look upon the suffrage as a national matter, and express a definite opinion that returned soldiers are entitled to the vote for the

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268 This was reported by The Mercury as appearing in the Labour press. IWW stood for International Workers of the World.
269 'Legislative Council Franchise', letter to the editor from Duncan McRae, The Mercury, 19 March 1919, p. 7.
270 'The inequitable distribution of wealth and capital versus labour prompted a revolutionary outburst from one interstate soldier: “I am for revolution, and when could we have a better opportunity than the present, when all the soldiers are returning and they are trained men. The soldiers are waking up to the fact that they have been exploited. This war is only a war for Capital and Territory.” As quoted in, Oliver, War and Peace in Western Australia, p. 156. I have found no evidence of similar revolutionary moves in Tasmania.
Legislative Council, and that they desire to have the same accorded to them. What particularly angered the RSA was that a member of the Legislative Council should link the extension of the franchise to returned soldiers and the threat of Bolshevism arising from it. Ironically, returned soldiers would be the ones most likely to protect society from Bolshevism. In regard to Dean’s reported claims that it was the Council that stood between society and Bolshevism, Foster made it clear that, if rioting was to arise from bolshevist revolution, it would be the returned soldiers and not the Council that would stand in its way.

The Mercury could not understand that returned soldiers (as represented by the RSSILA), would not support Dean’s assertions. Lieutenant Hurst’s relationship with, and previous candidacy for, the Labor Party was utilised by the newspaper to further inflame the links between Labor, Bolshevism and returned soldiers. The persistent suspicion that returned soldiers were merely the political pawns of Labor, despite the categorical rejection of such by the RSSILA, informed their opposition:

Why the Returned Soldiers’ League should lend itself as a body to a campaign of the Official Labor Party, the Party which left no stone unturned in its efforts to give the Germans the War, to turn down all appeals for reinforcements, and thus to betray the soldiers themselves at the time when they had to fight with depleted battalions to keep the Hun beasts’ dirty hands off their sisters and wives and sweethearts, it would puzzle Lieutenant Hurst to explain. This gentleman, having been defeated in his ambition to represent the electors in Parliament, because they did not consider him suitable for the work or worth the salary, is now asking the soldiers to organise a demonstration to the Legislative Council next session to “force their hands or their walls if necessary,” and says he, “I for one will come down at any time to help with either job,” adding, “We fought tyranny and autocracy abroad, and if necessary we can fight it here.” The gentleman’s pugnacity is obvious; but if it comes to the fighting he asks for we do not think he will find many Returned Soldiers at his back in his efforts to impose class tyranny and Bolshevik “autocracy” on Australia.

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271 ‘Soldiers and the Franchise’, Copy of letter to Ellis Dean forwarded to the editor from George Foster, The Mercury, 27 February 1919, p. 7.
272 Bobbie Oliver, in a chapter on Western Australian repatriation, also noted the differing responsibilities facing the returned soldier. “Returning soldiers found themselves cast in the roles of both upholders and destroyers of law and order,” Oliver argued, “depending on whether they embraced or rejected Bolshevism.” See, Oliver, War and Peace in Western Australia, p. 134.
273 ‘Soldiers and the Franchise’, Copy of letter to Ellis Dean forwarded to the editor from George Foster, The Mercury, 27 February 1919, p. 7.
This ultra-conservative and sensational conspiratorial polemic from *The Mercury* made more sense to them in a climate of Bolshevist fear than the more simple explanation that on one issue, the Labor Party and Returned Soldiers' organisation found common ground. They interpreted Hurst's pronouncements on demonstrating against the Legislative Council's refusal to pass the amending legislation as a call to arms for Labor rather than a call to returned soldiers to demand a right of citizenship earned through war service. For *The Mercury*, however, any alliance, actual or perceived between labour and returned soldiers had to be discredited and where possible destroyed: "We hope the soldiers will not fail to note the cunning of the common enemy... and how slimly they have preyed on men's natural pride to serve their plan of roping in the Soldiers' League as the tail of the Official Labor dog."\(^{275}\)

Duncan McRae savagely rebuked the editors, rejecting any association with Labor: "I have not the least doubt that practically every soldier will support the attitude of the committee of our [Returned Soldiers'] league in this matter, and will do so as soldiers, not as tools of the Official Labor party, which is what you endeavour to suggest we are."\(^{276}\) The broadsheet had missed the fundamental point that the RSSILA was an inherently conservative organisation,\(^{277}\) which had little genuine possibility of affiliating with such a radical ultra-left movement as the Bolshevists or IWW through Labor, particularly when many returned soldiers felt betrayed by Russian conduct in the war. Hurst's involvement was more likely coincidence, but was deemed sinister and representative of a far larger danger. In response to this charge, McRae noted that

The League is not likely to lend itself to Lieutenant Hurst, or to any politician, but if Lieutenant Hurst's views happen to coincide with the views of the League there cannot be any reason why this assistance should not be utilised in the achievement of the common object.\(^{278}\)

McRae was vexed at the continuing hostility in allowing returned soldiers the Legislative Council vote, particularly in the face of an agreement from both political

\(^{275}\) Ibid.


\(^{277}\) Fedorowich has argued that the League were "eagerly" "coopted" by conservative forces in Australian politics to preserve the status quo. See, Kent Fedorowich, 'Ex-Servicemen and the Politics of Soldier Settlement in Canada and Australia, 1915-1925', p. 79. See also his, *Unfit For Heroes*, p. 157; and, Mrdak, "Soldier - Citizen - Returned Servicemen and the R.S.L., 1916-1929", pp. 58-59. This point has also been made in Chapter 4 - Employment.

parties to support its measure: “Where are the opponents existing as an organised body?”279 he demanded. Instead of leading to the erosion of society and its social principles by allowing returned soldiers to vote in Legislative Council elections, their increased participation in the political process would have given them an added incentive to protect the very institutions *The Mercury* and Dean reportedly feared would suffer.

The belief that returned soldiers had threatened the existing social and political order by their assertive demands for the franchise, and the additional (but essentially unrelated) political support from the Labor Party, frightened the Hobart newspaper, despite the introduction of the Bill from the Nationalists. *The Mercury*, as representative of the conservative view, had attempted to defend the existing qualifications for the Legislative Council franchise, fearing any erosion would lead to further liberalisations. They effectively perverted the issue of returned soldiers’ franchise into one of national security in the face of radical elements, citing the potential breakdown of established order and convention, and demanded returned soldiers’ allegiance by the poignant suggestion of an unsavoury proximity to Labor. The RSSILA for their part asserted their own claims for the franchise independent of any suggestion that they were in league with subversive elements or Labor (excepting Hurst), while the two main political parties – Nationalists and Labor – both acknowledged the importance of courting returned soldiers to their election prospects. The Council franchise was one issue that neither could afford to be uninvolved.

Through it all, the Legislative Council itself rejected amendments to its constitution allowing the franchise to people who did not traditionally qualify. Their persistent obstruction failed, as in October 1920, the amendment to the Constitution Act allowing the extension of the franchise to soldiers, sailors and nurses who had been on active service, was passed.280 Two years of resistance had yielded to the insistent political demands by the ex-soldier community.281 Tasmanian returned soldiers, in this instance, had directly asserted their political claims as returned soldiers, using their status and war service as a bargaining chip to access special privileges. Their own acknowledgment of difference from the remainder of the community, combined with a

279 Ibid.
281 *The Tassie Digger* reminded veterans to enrol on the Legislative Council register to ensure their hard-won vote was used. See, *The Tassie Digger*, January 1921, pp. 18, 23.
political awakening, resulted in direct political pressure. Returned soldiers had found a voice and were more than capable of exercising it, using their war service as the qualification to force their demands as true and patriotic citizens. The blend of returned soldier political assertiveness, party-political chasing of the returned soldier vote, and conservative media argument combined to produce an explosive mix which suggests something of the importance of returned soldiers to the politics not only of election victories, the social/political divide through their claims for greater citizenship status, but also of the inherent conservatism of Tasmanian society in the immediate post-war period. That the issue took so long to be put in order was testament to the deep-seated conservatism that underpinned Tasmanian Government. Yet, returned soldiers had won their battle, and made their point politically to a greater contribution in the political future of the State.

**Conclusion**

From the evidence presented, what can we hope to learn about Tasmanian returned soldier politics, and the politics of repatriation in the State? The emergence of a returned soldier political consciousness was directed initially at the formation of an exclusive body whose membership consisted only of the veteran community - the RSA. Of foremost importance was the affiliation with similar associations interstate to form a national body to represent returned soldier interests and provide an atmosphere for veterans to retreat and be among their own. The RSSILA continued to provide a non-party non-sectional political involvement in pressure group politics, although that tag was challenged at various times by supporters and opponents alike.

The debate as whether to assume a political stance or remain non-political was forced by a growing awareness that the simple existence of the League as an entity in its own right would not suffice to represent the emergence of an even more virulent political bent – that within the context of patriotic pronouncements of ‘there is nothing that is too good for our soldiers’,

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282 Huon Liberal candidates in the 1917 elections were reported to have made these pronouncements in reference to the government’s proposal to settle returned men on Crown Lands. See, Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 55. Willard Waller records that United States’ veterans also complained of these ‘empty’ pronouncements in 1919. See his, The Veteran Comes Back, p. 186.
something even greater was contemplated. Tasmanian resistance was evident to returned soldiers’ involvement in direct political action, and conservative groups particularly that had previously supported returned soldiers shied away from their associations, criticising any emergence of an exclusive soldiers’ representative body. The acknowledgement of this sense of difference and exclusivity as a third branch of political ideology did not sit comfortably with those who saw the traditional dichotomy as sufficient. The soldiers, however, did not feel represented, and strove for a better deal, informing the reasons as to why soldier political associations emerged.

Political assertiveness and participation was driven by the inadequacy of repatriation policy as well as an awareness of a wider sense of themselves and their worth, which culminated in their candidature and success at the electoral polls. However, returned soldier political involvement was also driven by more traditional notions of class and social mores – their status as returned soldiers was incidental to the greater struggle of labour versus capital, or progressive against conservative. This complex nexus of overt and indirect political participation reflects the complex nature of returned soldier politics.

Returned soldiers maintained a public presence throughout the 1920s through their patronage of Anzac and Remembrance days. The RSSILA took a central role in Anzac Day commemorations, which became of even more importance as returned soldier issues took a less publicly prominent place. The sacred nature of Anzac and the jealously guarded myth that surrounded it ensured that their relevance and presence was never forgotten. By doing so, they ensured that their demands were never far from the public spotlight, and the intimate relationship with Governments since then have further strengthened their position. The relationship was of course reciprocal, as politicians too had much to gain from tapping into this rich strain of nationalist ideology.283 As such, the relationship was mutually reinforcing. Related to this was the intensely personal, yet no less political, negotiation of ‘return’. The ‘politics’ of ‘return’, the particularly personal negotiation of the soldier with his environment, was the phase where he had to effect his own repatriation. This was personal and private, and exclusive of any Repatriation policy enacted by government, yet was just as important as Millen’s official scheme. The failure to negotiate this chasm and accommodate the intricacies,

283 See also the Land Settlement chapters. They deal with the relationship between electoral advantage and the formation of a soldier land settlement scheme. Repatriation and politics intersect at a myriad of points.
pressures and expectations of the community (with those of himself), bred much of the returned soldier alienation and discontent that exhibited itself in higher divorce rates, domestic violence, prolonged unemployment, and higher suicide rates as discussed in the Prologue. Membership of associations like the RSSILA in times of personal crisis or societal pressure can reveal much concerning attitudes toward the importance of making this personal negotiation. As Foster and others proclaimed, only returned soldiers 'really understood', and maintaining an association with other ex-servicemen, as well as having their own political representatives, was an important part in effecting their own repatriation.
Chapter Two

Caring for Tasmania’s Soldiers – Repatriation Health Care

It must be ensured that Repatriation patients will never lack attention, particularly the cases showing change in conditions for the worse...

Health care for returned soldiers was arguably the most enduring aspect of the repatriation system. As Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees have noted, “Medical Repatriation was one of the earliest Australian ventures into mass medicine and by far the biggest until the first national health schemes emerged after World War II.”

It acted as a nexus within the entire repatriation system that linked employment (particularly vocational), pensions, hospital and medical care together. Approval for pensions was dependent on medical examinations that defined the nature and extent of the soldier’s incapacity, and linked that incapacity to war service. A previous injury or illness that was aggravated by war service was also accommodated under the system, but caused some difficulties when the process came into operation. Comprehensive hospital and medical care was provided to those veterans whose injuries were accepted as being due to war service, with specialist health care provided through the Repatriation Hospital in Hobart, and the Repatriation Ward in the Launceston Hospital, as well as urban and rural doctors and specialists contracted by the Department. Health policy also encompassed the vocational training of disabled veterans, enabling them to engage in meaningful occupations that the nature of their disability may have otherwise prevented or restricted.


3 Only illnesses and wounds established as due to or aggravated by a soldier’s war service were treatable and compensatable under the Repatriation scheme – or, as Kate Blackmore argues, “the state, as employer, was liable to pay compensation to its employees for disabilities arising in the course of employment on active service.” K. Blackmore, ‘Aspects of the Australian Repatriation Process: War, Health and Responsibility for Illness’, in J. Smart & T. Wood (eds.), An Anzac Muster: War and Society in Australia and New Zealand 1914-18 and 1939-45, Melbourne, 1992, p. 104.
Health policy was directed by Commonwealth legislation, but unlike the land settlement schemes, the States did not establish their own legislation. The States, through their own branches of Repatriation Departments run under the Federal model and headed by deputy Comptrollers, administered health policy on behalf of the Commonwealth. Theoretically there should have been no discrepancies across the nation in terms of the application of the policy, but, minor regional variations arguably evolved. The Tasmanian soldiers' hospital and medical repatriation files hold interesting correspondence between the State Deputy Comptroller Joseph Humphris and James Chisholm, the officer then in charge of the Medical and General Section in Tasmania, that discussed how repatriation policy should be applied – clearly suggesting vagueness in some aspects in the practical application of medical repatriation processes.

By 30 June 1929, official Repatriation Commission figures showed that 2,876 ex-servicemen were drawing a pension in Tasmania. This represented approximately 29 per cent of returned soldiers that arrived back in the State at the end of the war. Nationally, 73,436 men were in receipt of war pensions at the same period, and, including dependants, some 272,631 war pensions were drawn from the Repatriation Department indicating something of the magnitude of what Stephen Garton calls a "second welfare state." Tasmanian veterans, alongside their interstate comrades, suffered the effects of respiratory illnesses, gun shot wounds, war neuroses, amputation, heart trouble, rheumatism, debility and the effects of gas poisoning. Their physical and psychological scars were souvenirs of their war service, and the nation had to compensate these veterans for the war-work they did on behalf of the empire. Returning to their communities, families, friends and loved ones with these afflictions demanded emotional readjustments from all involved. Their injuries – the legacy of their active service – marked their bodies and minds to varying degrees, and each veteran negotiated this extra hurdle in the general process of returning, with various success. Stephen Garton argues that the process of merging with the general population was even more difficult for those returning with "psychological and physical injuries sufficient to warrant a pension or some other form of direct government assistance, 

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such as hospitalisation.”6 Some Tasmanians returned to work and as normal a life as possible, while others could not hold down a steady job or relationship, and Repatriation medical files catalogue their deteriorating journey through specialist visits, prescriptions and doctor’s reports.

As Joanna Bourke has argued in her study of the male body in the Great War, men’s bodies were “intended to be mutilated.”7 The maelstrom of Gallipoli, Ypres, the Somme, Bullecourt – each conjuring an iconic, mythical and fearful imagery – were the sites of these physical and psychological infractions on Australian men’s bodies. The horrifying realities of modern mechanised war wrought unprecedented carnage on the bodies of its participants. The injuries from bullets, explosives, shells and bombs redefined the scale of war suffering. The scale of the damage, and the consequent improvements in treatment and medicine meant that a significant proportion of the injured survived.8 The acceleration of modern medicine’s responses to these contingencies necessitated prolonged treatment and financial provision for their welfare – both obligations owed by the Commonwealth to its heroes.9

Occupying this chapter are aspects of the medical repatriation process in Tasmania through to the period to 1929. Repatriation policies concerning health provisions were established to repair as far as practicable, the physical (and emotional) damage caused by war service. The process of obtaining medical, hospital, and pension assistance was at times confronting, confrontational, and intensely personal. That soldiers’ bodies became sites of contestation in the process of applying those health

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8 In 1926, R. Downes considered the impact war had had on medical science, and how it accelerated medical learning and treatments through “the unprecedented opportunity of mass investigation” in “conditions controlled and ideal for observation – in other words, the greatest human vivisection experiments in history.” Downes also argued that surgery as a branch of medicine benefited the most from the horrible experience of war. See, R. Downes, ‘What Medicine owes to War and War owes to Medicine’, Medical Journal of Australia, 18 January 1936, pp. 76, 75.
9 Despite this obvious obligation, the authorities responsible for providing medical care were strongly criticised by the Medical Journal of Australia, who lamented the slowness in establishing institutions that could care for mentally-scarred war veteran, despite four years of war: “It is now becoming a common experience to see returned men whose mental condition demanded expert control at a stage when the horrors of war had recently unfitted them for the serious business of civil life. In some cases these men find it difficult and almost impossible to settle down to the dull monotony of an ordinary occupation.” The obligation to begin arrangements sooner had not been undertaken. “In season and out of season during the greater part of the three and a half years,” the Journal proclaimed, “we have urged the institution of a properly equipped orthopaedic service and of a properly adjusted neurological system,” in order to “place our soldiers as soon as possible after the reception of their wounds or after other deteriorating influences had produced their benevolent results, in the most favourable position for complete physical and mental restoration.” The fact that this had not been accomplished by 1918 was remarkable. See, ‘Post War Cripples’, Medical Journal of Australia, 16 March 1918, p. 217.
policies in the post-war years is both an interesting, yet tragic postscript to their active service. Injured veterans were highly visible in the public landscape. In the Politics chapter, I outlined how men's wartime experiences changed their perceptions of their own roles in a post-war society. Their service brought, and demanded, an altered idea of not only their place, but also their contribution to the community they had left behind and fought for. In this chapter, it is useful to consider the injured and disabled returned soldier and his experiences as being defined in response to traditional and pre-war notions of disablement. While Bourke has argued that war-mutilated ex-servicemen changed perceptions toward disablement, it is still interesting to consider the paradox between the virile masculine image of Anzac and the amputated, neurasthenic, debilitated veteran suffering from his war service, reliant on assistance from Repatriation authorities. The interrelation of pension to this nexus adds a further dimension to the construct of traditional notions of masculinity and manliness. In some ways, claiming a pension as a right for war service removed suspicions of malingering, as the receipt of a pension validated and authenticated the severity of their experience. It demonstrated a reason for inactivity and/or incapacity, but did not necessarily represent an attainment of the masculine notion of providing for one's family – the State as provider of the pension, was effectively the breadwinner. Incapacitated men struggled with their disabilities and with the notion that they relied on the State for their income.

Repatriation medical and hospital files for returned servicemen from the Great War are still highly sensitive, even some eighty-five years after the end of the conflict. A large proportion of ex-servicemen lived until the late 1960s, and some beyond this date. The files contain by their nature, material that may be distressing to family members, or reveal aspects of service life that was previously unknown, and as such, are not open to the general public. No names of the returned soldiers in these files will be included here. Nevertheless, the stories that they contain, and the sense of the returned soldiers' treatment under the health, medical and hospital repatriation apparatus in Tasmania is not compromised in any way by the absence of the soldier's identity. It is arguable that, for the purposes of this study, the lack of names enhances

10 Bourke, Dismembering the Male, pp. 16, 20, 37.
11 Access was gratefully granted by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, as owners of these files, on the condition that material of a personal nature not relevant to this study be omitted, and that due to the files' sensitivity, any information that may lead to the specific identification of the servicemen was also to be omitted. Both of these requests have been adhered to in the files' utilisation in this study.
both the individual, and collective experience, of returned soldiers' treatment and care in Tasmania:

The Application Process

Upon applying for repatriation benefits – whether sustenance allowances, pension claims, or medical treatment – the Board sent out to the soldier the necessary claim forms, and, if they resided outside a major centre, contacted doctors to undertake a cursory medical examination on the Department’s behalf to assess any incapacity in line with the soldier’s claim. Not all doctors assisted the Department in dealing with repatriation cases.12 Upon receipt of the report, arrangements would then be made for the soldier to be examined by a Medical Officer from the Department. Regional areas in the southern half of Tasmania would necessitate the Department making travel arrangements to bring the soldier to Hobart, (ie. from Oatlands, the West Coast, Channel etc.), then the meticulous medical examination itself would begin, including X-rays and specialist treatment where necessary. The next step of the process was the collation of reports to compile and assess the nature of any incapacity, the extent of the incapacity, and whether it was due to War Service. This last point was critical, as it was on War Service that treatment and any pension relied upon. The medical report would then be sent to the Board for approval or rejection. The Deputy Comptroller, J.F. Humphris, would then finally approve the claim.

Following a successful application, an incapacity rate was determined as due to War Service, in terms of impairment to earning capacity, and a pension rate was determined from that. Wives and dependants were then added to that rate. Medical examinations were held every six months or so as determined by the latest medical report, although by 1923 it was the policy of Repatriation authorities to lengthen the interval between examinations.13 The likelihood of improvement was assessed, both to re-evaluate pension entitlements and to keep updated with the soldier’s condition, and

12 The Department occasionally dealt with doctors who would not assist in requests to either examine the soldier on their behalf, or send copies of their examinations to the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Harry Nairn Butler. One such practitioner was Dr Allester from the Huonville/Franklin region, south of Hobart. The Department’s officers, including Deputy Comptroller Humphris, noted unsatisfactorily that Allester did not reply to requests for clinical notes on soldiers, and seldom did normally. See National Archives of Australia (Hereafter NAA): PI 07/4, C 8187.

any additional medical treatment that the soldier required was undertaken, particularly if the soldier’s health had deteriorated. Medical assistance between review examinations could be obtained from local doctors affiliated with the Repatriation Department. Alternatively, soldiers in regional areas often had their local GP undertake the examination, and submit their report to the Department for the Departmental Medical Officer’s approval (Dr Harry Nairn Butler¹⁴ occupied this position for the majority of this study’s period).

When attending for medical examinations and treatment in Hobart at the Department’s expense or insistence, soldiers were treated at either the Repatriation General Hospital, or one of several Department-affiliated doctors (one of a panel of ‘Repat’-affiliated doctors), predominantly in the city. Treatment in Launceston saw soldiers reporting to the Anzac Hostel in Paterson St, with nursing in the Repatriation Ward at the Launceston Hospital. A panel of Doctors in Launceston were also affiliated with the Department, including Dr J.A. Newell in Cameron Street. It was not unusual for soldiers to continue receiving out-patient treatment from either the hospitals or the contracted specialists. In outlying areas and districts of Tasmania, arrangements were made with the local medical officer or doctor to provide treatment as an agent of the Department, at the Department’s expense.¹⁵ Treatment was only covered under the Repatriation scheme when obtained from the Repatriation Hospital in Hobart, or a medical practitioner as arranged by the Department. Expenses for any personal or private treatment obtained by the ex-soldier without the Department’s prior knowledge or arrangement, would not be covered. More extensive medical treatment or hospital treatment would facilitate the removal of the soldier to the nearest hospital – if in

¹⁴ Dr Harry Nairn Butler came from a line of doctors. The eldest of six children, Butler served at Gallipoli, and was severely wounded in the stomach at the advanced dressing station at Lone Pine. He then served as lieutenant-colonel in command of the Third Field Ambulance in France, in action at the Somme action and the advance to the Hindenburg line. He was returned to Australia in 1917 due to health, and took up a position with the Repatriation Department. Butler’s obituary notes that the association with the Repatriation Department remained until 1952 – “first in the administration of its hospital, at that time a group of one-story wooden buildings that had been hastily erected on the best portion of the old Barrack Reserve, and later as senior medical officer... in control of the medical administration of the department throughout the state.” Crowther’s obituary added that Butler’s retirement after 35 years’ service with the Repatriation Department brought a “universal sense among ex-servicemen that their best friend had gone.” Butler’s importance to the narrative to Tasmanian Repatriation Medical services cannot be understated. See, W.E.L.H. Crowther, ‘Harry Nairn Butler’, Obituary, Medical Journal of Australia, 4 June 1955, pp. 858-859.

¹⁵ This information, including the minutiae of specialist doctors and the process was gleaned from the Tasmanian Repatriation medical and hospital files. When ex-servicemen had received medical attention from a practitioner without the knowledge or prior arrangement of the Department and attempted to claim their costs back, the Department did not pay for the consultation. Letters sent to ex-soldiers also had the process of obtaining treatment described in them.
Southern Tasmania, to the Hobart Repatriation Hospital; if in Northern Tasmania, to the Repatriation Ward at Launceston Hospital. Cases where further specialist treatment was required were usually sent to Melbourne.\textsuperscript{16} If a soldier spent any time in hospital, a special living allowance was paid for the duration of that stay. In the case of pension payments, money would usually be paid to the nearest post-office, or other alternative arrangements convenient to the soldier.

The medical records of the soldier were instrumental in deciding the application for pension or medical treatment post-service.\textsuperscript{17} Fortunately, Australian WWI medical records kept by the military on each soldier were quite comprehensive and outlined the major events in a soldier's service. Enlistment dates, places and events were all documented, along with descriptions of all health maladies and medical treatment. Repatriation administrators used this information in deciding the merits of a pension application when they compared the results of the mandatory enlistment examination after a claim had been made. The process of discharge for a soldier triggered a series of events that encompassed medical examinations in order to ascertain any health issues that accrued while on active service. In Tasmania, soldiers received their final discharge from 6th Military District in Anglesea Barracks in Davey Street in Hobart and were released into the community.\textsuperscript{18} Ex-soldiers who were medically discharged or felt that they had a claim to make under the auspices of the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act, applied for assistance – whether for medical and/or pension purposes – by filling out Form 'Z'; reserved for applications from incapacitated members of the Forces and their wives and children.\textsuperscript{19} The application forms requested details of service history and the nature of their incapacity, including information on dependents (wife, children) and the particulars of their details (dates of birth etc.).

\textsuperscript{16} See for instance, one soldier who went to Melbourne for treatment while his family stayed in Tasmania. See, NAA Pl0 7/1 C 197.
\textsuperscript{17} On this issue, Lloyd and Rees note that, "Of vital consequence to the repatriation prospects of the Australian soldier were the medical records accumulated during the period of service... A soldier's medical documentation, or its absence, was decisive in the process of determining eligibility for war pensions and repatriation benefits." See Lloyd and Rees, The Last Shilling, pp. 134-5.
\textsuperscript{18} Each state was listed as a separate Military District (MD). Queensland was listed as the 1st MD, New South Wales the 2nd MD, Victoria the 3rd MD, South Australia the 4th MD, Western Australia the 5th MD, Tasmania the 6th MD, and Northern Territory the 7th MD. For further information about the classification of Military Districts and their history, see P. Dennis, J. Grey, E. Morris, R. Prior (eds.), The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 395-6.
\textsuperscript{19} There were three forms of application for pensions:
Form 'Z' for incapacitated members of the Forces and their wives and children;
Form 'Y' for dependants (including wives or widows) over the age of 16 years;
Form 'X' for dependants under the age of 16 years.
The application form was submitted to the Tasmanian Repatriation authorities, and was then investigated by officers of the Department, who compiled the medical records of the applicant and arranged a medical examination of the soldier. The examination was usually carried out by the Departmental medical officer, Dr Harry Nairn Butler. The applicant stated his service history and the cause of his debility, which would be compared to his medical records. Claims of breathing difficulties incurred by gassing were sometimes difficult to prove, particularly when the ex-soldier did not seek medical treatment for it while on active service.\footnote{Adding further complexity was the suspicion that gassing caused tuberculosis. Michael Roe reports that Repatriation Department Tuberculosis doctor William Crowther noted that many soldiers "gave a definite history of experience to gas ... it left its victims predisposed to every TB infection, and unfavourably influenced the progress of such infection." M. Roe, Life Over Death: Tasmanians and Tuberculosis, Hobart, 1999, p. 91.} As the Repatriation authorities used the soldier’s own records when checking and cross-checking his claims, anything that the soldier claimed that did not appear on his service record was very difficult to prove and led to conflicts of opinion in examinations. Despite the fact that the Departments were likely to be staffed by returned soldiers themselves, or employ people sympathetic to the returned soldier, the system to a prospective applicant would have looked very hostile. The onus of proof was effectively upon the soldier, despite the fact that departmental officers were there to assist with the soldier’s claim.

Any feelings that the administration was hostile would have been compounded further during the medical examination required of pension claimants. Any physical imperfection found was linked to either a pre-service injury or deformity (as would have been noted on their enlistment records following their medical), or as due to, or aggravated by, war service.\footnote{This was often abbreviated in Departmental correspondence to DWS.} In a sense, the soldier’s body became a site of contestation, where an applicant’s claims for war injuries could be disputed by the medical examiner. The files reveal that these conflicts over soldiers’ bodies were an alienating process for soldiers, as they often felt divorced from the actual decisions that were made over their right for assistance and pensions – it was a decision based on the impact of war service on the body: between the examiner and the body itself.

Repatriation files show on numerous occasions attempts by soldiers to engage with this process of examination and decision-making by regaling the medical examiner (at the time of examination and later in correspondence) with stories of their suffering and symptoms – symptoms which sometimes had little physical evidence to support them.
This symbolism is arguably of a disenfranchisement that can be interpreted in several ways. It can be, as discussed above, an attempt to engage in the process of the classification of the injury – to overcome feelings of disempowerment; yet it can also be an attempt to enter the debate over the classification of their injury in order to press their claim for further or greater assistance – to combat the repatriation apparatus. By communicating experiences of their injuries to the examining officer (genuine or otherwise), soldiers not only accessed the process of decision-making and empowered themselves, but also, in some small way, sought to influence the result of the decision for their benefit. This is not a criticism of the conduct of the returned men. The politicisation and bureaucratisation of the examination process is something that permeated the entire health system of the Repatriation Department, and indeed, arguably the entire repatriation scheme.

If a soldier was deemed to have suffered an injury related to his war service, a further indignity was placed upon him by the need under Repatriation regulations to reduce his incapacity or suffering to a number that equated to a particular pension rate. This process dehumanised the applicant, by equating an injury to a fixed percentage of disablement, reducing experience to a financial compensatory level. The Repatriation Commission justified it thus: “The accepted basis for the awards of disablement pensions is the medical estimate of the extent of the disablement consequent upon disability found to be due to the man’s war service.” How for instance, does one claim that a soldier’s earning capacity has been removed by 25 per cent, or even 50 per cent? Attempting to place a standard or shifting scale on something that is almost impossible accurately to assess was problematic to the effective functioning of the policy, although it was the medical professionals who were forced to traverse this difficult arrangement.

Conversely, these rules were similarly unkind to the administrators executing the regulations, as it placed them in the unenviable position of having to make such a decision, particularly as many working in the Department were returned soldiers themselves. There are numerous cases in the Departmental files of soldiers appealing a low rate of pension as being unrepresentative of their discomfort and inability to

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22 Hereafter, when reference is made to injuries ‘related to’ war service, what is in fact intended is ‘due to or aggravated by’ war service. The onus on proving an injury as due to or aggravated by war service was central in being able to access benefits and treatment, and was enshrined in the legislation as such.

work. Some appeals were successful, in that a further medical examination was held by another doctor that confirmed the soldier's complaint, thus raising the pensionable rate of incapacity higher, but often, the soldier found little satisfaction. That is not to say that Departmental officials were mean spirited in their interpretation of the regulations – they applied the legislation as it was written, and attempted to make it as fair as possible in Tasmania at least. Nevertheless, many returned soldiers could probably testify that their claims did not receive the care and sympathy they felt their war service deserved.

**Pensions**

The first pension schemes were discussed and formulated in 1914 before passing as the War Pensions Act in December of that year. L.J. Pryor argued that at this early stage, “The Government certainly did not show that it had any conception of the vast problem which it might be called upon to tackle.” As a consequence, early estimates of pension budgets were ludicrously low, which was to be expected when Australia’s commitment to the war was in its early stages.

Discussion of the fundamental principles behind the granting of pensions arose over the same general basic issue that informed the purpose of the entire repatriation framework: the matter of whether pensions were compensation for loss or a right. As in Millen’s wider repatriation legislation, pensions legislation directed that pensions were granted on the basis that they were not a right, but rather that they were to compensate either the returned soldier for injury and subsequent loss of earning ability, or their dependants for the loss of loved ones. War Pensions were administered by the Treasury rather than the Defence Department – an arrangement that was not to be altered until the 1920 Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Act.

24 See for instance, NAA: P107/1 C 197; P107/1 C 1954; P107/1 M C 2043; P107/2 M, H 1744; P107/3 C,M 2147; P107/4 M 1717. This is but a small selection of the Tasmanian files the author examined where the soldier appealed his pension rate, requesting larger amounts in the face of either an inability to work, or not commensurate with the incapacity he felt he was suffering. These claims were separate from appeals claiming an injury was due to or aggravated by war service.
26 Pryor argued that, “A pension can never be more than a partial reward, that is compensation.” Pryor, 'The Origins of Australia’s Repatriation Policy, 1914-1920', p. 20. Pryor also went on to outline the political demarcation on the debate, in that the Labor Party supported the compensatory qualification, whereas the Liberals ‘strived to have the pensions granted as a universal and indisputable right.’ pp. 19-20.
Further pension amendments followed from the original Pensions Act in 1915 and 1916, where qualifications were liberalised and expanded. The fundamental program of reassessment of pensions were incorporated at this juncture, whereby payments to incapacitated returned servicemen were payable usually for a fixed period of six months. As outlined in more detail later, the serviceman would then submit to a medical examination whereby his incapacitation was reassessed for another fixed period, as prescribed by the examining practitioner. The scale of payments were based on a variety of factors – rank, rate of pay, the scale of the gravity of the incapacitation, and the soldier’s dependants (who were paid their own allowances, but whose payments were affected by the assessment of the examiner, and the soldier’s ability to undertake work). The pensions process was incredibly complex especially with regard to the issue of dependency. In order to qualify for dependency, it had to be established that the dependant was reliant on the soldier within twelve months of his enlistment.

Claiming a war pension posed questions over the possession of masculine and heroic attributes – the great spirit of Anzac was dependent (to varying extents) on social welfare to survive. This appeared contrary to the Anzac masculine ideal. Pensions equated to Victorian charity, not the rigorous Australian male who had enlisted to fight for the Mother Country. Garton notes that the vehemence with which returned soldier groups attempted to claim repatriation benefits as an earned right “or recompense for sacrifice” was an attempt to distance themselves from the gendered notion of feminised welfare dependence. He argues, with merit, that the masculine code was integrally related to the idea of independence, and that the sense of dependence on welfare – as in the case of disability pensions – was a “feminised condition” with the secondary torment of welfare’s relationship, “symbolically, rhetorically and practically, with charity.” In this way, the clients of the repatriation system faced a problem of image and identity, as the men who went to war were not necessarily the same when they

27 Alistair Thomson discussed the notion of masculinity and war in regards to Australian veterans in his interviews with Percy Bird, Bill Langham, Fred Farrall and others. His work explored notions of masculine conduct and emasculation under fire during the war, that does not necessarily accord with Bean’s legendary image. See, A. Thomson, ‘A Crisis of Masculinity? Australian Military Manhood in the Great War’, in J. Damousi and M. Lake (eds.), Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 133-147; and his, Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend, Melbourne, 1994.


29 Ibid. Garton goes on to argue that, “Repatriation could never entirely escape from the stigma of charity, and this partly explains the currents of resentment that eddied around these policies – from soldiers who feared that they were not respected and form civilians who implied that soldiers were ‘sponging off’ ordinary citizens.” Ibid, p. 195.
A literary culture of Anzac mythology has surrounded the Australian digger, although interestingly, there appears to be little space within this framework for the returned soldier who was dependent on the repatriation medical scheme.

Bourke argues that a sedentary lifestyle for disabled veterans was not conducive to a useful role in society, but rather, “disabled servicemen were deemed to be in need of ‘curative work’. In part, this was intended to prepare them for their return to productive labour. The philosophy behind curative work stressed the relationship between the mind and the body.” Such notions were clearly in currency in Tasmanian debates on disability, pension entitlement and work. An article in the Launceston *Examiner* in 1923 explored this concept in a less sophisticated fashion, reporting that a small percentage of pension recipients reportedly found it possible to not only live off their pensions, “but to indulge in such habits as not only to menace the public health, but hasten their own fate.” Obviously, this behaviour was to be discouraged. The pension was to be viewed only as a means of partial subsistence, and that work be found to help the patient “keep his mind off his disability” and to make the “most of his strength.” It appears that, despite war injury and the legitimate payment of a pension, there remained still a public and social anathema to these most celebrated of welfare recipients being inactive in their disability. By engaging in the life of the community, they were also engaging in curative work for their own benefit, while also earning their right to have their pension.

Pension rates for soldiers were generally increased in 1916, with Pryor noting that “Although the scheme was not a masterpiece of generosity it was quite liberal.” However, by 1919, the newly formed RSSILA was demanding changes to the pensions scheme. Pryor noted that increasing complaints about the general administration of pensions suggested that

the pensions system was not being carried out as satisfactorily as it should have been. The work was becoming congested in the Pensions Department, and delays and harsh decisions were causing considerable

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30 Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 55.
31 *The Examiner*, 11 January 1923, p. 4. *The Examiner* did not explicitly state the type of behaviour they aimed to discourage, although it is probable that alcoholism and gambling were among their target habits. The man on welfare could not be left to his own devices.
32 *The Examiner*, 11 January 1923, p. 4.
dissatisfaction. Instances of unjust discrimination were periodically revealed in letters to the press.\textsuperscript{34} The general call from returned men was for reform of the pension system, as “The number of complaints about inadequacy, delayed payments and discrimination increased during 1919 and made revision inevitable.”\textsuperscript{35} In this atmosphere further changes to the pensions structure were made in 1920, where the administration of the pension scheme was finally placed under the auspices of the Repatriation Department. The State Repatriation Boards, with Repatriation doctors, would be responsible for assessing incapacitation for pensions and determine the rates of payment.\textsuperscript{36} The pension scheme was revised, further defined, and consolidated under one Repatriation umbrella rather than the Treasury. In assessing the value of the 1920 amendments, Pryor argued that the 1920 Act

\begin{quote}
made liberal alterations to the pensions system and brought it into conformity with the most generous pensions systems in other parts of the world. [T]he changes made were not extravagant and in the end approximated rather to the relative rise in the cost of living than to any NEW beneficient [sic] system of generous pensions.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

This was to remain the general pattern for repatriation pensions for approximately a decade. Fully incapacitated veterans were entitled to receive the equivalent of a living wage, amounting to approximately eighty shillings per week in 1920. The war pension was less than the living wage – a one hundred per cent war pension amounted to forty-two shillings a week (more with dependants), yet this pension did not mean that the veteran was fully incapacitated. A special Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) pension was paid for those men at £4 a week and extra for dependents. Crucially, war pensions were not indexed to the cost of living, so the disparity of the war pension to the living wage had to be increased by parliament’s vote – usually by lobbying – thus promoting the role of the RSSILA as protectors of servicemen’s interests.\textsuperscript{38} Other criticisms of the pension scheme included claims regarding eligibility issues of war-

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid., p. 26.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Ibid., p. 28.}
\footnote{Ibid., p. 29.}
\footnote{Garton, \textit{The Cost of War}, p. 93.}
\end{footnotes}
relatedness, the partial incapacity of veterans and the subsequent pay scale that was relational to reduction in earning capacity, and the lack of assistance to the 'burnt out' soldier — men who were unemployable due to alcoholism, 'premature ageing' or other afflictions.  

Due to War Service

Related to the issue of the adversarial nature of the system, and at times the inherent suspicion of the administrators and the soldiers, the question was always to prove the role of war service to the member's injury or illness. The soldier attempted to prove that his illness or injury was caused by war service, and placed the onus on the doctor to support that claim. Great strains were placed on doctors to prove or otherwise the claims of soldiers as to the origins of their injuries and illness (more often illnesses as injuries were likely to be noted in the soldier's record of service). Proving due to war service was at times very difficult as many health problems occurred many years after returning, when on discharge there were no apparent problems. Proving a claim as due to War Service when there was no corroborating evidence on a medical file was problematic. It meant a laborious process trolling through service and medical records, plus countless medical examinations to prove or disprove the claim.

39 For more on 'war-relatedness' and eligibility criterion, see K. Blackmore, 'Aspects of the Australian Repatriation Process: War, Health and Responsibility for Illness', pp. 100-113.
40 The 'burnt out' soldier category involved men who had no clear disability and who were not eligible for an old-age pension. Canada and New Zealand established a special pension for veterans fitting this description.
41 This was especially true of respiratory complaints, that soldiers argued were a legacy of gassing. One such Tasmanian case claimed gassing as the cause of his health complaint, but as his service record did not contain information that he attended a field hospital or medical unit for the problem, it was difficult to definitively state. The official policy on these issues noted, in 1923, that, "Although several years have elapsed since the Armistice, there are still many new applications for pensions, and it is obvious that it is important to make sure that the disease on which a claim is founded has not arisen since the claimant was discharged." The soldier claiming gassing resorted to obtaining written statements from former comrades present at the claimed gas attack that he had in fact been subject to this injury, despite not seeking treatment for it at the time. This was not always believed, despite protestations to the contrary, and despite proclamations from the Repatriation Commission that, "The attitude adopted in cases where reasonable doubt exists is that, unless it is clear that the balance of probability is against the applicant, the benefit of the doubt shall be given." 'Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act: Report of the Repatriation Commission 1922-23', CPP, 1923-24, Vol. IV, Paper No. 68, p. 6. Some departmental doctors in Tasmanian case files preferred to believe not in the sympathy and benefit of the doubt, but of the supremacy of modern science in delineating whether an affliction was real and attributable to war service. Fortunately for the soldiers involved, these were very few.
Cases of tuberculosis, neurosis and gassing were always difficult to prove, and understanding of shell shock was also not at a sophisticated level, and often took years to develop. A 1940 medical report on a Tasmanian soldier suffering from deafness following gunshot concussion in Ypres, who later developed bronchitis, and by the early mid to late 1930s neurosis, remarked: “It appears to me difficult to disassociate his anxiety neurosis from his accepted war service disabilities and it is recommended that to his entitlement there be added ‘with associated neurosis’.” It should be added that the soldier also received comprehensive medical and hospital care, including hearing aids. But the difficulty for medical staff to diagnose illness as war related was obvious. In such cases, the pressure on doctors and medical examiners to decide the origins of an illness was great, and probably quite unfair, particularly when the reason for doing so was to either increase, decrease or withdraw the soldier’s pension. Much rode on the decisions of doctors. If the soldier disagreed with a

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42 In one Tasmanian case, breathlessness and chest pain identified in the late 1920s finally saw pulmonary tuberculosis accepted as due to war service around 1933, see, NAA: P107/1 M1684. Another soldier developed Tuberculosis, and spent nearly seventeen months at the Consumptive Sanatorium in the Hobart suburb of New Town. Bureaucratic wrangling led to delays in him receiving a TPI pension despite constant out-patient treatment at Launceston Hospital’s Repatriation Ward. He also developed TB in his elbow, and his general health deteriorated sharply in 1932. See, NAA: P107/4 M 5110.

43 Contemporary medical men could not necessarily agree on what constituted shell shock, or ‘battle shock’ as A.G. Butler attributes it. Certainly, Butler examined stages of neurosis that could be attributed to ‘battle shock’: “It is universally accepted – and was indeed being somewhat vaguely recognised at the end of 1916 – that nervous breakdown in a soldier, as in civil life, was the culmination of a more or less prolonged complex of factors. These combined to produce a state of mental and moral tension which, on the occurrence of some terrifying and ‘shocking’ experience, resulted in a condition that was conceived as being identical with ‘shock’.” See, Butler, History of the Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-18, Volume III, Canberra, 1943, p. 113. While Butler labelled the former set of circumstances as acute war neurosis, he also noted that prolonged exposure to continued strain similarly manifested a type of neurosis that he argued was “part and parcel of the same war experience and the same ‘disease’ process” as battle shock, which he titled chronic war neurosis. p. 114. Generally, a combination of factors – fear (self preservation); anxiety; moral, mental and perhaps physical shock; stupor; confusion and/or amnesia – were elements Butler ascribed to patients suffering ‘shell-shock.’ pp. 119-120. That these neuroses could develop some period after the war as a result of active service did not appear to be disputed by Tasmanian Repatriation doctors, but were usually ascribed as ‘war neurosis’ or neurasthenia’ as a blanket term to describe these mental conditions. Specific details of post-service shell shock treatment in Tasmania have not been identified.

44 Judith Allen argues that, “The full effects of the men’s experiences, especially of shell-shock and mustard gassing were not fully disclosed until well into the 1920s.” Tracing these afflictions back to war service was often difficult, particularly if nothing was noted in contemporary service records. Manifestations of these war-related traumas were also played out on wives, partners and families. See her, Sex & Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women Since 1880, Melbourne, 1990, p. 130.

45 Medical Report, 7/11/1940. NAA, P107/1, M 1606.

46 The Commonwealth Medical Referee addressed correspondence to the Medical Journal of Australia on this very issue. There appeared to be much inconsistency in what was attributable to war service, and the enlistment reports compared to final Medical Boards before discharge proved as vexing to the examining doctor as if no documentation to injury had been recorded at all. One soldier was granted a pension for six months, and when the case was investigated further, found that the causes were pre-enlistment. Yet the man was still accepted for military service, and granted a pension for six months. The Medical Referee concluded that, “on passing men as fit on enlistment we have to be particularly
diagnosis, and felt, or saw his pension reduced as a result, he was likely to appeal. Conversely, the Department could call on a second doctor to make another examination if they felt the first diagnosis was not consistent with the previous history of a case. That is not to say that the Repatriation Department grudgingly granted medical assistance to returned soldiers; on the contrary, there are countless cases in the archives which show Tasmanian soldiers the lengths that the Department would go to, to ensure the professional medical and hospital care of soldiers needing assistance.\textsuperscript{47} The establishment of a Repatriation Hospital in Hobart is probably its greatest statement.

The first Repatriation Act in 1917 outlined a system for the health care of returned soldiers. Assistance was to be comprehensive, and provide free hospital care for sick and injured soldiers on their return, and ongoing treatment for service-related injuries, including hostels and homes for those requiring treatment, tubercular soldiers, and soldiers who were totally incapacitated. Limbless soldiers were also covered under this system, receiving free artificial limbs.\textsuperscript{48} Official war historian Ernest Scott notes that Hobart was the last Australian capital city to open an artificial limb factory. Other states had operations opened by an American expert, but Hobart’s factory was started later by the Repatriation Commission.\textsuperscript{49}

Tubercular soldiers were treated at the Consumptive Sanatorium at Creek Road, New Town (in Hobart), with numbers usually around twenty military inmates at any one time.\textsuperscript{50} Michael Roe notes that the Federal Government moved toward formalising tubercular care arrangements in early 1917, pressuring ex-servicemen to undergo careful to state on the attestation paper if there was any ailment in existence at that time, which statement would greatly facilitate the subsequent examination for discharge on pension purposes, when the necessity arises.” Further, “no man can be and should be stated to contract the disease or being unfit for work before he enlisted and before leaving Australia...after he has been on active service at the front for two or three years, and discharged without further ceremony, unless any notes to that effect appear on his enlistment papers without grave injustice being inflicted on our returned and disabled soldiers.” Such measures would make it easier on medical examiners in deciding pension applications, and to remove the “unduly hard burden on the community by enormously increasing the expenses of war pensions,” while similarly reducing any “grave injustice[s] to our noble defenders on their return home after being discharged from the ranks of the army as unfit.” Commonwealth Medical Referee, ‘The Examination of Recruits and Returned Soldiers’, Correspondence, \textit{Medical Journal of Australia}, 16 March 1918, p. 227.

\textsuperscript{47} Case, NAA: P 107/1 C 1954, for instance, saw the soldier receive all the care he requested. Another ex-soldier received comprehensive treatment after suffering variously from neurasthenia, cystitis, phosphaturia, tachycardia, cardiac irregularities, and organic kidney disease. This soldier’s case showed a willingness on the part of the Department to care for this man, and treat him through his illness. Despite very comprehensive treatment, his illness was not able to be cured. The amount of treatments and examinations he had to monitor his progress was indicative of the care of the department for this returned soldier. See case, NAA: P107/3 M,H 2468.

\textsuperscript{48} Garton, \textit{The Cost of War}, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{49} E. Scott, \textit{The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol. XI, Australia During the War}, Sydney, 1936, p. 837 (fn 23).

\textsuperscript{50} Roe, \textit{Life Over Death}, p. 77.
treatment. This of course required liaising with local authorities, and from then until 1919, chalets and facilities for returned soldiers were built on the lower part of the site, while civilians had separate quarters at the top. This was an unsatisfactory arrangement for ex-service inmates, who, Roe argues, were cognisant of their inferior site at New Town, where they were “beset by mud whereas civilians had asphalt paths; the latter were getting a septic tank, while their own latrines stank.” A separate nursing staff eased some of the soldiers’ complaints, but by mid-1920, returned soldier tuberculars ceased going to New Town for treatment and instead went to a new Tubercular ward at the Hobart Repatriation Hospital, or the Repatriation ward at Launceston Hospital.

Health cover was granted to any soldier who had suffered a war-related injury, illness or incapacitation, although the process of obtaining benefits – sustenance payments, pensions and treatment – was a comprehensive one. In trying to decipher how Tasmanian returned soldiers were treated by the Repatriation system, Garton notes with caution: “By its very nature, the repatriation archive is more likely to be a repository of complaint than compliment.” As such, the majority of the material deals with soldiers’ problems rather than positive experiences. Nonetheless, something of their general interactive experience with the Repatriation Department is evident in the voluminous medical and hospital files held by the National Archives, and predictably, the majority of the correspondence is the process of applying and retaining repatriation benefits.

51 Ibid., p. 76.
52 Ibid., pp. 76-77. The civilian Executive overseeing care for tubercular patients were “outraged when the military built a chalet which failed to expose its inmates to fresh air.” p. 77.
53 Ibid. In addition, relations between civilians and ex-soldiers, Roe notes, deteriorated further in the shared dining room where younger inmates “threw food and otherwise misbehaved.” The issue of tubercular patients was raised by the Tasmanian Repatriation Department in 1938, when the then-Deputy Commissioner noted the unsatisfactory position of the New Town Sanatorium. “The Commission may not be aware of it,” he wrote, “but in the early post-war years, the soldier T.B.’s were located at New Town (the Chalets occupied by them still stand, but are now quite dilapidated and unfit for use). From information obtained and given me by the Senior Medical Officer, this arrangement proved to be most unsatisfactory for several reasons, eg. (1) The Institution has male and female patients, (2) It is of semi-private character, administered by a Committee, and (3) In the S.M.O.’s opinion the site is not at all suitable for T.B.’s, being subject to the bitter westerly winds which come down the adjacent valley in the winter months, and (4) The appointments generally are far below the standard of the most ancient of our own [Repatriation] Hospitals.” See, DVA (Hobart): File G493: Capital Assets Acquired from Department of Defence Without Payment: ‘New Town Sanatorium’, 23 March 1938.
54 In 1924, Dr Harry Nairn Butler reported that the Repatriation Hospital had seven tubercular patients, and facilities were obviously superior to the New Town Sanatorium as they had separate bed, dining and recreation rooms from other patients. Butler noted that arrested patients had found light work as tram conductors, and were doing well, although arrested cases were not encouraged to take up land under the soldier settlement scheme for obvious reasons. Roe, Life Over Death, p. 91.
55 Garton, The Cost of War, p. 86.
Among the material are copies of medical reports and pension applications, that had to be verified by a medical examination. RSSILA correspondence with the Department on particular servicemen are within the files, presenting the case on behalf of the soldier to the Department.\textsuperscript{56} There is also much inter-departmental correspondence within the branches of the Tasmanian Repatriation system – on this issue, usually between the Deputy Comptroller for Tasmania Joseph Francis Humphris, and the various medical boards. There is also correspondence from local repatriation committees to the Deputy Comptroller providing advice on soldiers in their districts. It should not be assumed that these local repatriation committees were exclusively there to report on soldiers for a department that wished to reduce or withdraw their benefits, but were often there to advise on the particular needs of a soldier, and make requests to assist his reintegration into civilian life where necessary.

Before the formation of official Repatriation Departments in 1918, the role of the RSSILA in representing the returned man took on a greater significance, as during 1916 in particular there was no indication that a Department specialising in returned soldiers’ issues was to be established. The RSSILA took on as its programme the welfare of returned soldiers and the responsibility to lobby for redress of their grievances. However, there was no organised process in Tasmania dealing with the wounded and incapacitated soldiers returning from war. Medical treatment was provided at Base hospitals and where appropriate, civilian hospitals, but it became obvious that such a system would not be suitable when the majority of Australia’s soldiers returned at war’s end. When the Repatriation Department was formally established nationally in April 1918, the RSSILA no longer found itself the primary carer for returned soldiers – in Tasmania or any other state. The new Department, administering the Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Act, took on the general responsibilities of repatriation, with Broinowski claiming in 1921 that this first Act “provided the foundation on which to build the superstructure.”\textsuperscript{57} It supplanted the previous administrative structure, but Broinowski claimed that it “did not define the scope of repatriation, but it gave power for the framing of regulations and the creation of certain bodies to administer the Act and regulations.”\textsuperscript{58} That was to occur later in the 1920 legislation. The War Councils that dealt with repatriation matters before 1918

\textsuperscript{56} The RSSILA played a crucial role in advising (Tasmanian) returned soldiers of their rights under repatriation legislation, as well as assisting in presenting their cases to the Repatriation Board.

\textsuperscript{57} L. Broinowski (ed.), \textit{Tasmania's War Record 1914-1918}, Hobart, 1921, p. 201.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
were replaced with a State Board and numerous local committees that assisted the work of the Department. These local committees offered advice to the Department on the soldier, back in his community, and presented a good two-way interchange of knowledge for the soldier about the department, and the department about the soldier. Overseeing the State Boards was a Commission in Melbourne, in which appeals and queries on repatriation policy were sent.\(^5^9\)

The superseding of the 1917 Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act with the 1920 version of the same brought about changes in legislation concerning the pension scheme, and a reappraisal and subsequent increase in pension payments. The administration of war pensions was placed under the umbrella of the Repatriation Department, and allowances formerly paid by the Repatriation Department were "incorporated into the pensions structure."\(^6^0\)

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**Health in the Community**

Incapacitated returned soldiers trickled back to Tasmania throughout the war, and, by mid 1916, there were moves in Tasmania to establish ANZAC Hostels in Hobart and Launceston for their care. A Disabled Tasmanian Soldiers' Relief Fund had already been established, with donations amounting, by 1 January 1916, to an impressive £3086.\(^6^1\) These figures paled beside collections for the Southern Tasmanian Division of the Red Cross Society, at £13,192, the Mayor's Patriotic Fund at £11,717, and the staggering figure of £21,541 for the Belgian Relief Fund by early January.

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\(^5^9\) Among the functions of the Repatriation Commission in its first year of operation were responsibilities for recommendations and advice to the Governor-General and the Minister respectively, on issues associated with the regulation and effect of the Act. As noted above, the Commission also fielded "appeals from the determination of a State Board", and were to "make recommendations to the Minister in regard to maintenance, erection, equipment, and conduct of homes, hostels, hospitals, sanatoria, workshops, and training establishments for the benefit of soldiers or their dependants." *The Federal Guide – Index to Parliamentary Activities*, Melbourne, 1918, p. 33.

\(^6^0\) Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, p. 197.

\(^6^1\) *The Mercury*, Saturday January 1, 1916, p. 11. Donations for these funds were received from a variety of sectors of the Tasmanian community – donations amounting to £7 11s. were collected on the days previous to the new year of 1916 for the Disabled Tasmanian Soldiers' Fund from the "Proceeds of entertainment held at Sandfly by the girls of State-school, per Olive Banks, Dorothy Ludbey, Elizabeth Fogarty, Zoe Worsley, Eva Moody, and Lauren Crane..." This fund was in addition to numerous other charities in operation in Tasmania collecting for a variety of causes; from 'Mayor's Patriotic Funds' and 'Belgian Relief Funds', to 'Red Cross Society' and 'On Active Service Fund' collections.
1916. Marilyn Lake has noted that Tasmanians subscribed enthusiastically to calls for donations – with the plight of the Belgians in particular receiving a substantial outpouring of financial goodwill. Australian, and more specifically, Tasmanian soldiers also received strong support from the Tasmanian public. The goodwill shown toward Tasmania’s Anzac heroes was not confined to donations to funds, but returned soldiers, upon their arrival and disembarkation, received heroes’ welcomes, and were feted with the thanks of a proud state and country. Hobart newspapers The Mercury and the Daily Post advertised the arrival of troopships returning to the state from Melbourne with their precious cargoes of injured and debilitated troops. In the early years of the war at least, such vessels were met with much fanfare, with the Mayor, other important dignitaries, and the public on hand to personally welcome the soldiers home with expressions of gratitude and thanks for their valuable service. The support shown by the public was reciprocated by the soldiers themselves, who were somewhat embarrassed by the commotion made of them, but thankful nonetheless for the appreciation of their efforts in fighting for the Empire. In late January 1916, a returned wounded soldier wrote to The Mercury expressing his “admiration” at the work of the citizens of the Bagdad branch of the Red Cross Society for the men at the front, and gratitude at the response he had received from the citizens of Hobart since his return from active service in Gallipoli, and convalescence in Malta and London:

The ladies...were all busy at some work for the comfort of the men at the front. [The warden of the district] on behalf of the Red Cross Society, announced that in welcoming me to this district he had the pleasure of presenting me with a walking stick and also a smoker’s fit out. I return my sincere thanks to all the good people of Bagdad for their kindness. I have only done my duty for my King and country.
One senses the enormous pride that such a letter would have engendered in those reading this paper in Tasmania, and indeed, of *The Mercury* for printing it. Everyone wanted to do his or her patriotic duty.

Within this loyalist Tasmanian atmosphere, the predominant work for caring for disabled and injured soldiers—who constituted the majority of those returning from the war at this time—was driven by private philanthropic organizations, supporters, and returned soldiers themselves. The lack of a concerted, cogent visible government response led the labour-affiliated *Daily Post* to ponder the fates of those returning wounded and disabled:

There seems to be a total lack of realisation of the necessity to provide for returning disabled soldiers at once, and in this Tasmania is as far behind as any other place in the globe. There are arriving week by week, numbers of men, and they have made bitter complaints of the treatment to which they are subjected. Several are stated to have said that they feel like paupers; others have openly stated that they are almost ostracised.67

In response, the people of Hobart acknowledged that work needed to be done to cater for what was inevitably going to be a growing problem.

Calls were made in July 1916 for the establishment in Hobart of a Returned Soldiers' Hostel to be used for accommodation while obtaining treatment. In mid 1916, Hobart was the only Australian capital city that did not have a Returned Soldiers' Hostel, although the 'Soldier's Dug Out', established by the Mayoress and run initially by the Returned Wounded Soldiers' Association (and later Returned Soldiers' Association) was, as *The Mercury* reported, “a most excellent stop gap” as an accommodation provider to returned soldiers.68 The scheme for a hostel to house wounded returned soldiers was initially formulated by the Governor, Sir William Ellison-Macartney and the Red Cross executive committee, and introduced at the Red Cross meeting of 17 July 1916. A letter published in *The Mercury* on 11 July from a wounded returned soldier ironically lamented the fact that Hobart did not have a hostel for the care of its soldiers, stating that, “such a home would be a boon to men whose homes were not in or about town... [M]any more wounded and sick men have yet to return. Could not Hobart and district show what it could do? Must the mainland

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always lead the way?" By the time of this soldier's somewhat critical letter, the proposal for a hostel had already been considered by the Red Cross committee for some five months, thus provoking criticism from the Governor for its procrastination on the issue. What is important to note at this early phase is that the responsibility toward housing repatriating soldiers in a hostel-like arrangement had been taken up by private means rather than any official Government organisation. The 'Dug-out' was not an initiative of the State or Commonwealth Governments, but rather a conglomeration of concerned citizens led by the Mayoress that hoped, however inadequately, to tackle a growing problem. That the Red Cross Committee had sat on this proposal for five months is surprising considering that every other State had a hostel operating in their capital city by this time, and that donations had been steadily increasing for a venture to support Tasmania's war veterans.

The proposal introduced by the Governor Ellison-Macartney on 17 July was, interestingly, to be administered by the Red Cross, and not by the State Government. The Governor remarked that "the suggested institution be provided without delay, and that it is the Red Cross' duty to provide it at present." It was felt that the Red Cross' mission was to deal with sick and wounded soldiers, and that the Red Cross committee had been entrusted with the care of the monies collected from the public for Red Cross work. The Red Cross Committee had identified a likely site for this hostel in Lewis' Buildings in Collins Street, Hobart. It was also suggested that soldiers from the Claremont Camp, who were not wounded, would have access to this hostel and the social rooms it would contain. That suggestion was resisted by the mayor as he and others believed that Red Cross money was collected for the care of wounded and sick soldiers only. The issue of rest homes for returned soldiers incited many inches of

69 'Rest Home for Returned Soldiers', *The Mercury*, 11 July 1916, p. 7. The returned soldier writing this letter justified the need for such a rest home for wounded and convalescing returned soldiers by saying: "When men have spent many weeks in hospital - some of us months - there is a general desire for a place of rest without the predominant feeling of being in a hospital or among sick men." The author recounted his experiences at staying at Rest Homes in Melbourne, and found the lack of the same in Hobart surprising, and disagreeable.

70 The Southern Tasmanian Division of the Red Cross had accumulated some £16,000 by mid-July 1916.

71 *Ibid.* There was some resistance and resentment to the Governor's position, as *The Mercury* reported that several ladies at the meeting - supporters of the RSA - were indignant that despite their best efforts at providing hostel-like care for returned soldiers "so far as their means allowed", the Governor was supporting the Red Cross proposal. Somewhat prophetically, *The Mercury* forecast that there were unlikely to be too many competitors when the real need for these services was felt at the war's end.


73 There was much resistance to the idea of letting the Claremont recruits have the use of the proposed hostel, none more so than in a letter published in *The Mercury* three days after the meeting. Among
column space in the Hobart *Mercury* during July 1916, particularly after an inflammatory letter from returned soldier Cpl. W.T. Keogh,\(^{74}\) refuting the need for a rest-home/hostel at all. During the war, Roseneath was used as a hostel for the treatment of wounded returned soldiers, and was run by the Red Cross. The building was on the historic 'Roseneath' property at Austin's Ferry situated some 9 miles northwest of Hobart,\(^{75}\) but was some way from central Hobart. Keogh claimed that such hostels would be useful only to teach returned men bagatelle, cards and billiards and that such a life of extravagance would render them unsuitable to return to their previous occupations. Duncan McRae, an occupant of the AIF Roseneath Base Hospital, perhaps summed up the argument for such a hostel:

> At the present time the accommodation in the base hospital is often severely taxed. Patients frequently have to be sent to their homes to make room for fresh cases. These men have to report every week or fortnight to the medical officer until they are discharged from the A.I.F. Some of these cases require a period of rest before they are completely recovered. For these a rest house would be of the greatest benefit, and would relieve the tax on the base hospital by enabling the authorities to send those cases to the rest-house who only require rest. This would do away with the expense that men are put to in travelling from their homes to the hospital to report.\(^{76}\)

McRae's summation of the problems surrounding medical care outlines nicely the processes facing wounded returned soldiers who needed further treatment for their injuries. His letter, as representative of the majority of returned soldiers, and others, including from the mother of two soldiers, indicated that in southern Tasmania at least,
there was widespread support for the establishment of such a home. The only question now would be for how much longer would returned soldiers need to wait?

As outlined in the Politics chapter, the RSA meeting of 5 August 1916 covered some important issues facing returned soldiers in Tasmania. The trickle of men that had returned from the Great War during 1915 had increased through 1916 as Australia committed more troops and encountered heavy fighting on the Western Front. Issues concerning more formal arrangements for returned soldier organizations, employment and the election of administrative posts within the RSA were all discussed, as was the proposed rest home. At the meeting, it was again Duncan McRae who led the discussion on the rest home. He rejected the Red Cross Society’s suggested site for the home, arguing that “The building was situated in one of the lowest quarters of the town, and he thought that the men who had fought for their country were worthy of something better. There were no grounds to the place, and there was not even a veranda or a balcony.” McRae advocated the right for returned soldiers to be housed in conditions that were commensurate with their sacrifices for their country, and clearly exhibited a strong personality capable of driving these suggestions through. His resolution to the Red Cross Society that the RSA found the proposed site of the hostel unsuitable was passed unanimously.

A Private Frahm suggested that an attempt be made to obtain ‘Stowell’, a property in Hampden Road Battery Point, as a more suitable location for the rest home. Frahm noted that this property had been offered by the owners when a site for a hospital was being proposed prior to Roseneath, and that it would make a suitable site for the rest home now. No further discussion was made on the rest home at the meeting, but on 7 August 1916 The Mercury published three more letters regarding the soldiers’ hostel. All were hostile to the suggestion that the Lewis Buildings in Collins Street would make suitable accommodation (as the soldiers resolved themselves), and that, while there was a dearth of alternative suggestions, the predominant feeling expressed in all three was that the cost for renovating and renting them was too high a price to pay.

Prominent social reformer Frances Edwards questioned the fate of the funds collected on Australia Day and the funds sent forth for the establishment of the base

77 Lake, A Divided Society, p. 69.
78 Speech by D. McRae, as reported in, ‘Returned Soldiers: Site of Rest Home; Protest from the Men’, The Mercury, 7 August, 1916, p. 2.
79 Ibid.
hospital in Melbourne; ‘A.G.W.’ castigated the proposal to spend so much money while current tenants were being charged far less; and public health activist Alice O’Shea Peterson called the plan to transform the Lewis Buildings a “positive scandal.”

Interestingly, among the other complaints about the Collins Street site, Edwards also argued that “the locality is the haunt of prostitutes,” undoubtedly displaying some concern for the moral wellbeing of the returned soldiers to be housed there.

The discussion over the proposed site for the rest home, and particularly the moral dimension to its location, produced an interesting interjection from a returned soldier indignant at concern from moral welfare crusaders:

These people say it is in a bad quarter of the city, that temptations will be all around us, that the locality is in the haunt of undesirables. In other words, to put it bluntly, they say that we, the returned soldiers as a whole, are not to be trusted: that because we are soldiers we have not the strength of will or the moral power to take care of ourselves. We grant that possibly some of us may have been seen a little off the beaten track at times, but it is no use “the pot calling the kettle black”: we are only very ordinary mortals, and we are more noticeable, possibly through being in khaki. Don’t let us come back to our own homes and have to say that a section of our own kith and kin would not trust us, but regarded the fact that by wearing khaki it was a sign that we were moral weaklings.

Evidently, his objection to notions of returned soldier moral weakness demanded a public refutation by disproving such weaknesses as a myth. Such a vehement response displays one thing while obfuscating another; that it was important not to be patronised by civilians who had never answered the call and did not understand the compulsions and urges of a soldier, that the Anzac legend was already in currency and its continued circulation relied on a vigilant safeguarding of not just the physical attributes, but moral stamina of the Australian soldier. It also suggests, yet concurrently hides, a deeper subliminal contradiction of the Anzac myth – the reference to “being off the beaten track at times” displays a cognisance that the virile and sexually active Australian soldier-tourist in Egypt, France and England also had a noble, masculine moral ideal to uphold.

81 Ibid.
By the end of 1916, Tasmanian returned soldiers, with the assistance of the Southern Tasmanian Division of the Red Cross Society, had established a soldiers' Rest Home at the Lewis Buildings in Hobart for the use of returned and serving soldiers as a place of rest and recreation. The formation of their own RSA as a body exerting pressure for returned soldiers' issues had effectively resulted in the founding of this shelter, and presented a place where wounded soldiers could stay while obtaining treatment for their war injuries. The initial impetus for creating spaces for care was precipitated by the humanitarian policies of the Red Cross, and driven by the soldiers already returned. While the Tasmanian RSA (later RSSILA) had achieved this success, their impact on returned soldiers' health issues, whether campaigning for the building of shelters, or for better government treatment, was to be displaced in early 1918 as the Repatriation Department took on all responsibilities for the health and medical care of Tasmania's returned soldiers. The RSSILA would take a comparative back seat to the Department, although the early achievements and the lessons learnt from them were not to leave them, and they continued to exert influence and to assist the returned soldier in his dealings with the Department.

The Establishment of the Repatriation Hospital

Until late 1920, Tasmanian returned soldiers received hospital treatment in the Defence Department's No. 9 Military Hospital in Hobart, or the No. 12 Military Hospital in Launceston. The hospitals were Military Hospitals rather than solely for Repatriation purposes, therefore Repatriation cases were under the auspices of the Defence Department. In July 1920, the cosy arrangement whereby Repatriation patients were treated in these hospitals was threatened by moves from the Defence Department to dispense with the institution in Hobart. The plan was that Tasmanian patients requiring hospitalisation were to be moved to Launceston's No. 12 Hospital for treatment — a plan that had apparently received the backing of the Principal Departmental Medical Officer who had toured the State some weeks previously. This caused alarm in the State Repatriation headquarters in Hobart, who did not see it as all practicable or beneficial to the returned soldiers that all hospitalisation cases should be moved to Launceston. Humphris requested the expert opinion of the Hobart-based Departmental Medical Officer (DMO) on the matter, a copy of which was forwarded to
Repatriation headquarters in Melbourne for immediate action. The DMO's report reveals some interesting regional and parochial peculiarities between the north and south of the State, and the first tangible moves toward forming a Department-run Repatriation Hospital.

The DMO argued that Hobart Military Hospital staff were stricter than Launceston in interpreting regulations governing hospitalisation, so that "no one is admitted to Hospital who is not entitled to do so," ensuring that No. 9 Hospital was run "as a strictly curative institution." In this way, the DMO conceded, the "men have been put back into civil life per the medium of the employment section or the vocational training section at the earliest opportunity." The administration in Launceston was criticised as being "lax in the extreme" due to their less rigid policy of moving men from hospital into vocational training at the earliest convenience, suggesting that the administration in Hobart felt that getting men back into the workforce as soon as possible was an important part of their repatriation. With the imminent closure of No. 9 Hospital in Hobart, the DMO put his case against a transferral of primary hospital services to Launceston:

At present we admit our patients to the Military hospitals. Once admitted we must leave them to the Military authorities. If now they are to be transferred to Launceston, I feel it my duty to point out that our men will come under a system of treatment in which I have no confidence.

The returned medical officers in Launceston are only three in number, one of whom has recently arrived, and of whom I have no knowledge, the other two are not men of outstanding ability. There is an able surgeon in Launceston attached to the Military hospital who is not a returned soldier. The professional standing and attainment of returned medical officers in Hobart is considerably higher than it is in Launceston. [...]

I would strongly emphasise the necessity for the immediate establishment of a hospital in Hobart managed by this Department for treatment of our cases, then we would no longer be subjected to the necessity of transferring our cases to an inferior hospital under an inferior staff. [...]

It is further essential that a hospital be maintained in Hobart in connection with this Department, in that doubtful cases eventually have

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84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 I carry this point further in Chapter 5.
to be referred to me at this Office for decision. These cases are those which have given difficulty to Local Medical Officers of Local Committees, and they can only be dealt with, with justice, when investigated by myself or under my supervision in hospital. Such investigation in hospital is necessary to do justice to obscure diseases and also to protect the Department in cases where the patients’ idea of the extent of his disability is at variance with the facts.  

The DMO’s condemnation of Launceston’s administration, and his proposal for a Repatriation Hospital in Hobart were arguably based on two main factors: the fact that the Repatriation Department headquarters were in Hobart; and the lack of Repatriation Department control (and his own personal supervision) in the Military Hospital in the north. Effectively, the DMO was pointing out the absurdity of having the seat of administrative control in Hobart while the prime hospital facility for dealing with returned soldiers was in Launceston. He evidently did not approve of northern Tasmanian administrative methods either.

Humphris relayed the DMO’s proposal to the Melbourne Repatriation Headquarters, adding his own approval to such a scheme. Humphris suggested that negotiations be opened to take over a portion of the No. 9 Hospital and run it entirely under Departmental control, “to become the chief centre for the medical treatment of discharged members of the A.I.F.” Humphris also suggested, under the recommendation of his DMO, that Launceston become a clearing hospital, indicating a complete reversal of the intended direction. “It is anticipated that this proposal will be vigorously opposed in Launceston,” Humphris wrote, “but as time passes, the number of patients will naturally diminish, and it is considered that one institution for the State will suffice.” This latter point is important to note, as it highlights one of the main regional peculiarities that Tasmanian authorities faced – the traditional north/south parochialism between Launceston and Hobart. Humphris anticipated some resistance to measures to centralise hospital care with the administrative headquarters in the south, but argued it would increase the efficiency of the medical treatment.

By late August 1920, the Repatriation Commission in Melbourne had not been swayed by the arguments of the Tasmanian Deputy Comptroller or the report of the

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88 Ibid., p. 2.
89 DVA (Hobart): File G493: Capital Assets Acquired from Department of Defence Without Payment: Memorandum from J.F. Humphris to Secretary of the Repatriation Department, 23 July 1920, p. 3.
Tasmanian DMO. The Defence Department had made the Tasmanian Repatriation authorities aware that they intended to close the No. 9 Hospital as at 1 September, thus forcing patients to move north. The DMO revealed that this information came from the Defence Department, and that the Repatriation authorities in Melbourne had not communicated this vital piece of news to their colleagues in Hobart, invoking anger and frustration at the work that had to be done in such a short space of time. The DMO was particularly furious at the actions of the Melbourne Repatriation authorities leaving the Tasmanian branch so little time to negotiate with the Defence Department and local authorities to take care of patients in Southern Tasmania. That their care would be his responsibility forced a strongly worded memorandum to Humphris:

I emphatically protest against the action of the Repatriation Department in leaving us to get this information so late from the Defence Department. Never at any time has the Repatriation Department given us notice as to when this change would take place, nor when it would be necessary for accommodation to be provided by this Department in Hobart.

As regards the question of moving the chief centre of hospital treatment to Launceston, this is a policy of which I cannot approve, and if this policy is approved by the Repatriation Department, I shall consider it my duty to notify you that I will no longer be responsible for the medical services of this Department in this State. This is a policy which divorces the centre of treatment from the centre of administration, and puts the main treatment of discharged men into the hands of a staff at the other end of the island where this Department could not maintain any adequate control.

The DMO staked his professional reputation against the move, forcing an escalation in the internal wrangling between the Tasmanian and Federal Repatriation authorities. The only group opposed to the proposed move were the people who had the direct responsibility for providing the care to the soldiers. The only sensible option, as far as Humphris and his Medical Officer were concerned, was the immediate assumption of No. 9 Military Hospital as a Repatriation Hospital once the Defence Department moved from the premises. As the DMO argued, 58 inpatients and 36 outpatients were dependant on the No. 9 facility for care. Even if the 58 inpatients were moved to

Launceston, the 36 outpatients still required local treatment in Hobart, and this left him 8 days to create and run an entire outpatient Department. It made more sense, he argued, if No. 9 Hospital became a Repatriation Hospital.

That Melbourne Repatriation headquarters had not consulted with the Tasmanian branch in deciding how the Defence Department's hospital facilities were to be structured and utilised in the State showed an astonishing lack of communication and responsibility for the medical care of Tasmania's wounded veterans. Internal correspondence suggests that the prime motivation for ensuring that medical headquarters were in Hobart rather than Launceston were the Tasmanian rather than Melbourne authorities, for they ultimately understood the regional exigencies of structuring a hospital system best suited to Tasmania. By the end of August, and with the 1 September deadline for the closure of No. 9 Hospital almost upon them, Humphris and the Tasmanian Repatriation branch formulated a policy to take charge of the Military Hospital for Repatriation purposes. Humphris wanted the bulk of hospital services in Hobart, but showed an extraordinary grasp of the parochial nature of Tasmanian feeling, and communicated this to Melbourne.

Hospital arrangements for the Northern end of the island need careful consideration. Any proposal to suddenly close the Military Hospital in that centre, and transfer patients in a body to Hobart will probably meet with violent opposition, and a change will need to be engineered very carefully, on account of the peculiar conditions in this State, where there is always a strong North versus South feeling, and any proposal which seems to favour one centre more than the other arouses a storm of opposition. On the other hand any proposal to continue two fully staffed institutions would be somewhat costly and scarcely warranted by the number of patients requiring treatment.

Despite Humphris' reaffirmation of this same point in a memorandum on 3 September, it appeared that the Melbourne Repatriation authorities were still to be

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91 Ibid.
93 "The policy of this Department will be to bring all cases to Hobart except those who have their relatives domiciled in or near Launceston. The Departmental Medical Officer emphasises the necessity of associating the main centre of medical treatment with the main centre of Vocational Training. This he considers most important. The policy of the Department therefore will be to make the Launceston hospital an Institution fulfilling purely local needs. Some time must necessarily elapse before this change could be effected, and the operation would be gradual." DVA (Hobart): File G493: Capital Assets
convinced of the merits of such a move. To all intents and purposes, Launceston’s No. 12 Military Hospital would provide the basis for Repatriation treatment. By October, Humphris still did not have control of No. 9 Hospital to establish it as a Repatriation institution, despite providing specific plans as to the number of beds and likely admissions. The only facility Launceston could provide that was superior to Hobart was their Orthopaedic Department, and there were moves to transfer that service to Hobart as well. On 8 October, Humphris made another firm plea to Melbourne headquarters to allow the transformation of No. 9 Hospital into a Repatriation Hospital, and he presented his arguments as succinctly and firmly as he could:

(a) The centre of administration for this State is at Hobart and the principal medical institution should be located at Hobart so that close supervision may be exercised, and to facilitate administration.
(b) The principal training centre is located in Hobart thus giving facilities for the Vocational Training of discharged members under treatment.
(c) The number of returned medical officers whose services are available in Hobart is much larger than at Launceston. In Launceston the services of some medical men who have not seen active service abroad would require to be availed of in the absence of practitioners with war service.

The Tasmanian branch proposed a 100 bed hospital in Hobart, and a 50 bed unit in Launceston to ensure that an adequate level of hospital service was maintained. The other major concern was that medical officers with active service experience were infinitely preferred to those without these qualities, and Launceston evidently suffered a relative dearth of these men.

A conference in Melbourne between the Repatriation and Defence Departments resolved that No. 9 Hospital in Hobart was to be taken over for Repatriation purposes as soon as possible, while Launceston’s No. 12 Hospital was to be taken over by 1 January 1921. The Tasmanian Repatriation Department finally took control of No. 9 Hospital in Hobart on 20 December 1920, over three months since the issue had first

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94 DVA (Hobart): File G493: Capital Assets Acquired from Department of Defence Without Payment: Memorandum from Deputy Commissioner, Hobart, to the Secretary of the Repatriation Department, Melbourne, 8 October 1920, p. 1.
95 Ibid., p. 2.
96 DVA (Hobart): File G493: Capital Assets Acquired from Department of Defence Without Payment: Memorandum from Chairman Repatriation Commission, Melbourne, to Secretary of Department of Defence, Melbourne, 5 November 1920.
been discussed. Its name was formally changed to the Repatriation Hospital, and was run by a civilian staff. The Orthopaedic specialist from Launceston was temporarily transferred to the Hobart Hospital before the DMO requested that the transfer be made permanent from that point. An artificial limb repair workshop was started in late December 1920, and new limbs were manufactured from early in 1921.

The fate of the Launceston No. 12 Military Hospital was caught up in a bureaucratic and political stoush between the Medical Association and State Government. The Medical Association and the State Government were less than amicable in their relations. Premier Sir Walter Lee was keen to assist the Repatriation Department with a ward in Launceston. Similarly, the medical men at the Hospital were prepared to work in a special ward erected by the Repatriation Department for returned soldiers, as long as it was in no way under the control of the Hospital Board or State Government. This delayed the creation of a special Repatriation Ward under Repatriation control in the Launceston Hospital, although the desire from all parties to provide after-discharge health treatment saw the Ward established.

Soldiers' Cases and Responses

In order to appreciate the obvious multiplicity of returned soldier response, it must be acknowledged that there existed a plurality of expectations and assumptions toward health provisions born out of distinct and varied experiences. These experiences informed their expectations toward the standard and responsibility for health and medical services the Federal Government would and should provide. Expectations were also informed by the social attitude toward disablement, injury and war service, and the value ascribed to each.

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98 DVA (Hobart): File G493: Capital Assets Acquired from Department of Defence Without Payment: Memorandum from Departmental Medical Officer, Hobart, to Deputy Commissioner, Hobart, 16 November 1920.
99 A memo from Humphris to the Repatriation Commission Secretary in Melbourne on Christmas Eve noted that, while repair work was well in hand, "no new limbs can be started until the motor, lathe and other tools have been received from Melbourne." DVA (Hobart): File G493: Capital Assets Acquired from Department of Defence Without Payment: Memorandum (presumed from J.F. Humphris) to the Secretary of the Repatriation Commission, Melbourne, 24 December 1920, p. 3.
How did Tasmanian soldiers respond to the benefits offered in the medical repatriation system? Responses understandably varied, ranging from a deep appreciation for the Department's care and treatment, to hostility at what some soldiers believed was a department attempting to block access to care rightfully earned through their blood sacrifice. Stephen Garton's own research found that, surprisingly, some soldiers opted to relinquish their pensions, despite their right to retain them. Such a case presented in the sample files I examined. Soldier 'A' suffered gunshot wounds in his left knee and right elbow and hand. He received a pension of £1 3s per fortnight from his date of discharge for partial deafness and concussion. He had suffered shell concussion in France, and revealed to Lt. Col. Alan Vincent Giblin in his medical examination in February 1920 that the Medical Board in Southsea Hospital had told him that both ear drums were "destroyed" and that in time he would go "stone deaf." Giblin found that his diagnosis was corroborated by service records and granted a pension for incapacitation for twelve months (until the time for a review and new medical examination). Twelve months later, the soldier applied voluntarily to surrender his pension in a letter to the Chairman of the State Board: "I desire to have my War Pension cancelled on the grounds that my deafness does not seriously interfere with my office work." In this instance, despite his obvious incapacitation and eligibility for a pension, this ex-soldier believed he could continue without the extra assistance. Such behaviour more broadly may have been partly a response to external criticism from the public and media, or simply a recognition that he no longer needed the assistance of the department in re-establishing himself in civilian life. Within twelve months, however, the soldier had reapplied for his pension "on the grounds that deafness is getting worse and left knee is affected by W. service." The claim was accepted and the pension was granted for another twelve months at twenty-five per cent rate. His health and pension were periodically reviewed over the next few years through the mid-1920s until he had to resign his occupation in 1930 due to a deterioration in his health. His resignation was accepted with a warm letter of thanks from his employer, and regret

100 Garton found that "almost 2 per cent of our sample of First World war pensioners voluntarily surrendered their pensions." Garton, The Cost of War, p. 87.
101 Alan Vincent Giblin was also a member of the Repatriation State Board in 1918 and 1919.
102 Letter from soldier to Chairman of the State Repatriation Board, 19/3/1921. NAA: P107/4, C 6094.
103 Letter from soldier to Chairman of the State Repatriation Board, 1/12/1921. NAA: P107/4, C 6094.
104 Pension Rates corresponded to an estimated rate of disability from one hundred per cent. In this case, the soldier's deafness was rated at twenty-five per cent disability. The Board would then re-examine him in another twelve months to reassess his case for any improvement or deterioration in his health, and revise his benefits and treatment accordingly.
that he could no longer fulfil his position "owing to injuries sustained during the Great War."\textsuperscript{105}

This soldier's experience of the repatriation system was more positive than that of some others, as the system was flexible enough to supplement his occupational earnings, and even renew his pension after he had cancelled it for twelve months. This flexibility allowed the ex-soldier the freedom to reintegrate into society without the extra pressure of earning enough money to support himself, and later, his wife, with a war-caused injury. When he could no longer continue in his employment, the pension for his war injury, and the pension he claimed for his wife, ensured a safety net from destitution. Garton has argued that, despite much criticism of the Department, there was at times "even appreciation of the benefits provided."\textsuperscript{106} There are instances in the Tasmanian case files where this point is certainly clear. One soldier, after many years of prolonged treatment through the Department, expressed his thanks to the Deputy Comptroller of Repatriation in Tasmania, Joseph Humphris for the treatment he had received, and for "favourable replies" to requests for assistance and medicines.\textsuperscript{107}

Many other returned soldiers found the benefits administered by the Department useful in helping them survive - and had no further contact with the department than the periodic medical examinations. One such case is a soldier who, on his return, was found to be suffering from an "irregular action of the heart after slight exertion... [and a] General shakiness and nervous manner..."\textsuperscript{108} attributable to War Service. The soldier believed that the condition was a result of "shell shock on active service." The Department agreed, and granted him a small pension. Following a medical examination in Launceston in March 1921, this ex-soldier took up a position as a lighthouse keeper, and so spent many months away from mainland Tasmania, and consequently was unable to attend the pension and medical reviews when required. After a medical evaluation in 1924, some improvement was found, but he was still suffering from shakiness and feeble heart action among other things, with further improvement doubtful. The D.M.O. concluded that "There is not a great deal to the matter and he appears able to earn full wages as lighthouse keeper, but may break

\textsuperscript{105} Letter from employer to ex-soldier, 2/4/1930. NAA: P107/4, C 6094.
\textsuperscript{106} Garton, \textit{The Cost of War}, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{107} Letter from soldier to Deputy Comptroller, 23/8/1933. NAA: P107/4, M1717.
I down.109 The soldier was granted a ten per cent pension for twelve months, which was later extended for another two years. This pension rate continued until 1930, when the soldier complained of worsening health and appealed for a higher pension. A medical evaluation endorsed his complaint, and his pension was increased from ten per cent to thirty-three per cent.

There is at least one interesting point from this case in regard to the machinations of the Medical and General section of the Repatriation Department: the complexity of the process is quite apparent. The D.M.O.'s 1924 report suggested that the soldier would be able to earn full wages as a lighthouse keeper, thus enabling him to draw a ten per cent pension. Presumably, his incapacitation was not such that his work on the lighthouse was affected, but if the returned soldier had taken up another more strenuous occupation, then he would have had to have been re-examined and reassessed, possibly with the rate of incapacity rated higher. This raises the issue of whether a returned soldier, if faced with this choice, would choose a more demanding job in order to be reassessed and potentially be able to claim a greater rate of incapacity, thus higher rate of pension, or retain an easier occupation, and be content with less from the Department. The files throw up many grey areas in the legislation like this. The other aspect about this case is that this returned soldier did not make many demands of the Department. His only inconvenience to them was his inability to attend examinations when required due to his remote location. He received all the care and benefits he requested (which admittedly, were not much), but when he did request a pension increase in 1930, a medical examination proved his claim, and granted it to him. The pension supplemented the soldiers' income to the extent that it allowed him to undertake employment on his return of a lesser physical and emotional strain, and thus re-enter the society he had enlisted to defend.

Medical repatriation policy as administered by the Department in Tasmania could be very effective and soldiers were at times treated quickly and efficiently. Despite Garton's point that repatriation archives are more likely to be a repository of complaint, the above cases demonstrate that the exchange between the Department and the soldier were not always acrimonious, and sometimes the soldier was happy with the outcome. On the other hand, criticisms concerning the overly bureaucratic nature of the Department and its inadequacies in administering repatriation health policy abound.

109 Medical Report, 6/2/1924. NAA: P107/1, C 1954.
Despite this, it is also important to consider the perspectives of those men (often returned soldiers themselves), who were at the forefront of policy administration. There was the potential for inconsistencies within the process simply due to the large numbers of people involved – the Department would contract doctors on its behalf to provide treatment to returned soldiers (particularly in rural or regional areas, or if they were specialists), but these doctors were not necessarily cognisant of all the complexities of medical repatriation policy and its application, nor were they likely necessarily to have had any previous contact with returned soldiers. Consequently, there was the capacity for discrepancies in how repat policy was applied, and how rates of incapacity were calculated.

Further, there appeared in my case files an extraordinary series of memos between officers in the department about the proper machinations of health policy. This is particularly important, as they were in the hands of two senior members of the department in Tasmania: Officer in Charge of the Medical and General Section, James Duncan Walter Chisholm, a returned soldier, and Deputy Comptroller Humphris. The important aspect of this exchange lies firstly in the fact that such a discussion was held on this topic at all, as it infers that within the Tasmanian Office of the Repatriation Department there was no unanimous prevailing view on the method of identifying an illness or incapacity as due to war service if it was not recorded in the medical or repatriation files.

Secondly, this discussion took place in the second half of 1926, after the Repatriation Department had been in operation for eight years. It seems remarkable that policy issues were still being discussed at this late stage, although it is perhaps indicative of a general review process within the department to ensure clarity and consistency. As we will see, Chisholm’s argument does not point to this necessarily being the case. Though these memos were written in relation to a particular case, their importance transcends the exigencies of that particular circumstance, and can be applied more generally as to how medical incapacity policy was interpreted and applied in Tasmania.

The case involved a soldier who suffered a gunshot wound to the ankle, later suffering a variety of afflictions as a consequence of this initial injury. A report from

\[10\] After conferring with Simon Beard, Director of Compensation at the Tasmanian Office of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs in January 2003, it was concluded that the initials ‘Med & Gnl’ as in the original, stood for ‘Medical and General.’
his local doctor in Oatlands stated that “His disability is due to constitutional defects consequent upon shock and wounds. The disability is debility and loss of reserve power in heart which prevents him exerting himself long or severely without further injury to the heart.”

Chisholm discussed the transition from the original injury to subsequent disorders and incapacities in his memo to Humphris:

In my capacity as O i/C Med & Gnl I have always held that the basis of treatment for a War Disability is the evidence in the “R” [Repatriation] or “M” [Medical] file. As a corollary it appeared to me to be the duty of the M&G Section to first ascertain if an unrecorded disability was to be accepted as due to W.S. or not, before any pension for such disability should be considered by the State Board. I am aware that other officers do not hold the same view...

This discussion is important as it had consequences for many other files consulted in the Tasmanian archival material. An original injury might develop further symptoms of other illnesses that the Department had to decide were due to war service or not. In this policy grey area applications and appeals were fought over, and, if the soldier was not satisfied with the result of the appeal to the State Board, he had the option of taking his case to the Repatriation Commission in Melbourne – the highest repatriation appeals tribunal in the country. If the subsequent incapacity was deemed due to war service, then the pension rate was amended accordingly to factor in this new disability. If not, then a process of applications, examinations and appeals would inevitably result. From the rejected applications (and the belief that accepted pensionable incapacities were not paid enough) the majority of criticisms seem to have been made. Further criticisms came from the overly bureaucratic nature of the system, and the constant examinations to reassess benefits. The development of further complications as sequels of the original injury was in this case accepted as due to war service, but it was, in the Tasmanian experience at least, the policy to treat these types of applications on a case by case basis.

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111 Report from Dr Moorhead, Oatlands, to Repatriation Department, 13/3/1919. NAA: P107/4, M 1717. Related to terminology used to describe disability, Blackmore considered that descriptions like ‘hysteria’, ‘cowardice’, ‘malingering’, ‘neurasthenia’ and ‘debility’ “relocated etiology back to the ‘constitution’, hereditary predisposition or innate weakness of the individual and were therefore considered not war-related.” See, K. Blackmore, ‘Aspects of the Australian Repatriation Process: War, Health and Responsibility for Illness’, p. 113. It appears that in this instance (and several other Tasmanian cases consulted), that this was not always the case, and that broad terms like ‘debility’ and ‘neurasthenia’ were indeed accepted as ‘due to war service.’

112 Memo from J.D.W. Chisholm, Officer-in-Charge Medical and General Section, to J.F. Humphris, Deputy Comptroller of Repatriation, Tasmania, 11/8/1926. NAA: P107/4, M 1717.
Humphris’ application of the policy in these instances is very important, as he oversaw the running of the entire repatriation scheme in Tasmania:

The question raised seems to be the right of the State Board to accept a disability without reference to the Commission.

Debility is not a new disability with [the soldier]. There are frequent references to it in the Medical reports on P [Pension] file and pensioner has been assessed on a basis which has included his condition, for years past.

A distinction must be drawn between new disabilities and disabilities which are a sequela of an accepted disability.

For instance. A man may have an amputation and subsequently develop chest trouble. That would be a distinctly new development and require submission to Commission.

In another type of case a man may develop new symptoms of disease which are distinctly traceable to an accepted disability. These symptoms would be described by the appropriate medical terms, but they would not constitute a new disability. They are merely an extension of a recognised trouble and as such would be accepted without reference to the Commission. There would be doubtful cases – cases on the borderline – and for safety these should go to the Commission.

It is impossible to lay down hard & fast rules. Common sense should be used.

With regard to the State Boards functions it must be borne in mind that the Board may be called upon to decide a case in which no medical treatment is involved. It may be purely a pension case. If the case subsequently comes up for medical treatment it should be sufficient for the M & G Section to observe that the Board has accepted the disability. It would not be desirable for the State Board to accept a disability and the M & G Section to refuse treatment for the same trouble. There is a safeguard in new cases in as much as new grants of pensions must be ratified by the Commission.

In cases in which treatment first, and subsequently pension[s] are involved it is the practice of the Board to ascertain whether treatment has been approved before considering grant of pension.

J.F. Humphris 11.8.26.\textsuperscript{113}

Humphris encapsulated a major problem facing repatriation administrators – where to draw the line in terms of war service injuries. The original injury had the capacity to develop further ailments, as was often the case, and it was knowing whether to add these subsequent ailments as DWS. The soldier would most likely not have developed the injury if he had not been incapacitated through his war service. Humphris clearly placed much faith in the administrative structure through his referral to the Repatriation

\textsuperscript{113} Memo by J.F. Humphris on the application of Repatriation policy in Tasmania, 11/8/1926. NAA: P107/4, M 1717. The original letter has been reproduced as an appendix in this thesis, pp. 429-430.
Commission and the State Boards in identifying and calculating treatments and pension rates. In this way, he utilised the structure open to him to the fullest, and advocated consistency in the process of deciding difficult cases.

There was the ever-present risk that the repatriation system was open to abuse. Bearing in mind Millen's assertion that repatriation benefits were not a right or reward for service, it certainly appears that some soldiers treated it as though this were the case. In one case a soldier used his war service in such a way as to justify treatment, after initial applications were rejected. One senses that this soldier may have been forced by desperation to resort to this device after earlier applications had been rejected. After his discharge in 1919, he finally applied for assistance sixteen years later in 1935, claiming that,

Owing to failing health, due I consider to my long war service I am compelled to ask for assistance. I have had medical attention on and off ever since I returned. I am an original with four years service. My unit was the 12th Battn. I have never had a [medical examination] board and regret having to ask for one now. 114

In July 1935, the department's request for a medical examination from the soldiers' local doctor was met with an evaluation claiming that the soldier was suffering from neuritis and rheumatism that was "probably the result of war services." The doctor added, "He is not the malingering type." 115 The State Board accepted myalgia and sciatica as due to war service with a pension at twenty-five per cent rate, while rejecting mild neurasthenia in the claim. Upon appeal for the Board's rejection of neurasthenia, the soldier wrote that:

I am basing my appeal on my long active service. There was [sic] very few actions, that my Battalion (the 12th) took part in, that I missed and there can be very few that can claim, a better front line record than

114 Letter from returned soldier to Repatriation Department, 6/6/1935. NAA: P107/2, M.H 2618.
115 Letter from doctor to Repatriation Department, 24/7/1935. NAA: P107/2, M.H 2618. Interestingly, the doctor's insistence that the soldier was not a malingering type may indicate two things: that 'malingering' was a common enough suspicion to warrant the addition of an affirmation like this; and/or that this doctor may have known this soldier and added this recommendation in order to assist with the soldiers' claim with the department. Joanna Bourke argues that interpretation and its limits in war and post-war medical terminology posed difficulties for medical practitioners to adequately diagnose a patient. She argues that, "debates about malingering men also kindled arguments about the relationship between body and mind and the extent to which some men classified as malingerers might actually be harbouring mental illnesses such as neurasthenia (or 'shell shock')." See her, Dismembering the Male, pp. 20-21.
myself. I am an original with 4 years 68 days service abroad and was only wounded once. [...] I could go on writing pages of my trips into the line and have often wondered how one got through it all. I am paying the penalty now, each month finds me unable to work. I have suffered with my nerves ever since my return.\(^{116}\)

By June 1936, the Board had accepted neurasthenia as due to war service, and his pension was increased to the fifty per cent rate. It may have been that the soldier in question applied for assistance only when he was unable to find work, which may account for the gap of sixteen years between discharge and application. Such a late application was generally difficult to prove, as service records were also consulted as part of the evaluation process. Whether this soldier's appeal was successful due to his reference to his war service is difficult to gauge, for certainly many of the members of the Repatriation Boards around Australia were, where possible, in line with Federal and State employment preference policy, populated with returned soldiers. A successful appeal on this basis would certainly have been contrary to repatriation policy, and its very notion is problematic. It would suggest that there may have been inconsistencies at a departmental level of the application of repatriation policy if such a decision had been made for this reason, although this is purely speculative. A large portion of the returned soldier community supported one another, and that this ex-soldier was also a recipient of the Military Medal may have carried some weight in his application. One must be cautious in making these assertions, however, as such proposals suggest that the Repatriation Department did not act professionally at all times, and impugns the good work it did for Tasmanian returned soldiers. Despite this, the fact that a returned soldier would use his war service as justification for assistance is interesting in itself, and is fundamentally contrary to the principles Edward Millen designed repatriation for. It suggests that some ex-soldiers in Tasmania at the very least had a different view of what repatriation benefits stood for from those who had designed the scheme.

Garton argues that men "frequently complained that they were treated as 'criminals' and 'malingers', and sometimes openly abused as 'drongos' and 'hypochondriacs' by officers of the department."\(^{117}\) One particular soldier’s file contained two disparaging remarks written by officers from the Defence Department.

\(^{116}\) Letter of appeal from returned soldier to Repatriation Department, 9/10/1935. NAA: P107/2, M,H 2618. The underlined section was also underlined in the original letter.

and Repatriation Department. In 1917, while at the Claremont camp before embarkation, a defence official wrote that despite complaining of stomach pains, "he has not been observed ill here. Makes conflicting statements." As to the cause of his disability, the same officer wrote that, "I believe he is a malingerer and has not suffered from appendicitis."

The soldier later had an operation in Bristol. On return and after several years of treatment for abdominal adhesions (approved by Humphris), including operations, in and out-patient treatment from the Repatriation General Hospital in Hobart, a gift of an abdominal belt from the Department, continued treatment for a reoccurrence of abdominal pains, and sustenance allowances and pensions, the returned soldier in question had endured a minimum of forty-one dispensary treatments as an out-patient at the Repatriation General Hospital from 1921-25, and 115 separate prescriptions and treatments until the end of 1929. Despite this care, a medical report in 1936 by the senior Repatriation Medical Officer, Dr H. Nairn Butler found his disability "Largely subjective and there is a very large element of neurosis which is the result of his operative treatment." He calculated an incapacity rate due to War Service at seventy-five per cent for twelve months, and the next day wrote that the ex-soldier in question, "Is a hypochondriac..." It is difficult to reconcile Butler's assessment after the patient's many years of presumably genuine treatment.

Another instance of departmental personal judgements was the case of one soldier who had lost his ring finger and had a large scar between his shoulders - both due to gunshot wounds - who claimed that he could not work due to his war disability. The Officer-in-Charge wrote a memo for the Deputy Commissioner, stating: "Will you please review this case as it seems that [soldier] is still suffering from his war service, approximately 5 kilometres north of Hobart.

Medical Report, Claremont Camp, 28/6/1917. NAA: P107/4, M,SDs,H 3552. These comments appear to confirm Kate Blackmore's assertion that doctors, in addition to healing, observed and medically policed individual soldiers on behalf of the state. Value judgements like those expressed above also serve to highlight Blackmore's argument that "an important and unequivocal relationship" existed "between disciplinary infringement, moral judgement, medical treatment and eligibility for benefits under the repatriation scheme." She added that "moral judgement of the behaviour of the soldier was an integral part of the procedure." See, Blackmore, 'Aspects of the Australian Repatriation Process: War, Health and Responsibility for Illness', pp. 103, 110.

Perhaps something of Butler's assessment can be elicited from his obituary: "To subordinates, especially ex-servicemen, 'The Colonel' became a paternal figure. [...] Autocratic in temperament, he was at times peremptory and impatient, being quick to appreciate the essential factors in any problem and intolerant of paper work and office procedure." W.E.L.H. Crowther, 'Harry Nairn Butler', Obituary, Medical Journal of Australia, 4 June 1955, p. 858.
and although he is not the best of characters, his disability warrants consideration."\(^{122}\) Although these were internal memos for the edification of department staff only, these notes indicate a fundamental misunderstanding of, and value judgement toward some returned soldiers, who they deemed, for whatever reason, may not be worthy of receiving assistance from the department. Repatriation authorities and administrators had to negotiate these issues while applying repat policy at all times, being conscious of not appearing to be obstructive to a soldiers’ claim. They occupied a difficult position as they were criticised if they were not seen to be providing the care they should be for returned soldiers, and yet Repatriation was also criticised for being open to rorting and abuse.\(^{123}\)

While the department could be criticised on many different fronts, the problem did not exclusively lie with them. Repatriation administrators faced difficulties in keeping the machinery running smoothly, particularly so when they were not assisted by the soldier himself. Repeated requests for information or attendances were met with no response, and the failure of punctual attendances spelt the cancellation of more than one soldier’s benefits. The repatriation process was a reciprocal arrangement too, and, while particularly vocal ex-soldiers were quick to criticise, the onus was on the soldier to uphold their part of the process. One soldier had his pension cancelled for non-attendance of his medical and pension review, despite suffering from gunshot wounds in both thighs, and at one stage having a pension rate at seventy-five per cent and later fifty per cent (indicating a serious injury).\(^{124}\) After non-attendance at the Repatriation Hospital for treatment, another soldier’s application for an increase in his pension was deemed withdrawn, after letters from the department requested him to attend.\(^{125}\)

This latter case was unique, however, as the file indicates that the soldier in question had tired of the process necessary to obtain treatment, and had neglected to fulfil every request made by the department. Previous applications to the department for an increase in his pension rate from one-third (thirty-three per cent rate) to one half (fifty per cent rate) had been rejected, and the reasons for rejecting the application highlight an incidence of an antagonistic examiner to the soldier’s complaint. The

\(^{122}\) Memo from Officer-in-Charge, Launceston, to Deputy Commissioner, on soldier’s appeal for Vocational Training, 12/9/1920. NAA: P107/2, M,H 1279. (Emphasis added)

\(^{123}\) See Garton’s argument on this, where criticism of Repat policy appears to have been entrenched since as early as 1919, continuing to this day. The shift in public and media opinion toward benefits for returned soldiers since the end of the Great War was marked. Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 87.

\(^{124}\) See case file NAA: P107/1, P 2223.

\(^{125}\) See case file NAA: P107/1, MC 2043.
initial medical report stated: "Is suffering from muscular weakness. He states he is easily exhausted when he attempts to work. From the condition of his muscles and browning of skin he appears to have been doing a fair amount of work. Incapacity one third." The patient claimed one thing during the examination, and the medical examiner, while not directly claiming otherwise, suggested another, indicating an inherent distrust between the two parties. The ease with which the District Medical Officer's claim that his debility was one third is striking in its simplicity, and its ability to quantify human suffering and injury to a ratio translating to a pension amount. This problem is more one of legislation than application, but the rationale by which the decision was reached would not have been encouraging to the soldier. The official response to the soldier, merely stated:

With reference to your recent appeal against the amount of your war pension, I have to say that your case has been very carefully considered at this office. In view of medical evidence, however, it cannot be admitted your incapacity is such as would warrant payment of a greater pension than that which you are already receiving. It is therefore regretted your war pension cannot be increased.

After two unsuccessful applications for a pension increase, and repeated medical examinations to ensure the continuation of repatriation benefits, it is no wonder that the soldier later became so disillusioned with the system that a note during a later medical examination found that, "states he is tired of seeing the local M.O." This may have been as a result of a belief that any further appeals to the department would almost certainly be rejected. From the department's perspective, they could only operate within the legislation they had, while the calculation of rates of incapacity was, and remained an imperfect science. Departmental officers could only make assessments on the advice of doctors - whether departmental or contracted - meaning a lot of power was invested in the opinions of individual doctors.

This soldier's requests for a pension increase, the perception that the department did not understand or care for the suffering of soldiers in the community, and the sense that the repatriation process was arbitrary, was the basis for a letter from this soldier's wife to Humphris:

126 Medical examiner's report, 12/12/1918. NAA: P107/1, MC 2043.
128 Medical examiner's report, 21/2/1924. NAA: P107/1, MC 2043.
Dear Sir, Per War Pension My husband call on Medical officer at Huonville when he got the first notice [to have another Pension medical examination] hoping you have got the reply by this & if the Medical officer send in his report of my husband health you will see by that the state my husband is in & is always in he is living a life of misery through the war & the small pension he gets to live on his wife & child the Government promist [sic] to keep those soldiers & this is the way they are doing it my husband has them back almost on quite seven years and is no better only getting worse & worse why because he has to go & do something to keep us when he should be keep he is not strong enough to do any work he was in Rep Hospital 12 months ago through the same thing that is just weakness through his war work If those people could only come around & see those soldiers that are in ill health they would try & help them more there is a lot I know are getting more than there [sic] share according to there [sic] health then [sic] others some have never done one days fighting & are getting a nice pension & others are not getting any & are in very bad health I have had my husband in bed last week just to [sic] weak to get about any one knowing my husband knows how he is in health & would tell you the same as I have told you hoping to hear from you soon.  

This wife’s experience was typical of many others whose husbands were struggling with poor health as a result of war work. She saw first-hand the devastation that war could wreak on the human mind and body. To her, and other wives and dependents of wounded returned soldiers, the Department’s processes must have appeared mystifying, particularly when there were stories of other soldiers getting a fairer deal from the repatriation apparatus. These are problems that the department faced, and undoubtedly added to the public-relations problems that the repatriation system suffered through the inter-war years.

Conclusion

What conclusions can we draw from the narratives in the medical and hospital repat case files of Tasmanian soldiers’ experience of Repatriation medical care? In a broad sense, the Tasmanian returned soldier had access to quality health care treatment that was constrained at times by bureaucratisation due to the restrictive, but after 1920, 

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129 Small township south of Hobart, in the Huon region.
130 Letter from soldier’s wife to the Deputy Comptroller of Repatriation, J.F. Humphris, 22/1/1923. NAA: P107/1, MC 2043.
increasingly liberalised treatment qualifications. The issue of whether the incapacitation was caused or aggravated by the soldier’s war service was central to his access to the repatriation medical benefits scheme. In this sense the returned soldier found himself waging war on an entirely different battleground, and one that was as equally important to health as time in the trenches. It is perhaps too simple to reduce the average soldier’s experiences dealing with the Repatriation Department in terms of hostility, but to many the inability to prove their injuries as due to war service often meant many years of fruitless applications and appeals, and the Repatriation Department had failed to provide what Billy Hughes and Australia’s other politicians had promised on their enlistment. To others, the care and treatment, including pensions and sustenance allowances while receiving treatment were gratefully received, and enabled veterans to continue their lives with less suffering than they would perhaps have endured otherwise. Such treatment was also of comfort to the families of wounded veterans, as the pension scheme enabled the family to survive when or if the returned soldier was unable to undertake employment. While undoubtedly some slipped through this medical safety net, a fair majority did not.

It has been fashionable to represent the repatriation system and the Department that administered it as incompetent, overly bureaucratic, and unfair to the returned man, particularly after the promises that were made to the men on their enlistment. They did not return to a paradise of infinite health care with pensions for all, indicating a gulf between expectation and reality – the process was complex (perhaps overly so) and at times adversarial, and the focus on the injury or incapacitation as a result of war service was not always easy to define. Returned soldiers often had different views on what constituted due to war service, and of what they felt they were entitled to receive. However, to gauge the department’s work solely in terms of how it was received by returned soldiers is problematic in that it only provides part of the story. What is easy to forget is that the department was staffed largely with returned soldiers who, where possible, trod a middle ground between sympathy and legislation; where they were hamstrung with the desire to support a comrade, but were obligated to prevent abuses of the system. This middle ground found them caught between two extremes: a public increasingly hostile to the range of benefits available to returned soldiers that particularly manifested itself as the 1920s went on and the proximity to the war decreased, as well as attempts by Governments to introduce financial stringency while improving repatriation standards; and a vocal and politically active returned soldier
community who would not and could not forget the trauma of war, that had inexorably imprinted itself onto their bodies and minds. The traversing of this path was a journey that would never meet with the satisfaction of either side – a case of the colloquial, between a rock and a hard place.

The cost of war, as Stephen Garton has noted, did not end with the cessation of hostilities, but continues to this day. It killed the architect of Repatriation, Senator Edward Millen both politically and literally. The medical system took many years to find its feet, and never ceased to be an object of criticism from the ex-soldier community as the archives attest, but by reducing the medical repatriation process to a personal level – to Tasmanian soldiers’ experiences of the system – it is possible to find among the complaints, examples of positive encounters, and a repository of some successes. There may indeed have been a gulf between expectation and reality, but in the department’s defence, their work was pioneering and fraught with the capacity for failure. The 1920 Act attempted to rectify the problems of the first Act of 1917 with some success, but one must remember that the early history of repatriation was one of “hesitant experimentation.”  

Garton, The Cost of War, p. 78.
Chapter Three

Housing the Veteran – War Service Homes in Tasmania

I own the house, which stands on my ground, and I cannot (in the circumstances) see how I can be a tenant of a property of which I am the owner. In addition, I do not yet know the capital cost of the house, and therefore do not feel disposed to pay instalments...especially as the term of the agreement is quite indefinite.

I should not be surprised if houses were charged with material and labour that never went into those houses.2

As part of the massive task of repatriating returned soldiers and providing for their physical return, provisions for the construction and sale of houses for ex-servicemen and their families3 were created to assist this process. If finding employment and providing health care for veterans assisted their return into society, then providing homes as part of a greater repatriation commitment was a process of providing them with a comfortable place in a grateful Australian community through the opportunity of owning a piece of the country they had fought for.4 Most states (except Tasmania5) had instituted an informal process of providing housing for returned soldiers, widows and dependents prior to the Commonwealth programme, but as L.J. Pryor argues, much of this was organised through State War Councils, the

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3 War Service Homes provisions were also extended to dependents of deceased soldiers, although this study will focus on applications made by, and homes provided for, returned servicemen only, in line with the general theme of this thesis.
Repatriation Fund and the efforts of local communities. Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees argue that the provision of War Service Housing regulations had a pragmatic as well as altruistic basis, as demand for homes from returning soldiers would accentuate a national housing shortage, so a veterans' housing scheme would "straighten out bottlenecks in the domestic market," while also adding to the broadness and munificence of Australia's repatriation scheme. Additionally, Pryor argues that housing provisions under the general repatriation umbrella took on an even greater significance to returned men if they were "unemployed or otherwise handicapped", because these 'disabilities' conspired to restrict the ability of a man to obtain a house.

In the interwar period, Tasmania was affected by poor industrial growth that precipitated high unemployment. This conspired to add to the burden of an already dire housing shortage since Federation, that Stefan Petrow notes in Hobart at least, saw working-class housing in short supply and of low quality. Overcrowding was prevalent, and high rents were charged in proportion to low wages – a situation that was investigated in a series of newspaper articles in 1919. It was not until the Lee Government's successful Homes Act, 1919 that ownership of private housing was available to working families on moderate incomes, after previous governments' efforts were blocked by the Legislative Council. The Homes Act was framed in the context of the demobilisation of Tasmania's AIF, and its provisions were also opened

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8 Pryor, 'The Origins of Australia's Repatriation Policy, 1914-1920', p. 70. Pryor also argues that many servicemen returned to Australia with new brides from the United Kingdom, so there was an additional urgency in obtaining a home.
up to returned soldiers. Thus, while a housing shortage still remained in Tasmania throughout the 1920s, Tasmanian returned soldiers had two housing schemes from which to attain a home. While the Homes Act provided a legislative and financial basis to construct more housing in the State, demand always outstripped supply, and the basic eligibility to married men with dependants who were of ‘limited means’ and who could provide a ten per cent deposit, meant that a large number of working families could not avail themselves of the Act’s benefits. “Buying a house by instalments over a long period,” Petrow notes, “was perhaps too much of a risk for workers at the mercy of uneven economic development and regular depressions.”

Providing a Home

Legislation to provide for a veteran housing scheme was introduced to Federal Parliament in December 1918 by Minister for Repatriation Senator Edward Millen, and allowed for advances to construct homes, as well as the purchase of estates for cheaper costs (much like the principles underpinning purchases for soldier settlement properties). All of the provisions were to be administered under a War Service Homes Commission, with a Commissioner presiding who was accountable to the Minister. The War Service Homes Act came into effect on 6 March 1919, and Lt. Colonel James Walker was appointed Commissioner. Subsequent amendments

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11 See, Petrow, ‘Hovels in Hobart: The Quality and Supply of Working-Class Housing 1880-1942’, p. 172. The Labor Party pushed for the inclusion of returned soldiers in the legislation. While the Legislative Council blocked it, they eventually relented after a conference between the two Houses.
12 Ibid., p. 164.
14 See the first Land Settlement Chapter for how this principle was applied to providing farms for soldiers.
15 Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 154. For a very brief treatment of war service homes and its basic functions and achievements up to 1935, see, E. Scott, The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol. XI, Australia During the War, Sydney, 1936, pp. 840-841. Scott’s short section fails to mention any of the issues involving Walker’s dismissal or problems that the scheme faced.
16 Lloyd and Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 156, note that the promotion of Walker to the position, a Boer War veteran, and battalion commander in Gallipoli and France, was a major embarrassment to the Government. While having previous experience in the building industry, he was formerly bankrupted
were made in 1919 and 1920 to expand and liberalise conditions of eligibility and affordability. A cap of £700 was advanced for the purposes of either building or purchasing a pre-built property in order to provide a home for the ex-soldier, later raised to £800 in 1920 after building costs began to spiral. The Government (through the Commission) provided insurance, as well as bore administrative costs. The provisions were reasonably liberal, and importantly as Pryor notes, made it possible for all returned soldiers and widows to obtain a home “on comparatively easy terms.”

In Senate debates during 1920, Millen expressed pride in Australia’s beneficent treatment toward housing Australian veterans. There were choruses of congratulations and much back-slapping to celebrate the work done by the War Service Homes scheme. Millen himself made the grandiose claim that “Australia has nothing to fear from any fair comparison of what we are doing for our returned soldiers with what is being done in any other country in the world.” This was, however, before the investigations of the Public Accounts Committee, the unravelling of administrative inadequacies, and the embarrassing removal of Commissioner Walker.

In short time, criticisms of Walker’s somewhat extravagant administration were aired, while other circumstances conspired to prejudice the erection of affordable housing for ex-soldiers. Millen was criticised for the slow progress in
constructing homes, yet faced the problem of industrial strikes and the influenza epidemic that slowed the purchase and shipping of materials. The Government’s entry onto the building market precipitated price increases for materials and in the price of contract work,\textsuperscript{21} with the result that the Commission constructed many of the homes itself using day labour.\textsuperscript{22} The purchasing of estates for subdivision into group housing was unpopular,\textsuperscript{23} Walker acted beyond Millen’s direct knowledge in purchases of assets and materials, and there were issues of financing with the banks. Millen had proposed utilising the Commonwealth Bank to advance loans, but had met little assistance, so negotiated with State Savings Banks. After almost finalising agreements with them, the Commonwealth Bank indicated its willingness to participate with the promise of being able to provide homes immediately. Millen cancelled negotiations with the States’ Banks and “reluctantly” took up their offer,\textsuperscript{24} leading to two essentially similar housing programmes for veterans that “inevitably” competed for resources and forced up prices for land and materials.\textsuperscript{25} The repetition of effort was counter-productive. On one side, Walker’s Commission facilitated the role of financer and builder on a large scale, while the Commonwealth Bank was also advancing monies for housing to individual applicants. By his own admission, the Minister for Repatriation did not see the division of labour between the Commonwealth Bank and the Commissioner as any great success, despite the achievements of the War Service Homes scheme. For Millen, the more serious ramification of sharing the responsibility of administering the scheme with the Bank was that, “under the agreement, although the Commonwealth Bank claimed that it was merely an agent, it was yet impossible to control it. The Bank was an agent at

\textsuperscript{22} Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 160. This was driven out of the high cost of tenders.
\textsuperscript{23} While group purchase and subdivision was undertaken with economy in mind (to the Government and therefore to the soldier), the consequence of such a policy was that a large conglomeration of returned soldiers (in similar style homes) were placed together. This suggested to the men, as Earle Page declared, a construction like ‘an internment camp’, while Millen admitted that such developments could act by segregating them from the community. See, Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 158. See also, ‘Final Report From the Joint Committee of Public Accounts Upon the War Service Homes Commission’, CPP, 1922, Vol. II, Paper No. 32, p. 11. The Public Accounts Committee’s Final Report in July 1922 found that applicants “objected to being segregated in this way from the ordinary community, and would have much preferred to choose allotments in localities suited to their individual requirements.”
\textsuperscript{24} Pryor argues that there was little reluctance in the decision. He believes that “Senator Millen was quite ready to find reasons why that Bank [Commonwealth] was most suitable for the purpose in question.” Pryor, ‘The Origins of Australia’s Repatriation Policy, 1914-1920’, p. 156. For further on the issue of Millen accepting the Commonwealth Bank’s late offer, see, Wettenthal, ‘Administrative Debacle, 1919-23’, p. 309.
\textsuperscript{25} Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 159.
one moment, and at another was claiming a free hand."26 The Commonwealth Bank had the responsibility of approving and forwarding monies to applicants, yet had no authority in the administrative process. Millen and the Commissioner agreed that the Bank’s role in the scheme should be terminated, with the exception that existing transactions should be completed. It was terminated in June 1920.27 The role of the Commonwealth Bank after 1920 in the War Service Homes scheme was that of an agent, collecting the repayments by the soldiers on behalf of the Commissioner. It was coincidentally after this period of time that Pryor argues the scheme began achieving some successes.28

As materials and labour became more difficult to acquire at an economical rate, the costs of homes under the scheme rose. The standards of homes militated against pure economy, as extra embellishments added expense. Consequently, “prices were beyond the means of many returned soldiers”, yet these higher standards in building were, Lloyd and Rees argue, “consistent with the ethos of Australian repatriation.”29 The legislative amendment to increase the maximum loan to £800 was Parliamentary cognisance of the rising costs of land and construction. Further amendments closed the loophole allowing ‘trafficking’ in War Service Homes for returned soldiers to civilians. Such transfers had taken place up to this point, and were to be stopped under the new legislation. As the value of War Service Homes was often greater than their building costs, some returned soldiers saw an opportunity to cash in. While all transfers had to be approved by the Commissioner, Millen reported that returned soldiers were defeating this requirement by selling their homes for cash (presumably at a profit), then paying their outstanding debts to the Department. In this way, “houses that were constructed for returned soldiers are now in the possession of non-eligible men,”30 Millen stated. This trafficking clearly contravened the scheme’s objective, for, “these homes were built for soldiers...they were not supposed to be a medium by which any member of the community could secure a home at a reasonable price.”31 The amendment simply allowed that any soldier who had to sell his property for legitimate reasons could now do so provided that such a sale was sanctioned by the Commissioner. The Commissioner would have

26 CPD, Vol. XCII, p. 3629.
29 Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 159.
30 CPD, Vol. XCII, p. 3623.
31 Ibid.
the power to repurchase the home, refunding any monies paid by the soldier, and in
doing so, according to Millen, "No injustice will be done to the soldier, because he
will receive back all he paid, and the house will then become the property of the
Commissioner, who can sell it to another soldier." In this way, War Service
Housing would be kept out of the hands of non-eligibles, and the scheme could
continue and provide for genuine applicants.

Criticisms of the scheme came from those who considered the housing a
'gift', and from those with vested interests in the building industry, who railed
against the impact that a Government-sanctioned building program would have on
their livelihood. Sections of the building industry complained they were not part of
the construction of the War Service Homes, and architects too bemoaned the fact
that they were not invited as part of the process. Millen replied that cost was the prime
prerogative. The price of the homes was of paramount importance, for at all times the
Commissioner was obliged to provide quality housing as cheaply as possible. While
contractors had built approximately half of the homes under the scheme, the other half
were built using day labour; cost being the primary reason. As Millen argued: "If
contractors were prepared to tender and to build upon the basis of the same prices as
the Commissioner, they would be gladly given the contracts."

However, there were criticisms of the scheme by returned soldiers that a quick
gloss by Millen could not erase. The main criticism of the scheme, in its early days at
least, was the delay in getting the scheme running to build homes. Looking back at

32 Ibid.
33 This amendment did not preclude a soldier who had sold his property back to the Commissioner, for
genuine reasons, from applying for a new home in a more suitable district. The legitimacy of the
reasons for sale, and the success of the applicant was up to the discretion of the Commissioner. Ibid.,
pp. 3623-4.
34 The Tassie Digger emphatically rejected any claim that the homes built under the War Service
Housing Scheme were in any way gifts to ex-soldiers. "It requires to be made abundantly clear to the
public," their Editorial thundered, "that the dwellings built for the Diggers by the department are by no
manner of means in the nature of GIFT HOUSES. [...] What is objected to...is the widespread fallacy
that because the Digger went and fought for his country he has been presented with his house free,
grats, and for nothing. Nothing could be further from the truth." See, 'Editorial Notes', The Tassie
Digger, December 1921, p. 5.
35 The problem here revolved around the fact that the Commissioner was reluctant to undertake
contracting work on the building of the homes. The reason for this was that estimates provided by the
contractors were too expensive for the economical construction of the homes, under which the
Commissioner was instructed to keep at as low a cost as possible. According to the Minister for
Repatriation, Senator E.D. Millen, the contractor's estimates were frequently higher than the
estimations of the Commissioner. See CPD, Vol. XCII, pp. 3634-5. As such, day labour was used to
cap the costs of construction. The irony was that day labour was cited in the Public Accounts
Committee Final Report of 1922 as contributing to the high cost of homes, over and above the costs
involved under contract labour.
36 E.D. Millen, 19 August 1920. Ibid., p. 3635.
those complaints from a vantage point two years later, Millen could only sympathise
with them. He acknowledged their need and desire to get their own homes as soon as
possible, and understood the criticism that some returned soldiers levelled at the
scheme when they could not do so at short notice. The initial delays in the
construction of homes centred around the fact that there was a backlog of applications
for such homes under this scheme, and to create a department, administrative
structure, and funding for such a scheme took some months to organise. This
accumulation had to be cleared, and can be seen in the predominance of purchases of
pre-existing homes rather than the actual building of new ones. This trend from 1920
stimulated the building industry by the increased spending and employment it offered
(many of which were to be returned soldiers plying their new trades learnt through
returned soldier vocational programs). The eventual beginning of the construction of
war service homes was plagued from the start by a dearth of skilled labour (at
competitive prices to ensure the overall cost would fit beneath the £700 ceiling), and a
lack of materials, although Millen indicated that the shortage of labour was the
biggest impediment to a wide-scale building program. In addition, construction was
hampered in the first two years by industrial strikes that limited the supply of
materials and labour. Not aiding the Commissioner’s job in constructing homes was
the steadily rising cost of materials, which made his job more difficult when the final
cost of a soldier’s home was of the utmost importance.

Walker continued purchasing land and materials through the Deputy
Commissioners in each state independently of Millen, indicating a rashness and
recklessness in his administration. When Public Accounts Committees began
investigating the scheme, Walker’s tenure was running out. The Commonwealth
Parliament were concerned at his operations, and the Public Accounts Committees
found administrative instability and turbulence to be the problem behind many of the
schemes criticisms.

37 Millen acknowledged this during the introduction of the second War Service Homes Bill to the
Senate, 19 August 1920. Ibid., p. 3630.
38 Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 163.
All we want is justice for everybody.39

The War Service Homes Scheme began Tasmanian operations in May 1919.40 Two years later, the scheme was being investigated to identify and remedy its faults. The Public Accounts Committee visited Tasmania in July 1921 to inquire into the administration and work of the Tasmanian War Service Homes Commission. The Tasmanian RSSILA were involved in presenting cases to the Committee’s hearings, and requested that complainants interview them to have their cases represented.41 Duncan McRae, representing the RSSILA, gave evidence on the hearing’s second day. The Committee inspected homes around Hobart on 11 July and began taking evidence the next day. They then travelled north to Launceston and Burnie to replicate the process in northern Tasmania. The Tasmanian Deputy-Commissioner Captain W. Taylor gave alarming evidence, stating that he was the fifth Deputy Commissioner in the State in three years,42 which led to little confidence in the State’s Homes administration.43 Taylor detailed the reorganisation of his office staff, claiming that the chief clerk and accountant had been dismissed, the sub-accountant had resigned and a general “clearing up” had taken place.44 Under heavy questioning, Taylor’s evidence revealed that the scheme in Tasmania was beset with problems: as

40 ‘Second Progress Report From the Joint Committee of Public Accounts Upon the War Service Homes Commission (Tasmania)’, CPD, 1920-21, Vol. V, No. 149, p. 3.
41 The Mercury, 7 July 1921, p. 8.
42 Later evidence from clerk Archibald Douglas said there had been 6 Tasmanian Deputy Commissioners in total. The Second Progress Report from the Public Accounts Committee in Tasmania stated that there were in fact five Deputy Commissioners or Acting Deputy Commissioners between May 1919 and July 1921. See, ‘Second Progress Report From the Joint Committee of Public Accounts Upon the War Service Homes Commission (Tasmania)’, CPD, 1920-21, No. 149, Vol. V, p. 71. The author found that the latter figure was correct. The discrepancy becomes largely academic as the main issue is the fact that the excessively frequent changes in administration and leadership, with the contrasting styles of administration, undoubtedly played a significant role in the Tasmanian scheme’s problems.
44 Ibid., p. 6.
across Australia, there were problems obtaining (skilled) labour and materials; unsuitable land had been bought in both Hobart and Launceston; one block had been bought which was still under contract to other tenants and had another two years until it was available for use; quotes for house prices were frequently under what the final cost came to and were (sometimes substantially) over what was advanced under the legislation; and that problems with homes bought under the Commonwealth Bank had to be “fixed up.” The evidence from the Deputy Commissioner himself painted a bleak picture of War Service Homes administration in the State, but he argued that the majority of purchases had been made by previous Deputy Commissioners, most notably the first in that position, Captain W.J. Earle. Taylor, previously Chief Clerk in Victoria’s administration, had attempted in seven months in the job to remedy as many problems as possible. He had taken measures to improve the Tasmanian administration satisfactory, instituting proper and accurate record-keeping, as well as reorganising the ‘system’ he inherited. The Select Committee agreed with Taylor, and the measures he was taking.

45 Taylor claimed that one “small” piece of land in Hobart contained five allotments, yet had one entrance which was a 20 ft right-of-way with small bridge for access. It was liable to flooding. Another block on the top of Cataract Hill in Launceston was “not worth the trouble of clearing”, yet these properties had been purchased. Ibid. In other regions, despite 34 applications for homes in Burnie in February of 1921, the problems in Melbourne forced a suspension of purchases, meaning that the Burnie applications were all refused pending further instructions. Commission Clerk, Archibald Douglas, explained that no properties were purchased in Burnie because the cost of land there was “so fearfully expensive” owing to its ownership by The Van Diemen’s Land Company. A previous Deputy Commissioner, Major Harbottle, had attempted to purchase land in Burnie owing to applications there, but had to give up after the prices were too high. See evidence given by Archibald Douglas, ‘War Service Homes. More Evidence in Hobart. Quantity Surveyor Examined. Senator Millen and Guesswork’, The Mercury, 15 July 1921, p. 6.

46 ‘War Service Homes. Inquiry in Hobart. Some Surprising Revelations. Facts About Land Purchases’, The Mercury, 12 July 1921, p. 6; ‘War Service Homes. Inquiry in Hobart. Returned Soldiers’ Grievances. Auditor’s Investigations’, The Mercury, 13 July 1921, p. 7. The block was under a seven year lease, signed in 1916, and due to lapse in 1923. There was a clause that allowed the Commission to build at any time, but to pay compensation to the tenants. The block had been purchased regardless.

47 One case was reported where an applicant had been given three separate final prices “starting from £700 and running up to £842.” The man eventually had to pay to the Commission the £46 over and above the money allowed to him. Costs of foundations for homes near Hobart were valued at up to a staggering £100 over the valuation price. See also references to the Wadley case, where he paid the £196 above the £800 advanced to him under the Act, yet when valued by the valuer was quoted £104 above that again. Wadley had no house, had paid the extra £196 to the Department, yet still also continued paying interest on the £800. Taylor admitted “possibly a dozen” more cases like Wadley’s. ‘War Service Homes. Inquiry in Hobart. Some Surprising Revelations. Facts About Land Purchases’, The Mercury, 12 July 1921, pp. 5, 6. Wadley gave evidence on the last sitting day in Hobart, outlining his case. See, ‘War Service Homes. Hobart Inquiry Closed. More Interesting Evidence. The Land Transactions Detailed’, The Mercury, 16 July 1921, p. 10.

Large discrepancies between the costs of blocks had been noted in the Tasmanian operations by the Committee, ranging between £30 and £90 per block. The Government's entry onto the market as a buyer had, as with land bought for soldier settlement, precipitated large price increases from speculators. The Tasmanian representative on the Committee, Senator J.D. Millen, dryly remarked at the 'patriotism' of selling to the Commission at such inflated prices. Evictions had been threatened against ex-soldiers, some 12 homes were unoccupied because of their cost, and costs had blown out in some instances because "the men were not kept up to job, and because the foremen employed were not capable." Such high prices had removed the opportunity for home ownership that the scheme had intended to deliver.

In addition, land was purchased far in advance of requirements, particularly in Launceston, in expectation of further applications, yet the problems with Walker interstate had brought uncertainty about further action. The same concerns in the central administration led to applications from the north-west coast being refused because Taylor did not have authority to purchase new blocks at that period of time. Little wonder the Tasmanian RSSILA followed keenly the Committee's hearings.

Notwithstanding the administrative gaffes, Taylor reported that up until July 1921, 132 acres of land had been purchased, 170 homes had been built, and capital expenditure was £532,557. The standard and quality of homes that had been

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49 Eight acres at Mezger's Estate in Moonah had sold £550, then when the Commission bought it, cost £2,887 10s., a cost five times the price only three months earlier! At the Grove Estate in Glenorchy, in 1916 95 acres had sold for £8,000, then in June four years later, one-third of that land cost the Commission £8,220. See, *Ibid.*, p. 5. Colin Perkins, the solicitor for the Tasmanian branch from late 1920-early 1921, gave evidence at the second day's sitting, and remarked that the Grove estate was most likely the result of a natural land boom in Glenorchy since the establishment of the Zinc Works at Risdon. The Moonah estate was however considered by Perkins to be "abnormal appreciation." Later, Geoffrey Payne, a member of the Commonwealth Surveyor-General's staff who worked casually on War Service Homes properties stated that he thought the Mezger Estate purchase was reasonable because "Hobart is growing and it can only expand in that direction. There have been other sales in the same proportion." Presumably he meant the building expansion of Hobart's northern suburbs. See, *War Service Homes. Inquiry in Hobart. Returned Soldiers' Grievances. Auditor's Investigations*, *The Mercury*, 13 July 1921, p. 7. Many of these facts were refuted by E.C. Tregear, the agents for the above estates. Tregear wanted to correct statements made by Taylor about the land and prices paid, demonstrating that the Deputy Commissioners responsible for their purchase showed "good business ability on their part in obtaining the properties as near as possible to the price that they actually cost the vendors." See, *War Service Homes Commission: Land Purchases*, letter to the editor from E.C. Tregear and Co., *The Mercury*, 14 July 1921, p. 2.


51 *Ibid.*, p. 5. In the House of Representatives on 13 July 1921, Colonel Bell asked A. Rodgers, representing Senator E.D. Millen, for statistics of the War Service Homes scheme in Tasmania. Up until 30 June, Rodgers replied that £535,799 had been spent, 236 homes had been completed with 3 men being assisted in completing houses owned by them, and 36 homes were in the course of construction. The main discrepancy with Taylor's evidence to the Committee is the number of homes
completed had been praised by the Committee, and were the equal of interstate houses. Despite the administrative problems, the final products were evidently more than suitable for habitation.

On the second day of hearings McRae submitted complaints he had received from returned soldiers. The use of day labour rather than contract had increased the cost of houses, and frequently led to soldiers having to pay over what they expected. Taylor had explained the previous day that he thought the best method in Tasmania was to use contract work. Soldiers also criticised the “excessive” interest charges on progress payments. The main point McRae kept returning to was the large difference between quotes and final costs of homes. According to McRae, it broke the “moral agreement that houses should not exceed the original estimate”, although no legal clauses were in place to protect soldiers against that. He reported that

Soldiers contended that the costs of the homes had been excessive, and that the houses could have been built for those sums at the time, but they had dragged along over such long periods. This was due to the inefficiency and mismanagement of the Commission under previous Deputy Commissioners, mismanagement for which the soldier was now being called upon to pay.

McRae’s typical rhetorical flourish maintained his general mistrust of the delivery of repatriation services, but surprisingly he publicly expressed his appreciation to Taylor for the way he dealt with complaints from the League. Two returned soldiers personally took the stand to air their own grievances with the Commission, with one, John Gibbs, revealing his frustration at the delays in building his home. He said that the day labour working on his house was so slow he complained to the architect, and

completed, although that is most likely borne out of a lack of differentiation between houses built and pre-existing houses bought under the scheme.

52 Ibid.
54 Ibid. The extant Minutes of the Meetings of the Trustees of the Agricultural Bank note the successful application during a meeting 8 April 1925 from a “D. McRae” applying for £797 5s. 0d. for the erection of a house in Sandy Bay. It is likely that this was the Duncan McRae who presented evidence to the Public Accounts Committee. See, AOT: AB 71/1-2 – Minutes of Meetings of the Trustees of the Agricultural Bank, 1924-1929, p. 5.
pleaded with them directly to give him a “square deal.” He even assisted in building
the house himself to increase the pace.

A succession of Commission employees revealed some detrimental evidence
about the previous running of the Tasmanian administration. The internal auditor and
later accountant at the Hobart branch of the Commission, Archibald Broad, claimed
that he had even been warned when he first arrived in Hobart “that there were unusual
conditions, for which he had to keep a sharp look out.” There was “no system
whatsoever”, and instructions from headquarters “had been disregarded.” He
blamed much of the administrative mess on the high staff turnover, and felt that
headquarters were aware of the poor organization. Inconsistencies with stores found
“only” £800 worth missing, but the incomplete and inaccurate records Broad faced on
his placement meant that no true figure could ever be arrived at. While there was
ample potential for fraud and other criminal activity due to the laxness of the
administration, Broad could not say that it had ever occurred, although that was
qualified with the adjunct that it would be impossible to ever know. Archibald
Turner, the Commission’s Tasmanian Inspector, revealed incompetence and waste in
his own three-month experience in the position. Jobs at Devonport and Launceston
saw windows being ordered that did not fit houses, timber ordered with no
explanation of what it was to be used for, faulty estimates for houses, and incompetent
overseers. Turner had sacked four foremen because he was dissatisfied with their
work. The evidence presented to the Public Accounts Committee was damaging to
the Tasmanian scheme, although there was a general recognition that since Taylor had
taken over, its affairs were better organised.

The third day of hearings in Hobart answered many of the questions posed in
the previous two days of evidence. Former clerk, Archibald Douglas provided much
background material, and answered queries related to land in Burnie, estimates and
wastage in materials, delays in surveying because of excessive bureaucratic red tape
(that saw correspondence go through Melbourne rather than directly between
Tasmanian branches), inadequacies in labour, and opportunities for theft and waste. Douglas himself had been dismissed on orders from Melbourne, against Taylor’s

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 ‘War Service Homes. More Evidence in Hobart. Quantity Surveyor Examined. Senator Millen and
wishes. The Tasmanian Commission had a policy of building 400 houses a year under the scheme, based on numbers of applications, although it was plainly obvious that that figure was optimistic. Up until March 1921, Douglas revealed that 776 applications for homes had been approved, 441 had been refused, and 680 had been withdrawn. Evidently, the War Service Homes scheme was a popular proposal, and over 1,200 Tasmanian returned soldiers had applied for assistance to own their own homes. These were high numbers of applicants when placed alongside the numbers of Tasmanians who took up land under the soldier settlement scheme, and, when combined with the rough figures from the land settlement scheme, a very sketchy estimate of nearly 3,200 Tasmanian returned servicemen applied for assistance by 1921 alone. In effect, approximately one-third of Tasmania’s 9,700 returned soldiers applied for these particular repatriation offers. 60

Douglas was very candid about where the problems in the administration of the Tasmanian scheme lay: the deficiency in staff, and the want of a suitable depot when day labour operations started. 61 Stocks were stored in the middle of a building site, as well as in a lane up against the Hobart office. 62 William Baillie, the quantity surveyor from January to September 1920, could say very little positive about the Tasmanian scheme, yet also could not provide evidence of accusations he made when pressed by the Committee. He steadfastly refused to take responsibility for valuations that proved well below the final cost. He claimed he had worked 250 hours overtime in the first three months there, and observed some appalling building practices. Baillie claimed that material used for some of the houses was charged up “two or three times” to the capital cost of the home, but could not provide useful evidence for

60 It must be reiterated that these figures are very rough estimates, and no doubt deserve (and require) more vigorous and accurate compilation to provide a true idea. The difficulty in finding precise numbers is cited as a main reason for the lack of a definitive figure. See Chapter Six for further details of the difficulty in compiling accurate figures for Tasmanians under that scheme, notwithstanding Pike’s 1929 published statistics.

61 The dearth of staff was particularly bad in the early part of the Commission’s operations in Tasmania, and only when Taylor assumed control was progress made. The Chairman of the Committee, Western Australian MHR J.M. Fowler, noted from overtime documents that some members of the Accounts section “came back at night nearly every night. Often they worked until after midnight, and in some cases were back early in the morning, and working over Saturday afternoon and Sunday.” In addition, Douglas felt that “Salaries in the Tasmanian office were too low right from the start.” It was difficult to attract good people with poor wages, and when it came to employ bricklayers, the Commission only paid award rates, whereas outside firms paid above that. This may inform why Gibbs had so much trouble getting the bricklayers building his home to work more efficiently and at a faster pace – or, as the Committee asked, “the outside firms sifted out the best men and left you with the ‘bobtails’?” See, “War Service Homes. More Evidence in Hobart. Quantity Surveyor Examined. Senator Millen and Guesswork”, The Mercury, 15 July 1921, p. 6.

62 Evidence given by Archibald Douglas, Ibid. See also, Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 163.
the Committee to officially report on. Douglas also claimed he found evidence of fraudulent practices – most notably when “checking up cards”, it was found that work had been charged up to one house was actually undertaken on another. This was patently unfair to the soldier who had to bear the added cost for a home that had not had the requisite work done on it. Clearly, the grievances McRae had aired were supported by the evidence tendered from the Commission’s own employees.

The Committee sat again in Hobart for a fourth day on 16 July, with evidence focussing on land transactions and issues of under-staffing. Timber merchant, Andrew Kemp, asserted that former Deputy Commissioner Earle did not purchase timber as cheaply as he was able to locally. Kemp, deputy chairman of the Southern Tasmanian Sawmillers’ Association, revealed that members of his association were eager to provide cheaper timber because “so many of the sawmillers and merchants had had sons at the war and they really wished to help the Commissioner along by giving the best advice and help of which they were capable.” Kemp believed that timber was bought from “the north”, suggesting that north/south parochialism extended even into providing patriotic assistance through business deals. It appeared, too, that this was a lost opportunity for the Tasmanian administrators and soldiers. Taylor, later commenting on Evans’ evidence when the Committee sat in Launceston, could not explain why the decision had been taken to source timber from two companies in Launceston. The decision, he argued, was made before his promotion. While Earle’s decision was criticised by Kemp, Taylor’s evidence from the first day was fiercely repudiated by angry witnesses. Edward Tregear, the estate agent and general valuer, attempted to clear “the odium” from his name over allegations arising from estate sales. In outlining the sales of several estates and the close friendship he enjoyed with Earle, the Committee vigorously questioned him over the sale of a motorcar to Earle, rumoured around Hobart to have been made out of a deal over the sale of the Grove Estate in Glenorchy. Tregear protested that he had to leave the

64 Ibid., p. 6.
66 ‘War Service Homes. Inquiry at Launceston. Concluding Day’s Sittings. Deputy Commissioner Re-Examined’, The Mercury, 19 July 1921, p. 5. Interestingly, the prices paid for this timber cost more than the timber offered by the Southern Tasmanian Sawmillers’ Association, even including the added cost of shipping it to build northern Tasmanian houses. The prices remained confidential under a clause in the contract, and were submitted to the Committee but not reported.
Committee hearing with allegations still hanging over his head, and with no retraction of Taylor’s remarks.67

H.C. Orbell, an accountant in the Commission from June 1919 to February 1921, highlighted the chronic understaffing that had led to such administrative bumbling and massive overtime reported in previous days’ evidence. Taylor’s ascension had remedied that problem to an extent, but the irony in Orbell’s evidence was that the building operations were reducing as the staffing levels increased.68 He angrily rejected suggestions that problems in the accounts section were down to ability, but were instead a consequence of having two people do the work of fourteen men.69 As most evidence to the Committee had attempted to do, Orbell used the occasion to exculpate himself from claims of incompetence. He also rebutted rumours of personal gain from irregularities in the accounts – a situation he claims was brought about from the lack of staff and the practices of employees engaged in outside work:

[H.C Orbell]: “The idea that Hobart people seem to get is that by collusion with the outside staff I have made money out of this business.
[Chairman James M. Fowler, MHR]: I do not see where money comes into it?
[H.C Orbell]: No more do I, but that is the impression in the press, and I ask for and demand justice.”70

It was clear from the Hobart evidence that understaffing, high staff turnover, and slow labourers were a fundamental problem with the smooth running of the scheme, irrespective of the problem of obtaining materials.

When the Committee travelled to Launceston to take evidence, the RSSILA sub-branch there presented evidence on behalf of returned soldiers and their experiences with the Commission. The Launceston Executive RSSILA representative, Earnest Pinkard, himself had a house acquired under the scheme, and was personally very happy with his home. Complaints, however, centred around

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68 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
69 Ibid., p. 9.
70 Transcript of evidence from Public Accounts Committee, 15 July 1921. See, Ibid., p. 10.
delays in building that caused problems with financing.\textsuperscript{71} The hold-up in applications and building caused costs to blow out, and a house that could have been built for £700 in January 1920 cost more than £800 by the end of that year. That was the predicament facing one returned soldier, a Mr Solomon, who had land at Mowbray that he was paying rates and taxes on, but with no home on it. As Pinkard noted, “Had the building been pushed on with in 1920, the complaints made to-day would not exist.”\textsuperscript{72} Ironically, dealing with applications “improved considerably”\textsuperscript{73} in late 1920, but the trade-off was that house prices had invariably increased. French’s Estate, located in Launceston, was criticised as unsuitable for returned soldiers only because of the cost of cartage. It was located on a steep area, and cartage and road building would add an increased financial burden to the soldier. Committee member and MHR John Prowse remarked surprise that it be deemed unsuitable, considering that “well-to-do people” tried to buy on those properties for their views. Pinkard retorted that well-to-do people could afford the extra cost.\textsuperscript{74}

Deputy Commissioner Taylor was again questioned, but added little useful to the account he gave in Hobart the week before. In contrast to the Hobart evidence, Launceston had provided an example of how the scheme \textit{could} work for returned soldiers. Despite complaints of delays and difficulties in acquiring bricks, Chairman James Fowler declared himself “very pleased to find that there has been nothing very seriously wrong here, so far as the erection of the soldiers’ homes is concerned.”\textsuperscript{75} Launceston’s War Service Homes had largely been built by contract, which meant that prices on average were lower than Hobart’s. Certainly, Pinkard reported that the League in Launceston had not received any complaints of overcharging.\textsuperscript{76} The quality of Launceston homes was good according to Pinkard,\textsuperscript{77} and, if one uses

\textsuperscript{72}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73}Evidence from Ernest Douglas Pinkard, RSSILA member to the War Service Homes Inquiry. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74}Ibid. The Public Accounts Committee’s Report described French’s Estate as a “rocky outcrop on the side of a steep hill.” Notwithstanding the complaints made by Pinkard as to costs of cartage, the Committee stated that “the land is in a good residential area convenient to the city.” See, ‘Second Progress Report From the Joint Committee of Public Accounts Upon the War Service Homes Commission (Tasmania)’, \textit{CPD}, 1920-21, Vol. V, No. 149, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{76}‘Ex-Soldiers’ Homes’, \textit{The Examiner}, 19 July 1921, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{77}Pinkard noted that there were very minor reports of defective construction in Launceston homes — putty had fallen off some windows, and some defective brickwork had been found. Generally though, the quality of Launceston’s homes were good. Ibid.
complaints to the RSSILA as a general barometer of soldier dissatisfaction (however problematic and unscientific it is), no serious complaints of defects in construction were reported.\textsuperscript{78} No evidence was reported to the Committee to the contrary either.\textsuperscript{79}

The Burnie sitting was conducted in the Council Chambers, and, like in Launceston, took evidence for only one day. H.C. Pierce, representing the Burnie RSSILA, expressed hope that some good might finally come out of the Commission's visit.\textsuperscript{80} State MHA Joshua Whitsitt presented evidence on behalf of the returned soldiers in his constituency. One returned soldier, J.J. Paris of Cooee, had suffered administrative delays from Hobart in getting a house built on his block. It took five months until a tender was accepted, and Paris had then received a bill for £21 8s. 6d. to pay for 'Supervision', interest, stamp duties and survey fees.\textsuperscript{81} Whitsitt implied through his evidence that if the process had taken a shorter period of time, much money would have been saved.

Rather more belligerent in his evidence was Ronald Harrison, an Assistant Council Clerk of Table Cape Municipality, President of the Table Cape sub-branch of the RSSILA, and a member of the local Repatriation Committee. For the first time in the Committee's hearings, evidence was presented that pointed to the prejudicing of regional soldiers' applications. Harrison attacked the regional/urban divide that saw preference in applications and building from the Commission go to city areas.\textsuperscript{82} His


\textsuperscript{79} In fact, when the Committee toured homes in Mowbray (a suburb of Launceston) and spoke with their occupants, "the occupiers expressed themselves satisfied with their houses." \textit{The Mercury}, 18 July 1921, p. 4.


\textsuperscript{82} These same concerns were made by Sir George John Bell, Federal member for the north-western Tasmanian seat of Darwin (now Braddon). In September 1920, Bell complained at the lack of progress since the first foundation stone had been laid by General Birdwood: "Many of those applicants who have been waiting have been so disgusted with the delay that they have gone elsewhere, to private sources, in order to secure homes for themselves. Absolutely no progress has been made in the smaller towns in my electorate, although applications have been in for a very long time." Bell's criticisms were also based along the lines of regional interests against urban interests, with the argument that war service housing policy was focussed on the city areas to the detriment of regional areas like the north and north-west coast of Tasmania. See, Bell to the House of Representatives, 17 September 1920, \textit{CPD}, Vol. XCIII, p. 4753. The property on which Birdwood laid the stone belonged to A.S. Horton, who had waited for over 12 months for work to be carried out on his home, only to be told his applications was cancelled. See, 'War Service Homes: Joint Committees' Enquiry', \textit{The Examiner}, 20
statement was a litany of complaint against the Tasmanian operations, and how disadvantaged the rural soldier was under the scheme. The shift from purchasing houses to building them was the biggest single impediment to returned soldiers desirous of obtaining a home in the larger Darwin electorate. While Burnie was in chronic need of housing, Harrison saw the purchase of existing houses as the only way to expedite the requirements of local ex-servicemen. “Ten houses could have been bought in the municipality”, Harrison claimed, “at an average cost of £315 10s. each, and all of which would have been bought well, owing mainly to the efforts of an excellent local committee.”

Such a price, if realistically attainable, would have represented a significant saving to the soldier, and undercut the costs of building in the cities by more than half. In addition, Harrison presented six points as to why the Commission’s decision not to purchase homes was such a poor one for Tasmania’s regional returned men: the Act now did not operate out of cities; building cost “easily 5 per cent.” more than buying, yet still required further money for fences and outbuildings; purchasing saved on overheads and provided a finished home; purchased houses could be obtained at a lower cost; purchasing afforded finality quicker; and, most interestingly, in assessing regional differences in the scheme, he felt that “an architect seems unable to plan a house suitable for country towns, though his plans might have been suitable for cities.”

The latter complaint is important to note in terms of regional differences even within States, notwithstanding the obvious differences between houses designed, for instance, for Queensland and Tasmania. The Committee left for Melbourne that same night and was to have presented its

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Footnotes:

84 Ibid. William Hines, the Secretary of the Burnie sub-branch of the RSSILA, expressed his disgust with the Tasmanian War Service Homes Scheme. *The Advocate* reported that Hines “would not recommend another soldier to purchase a home through the War Service Homes Department. In fact, if the Department offered to give him the house he would not have it.” See, ‘War Service Homes Bungles. Extraordinary Delays. “The Greatest Blunder”’, *The Advocate*, 20 July 1921, p. 1.
85 While in Tasmania, Premier Sir Walter Lee lost no time in showing the Committee members some of the successful industries in Tasmania to produce “favourable impressions of the great prospects of the future development of Tasmania.” Lee took them to Waddamana, The Electrolytic Zinc Works at Risdon, Cadbury’s at Claremont, and the carbide works at Electrona. All of this was most probably an attempt to paint Tasmania in a softer light than the damning War Service Homes evidence from Hobart provided. Lee also expressed a desire that other members from the Federal Parliament made the trip to Tasmania, so as to better appreciate the special requirements of the State, “which, sometimes, when they were dealing with matters affecting Tasmanian interests, he felt were necessary.” Lee’s opportunism in selling Tasmania’s ‘special case’ must be commended, but reaffirmed the problems.
evidence on its arrival, but owing to problems in compiling and publishing their report, it was held over until later in the Parliamentary session.

The Committee Reports

In almost all aspects, the Tasmanian administration was unsatisfactory. Most of the evidence presented at the hearings made its way into Fowler's report to Parliament. Of most concern, and which struck at the very intention of the scheme, were the cost of houses. Tasmanians overwhelmingly found the issues in relation to house prices "the outstanding grievances."86 This did not bode well for the scheme as it priced many soldiers out of enjoying the scheme's benefits, most tragically when applicants could not afford the home when its final value had been calculated.

The Committee found to their great concern that day labour costs severely inflated house prices over contract labour: "In some instances applicants were supplied in writing with definite estimates, but when the costs were ultimately ascertained they greatly exceeded the amounts quoted."87 Fortunately, the homes completed under the Commonwealth Bank scheme were erected by contract labour, which for Tasmanian homes allowed them to keep a relative cap on costs. Some 50 brick and 19 weatherboard houses were built by the Commonwealth Bank at an average cost of £646, exclusive of the land.88 The Tasmanian administration was found to have contributed to the general increase in costs, with slackness and looseness in plan specifications, inconsistent deliveries of materials to sites, and workmen regulating the pace of their work to fit with the deliveries so as not to lose wages. Consequently, they were paid extra over the period of the house's construction. In hearings in Hobart, Chairman Fowler asked the Clerk of Works, John Cunningham, whether much time had been spent standing around waiting for material? Cunningham replied: "Human nature is the same the world over, and you may be sure that these men would not work themselves too hard."89 In order to not

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Tasmania faced in comparison to other States. See, 'War Service Homes Committee', The Mercury, 18 July 1921, p. 4.
87 Ibid., p. 5.
88 Ibid., p. 7.
lose valuable pay, the day labour employees merely moderated the pace of their work until the materials arrived. Such methods increased the final cost of the labour in building, which therefore drove up the capital cost of the home to the soldier.

Materials were also moved from house to house without the head office being aware of what was occurring. Consequently, some properties were charged up with materials that were not used, and vice versa. To illustrate this point, the following table was included, based on a quantity survey made by the Chief Inspector of Works comparing the quantity of materials with the amounts actually used. The terrible administrative inadequacies of the Tasmanian system are amply demonstrated by the above table, and add credence to soldiers' complaints of soaring costs and inefficient use of materials. They also illustrate why the Committee was especially concerned to uncover evidence of fraud or malpractice amongst Commission employees. Wettenhall argues that Tasmania's administration was a special case in these matters, even amongst the litany of problems experienced nationwide.90

If applicants objected to paying the extra costs of homes over and above the initial quoted cost, the Commission would regard the applicants as tenants only91 - an anomaly made further incongruous when the soldier owned the land that the house was built on. In some instances, soldier applicants provided their own labour and materials to help reduce the cost of building, and while "no credit was given or deduction made", costs still exceeded initial estimates.92 The increase in costs, and the requirement of the soldiers to bear them led to condemnation from the Committee. Despite signing undertakings to pay "for the capital cost when ascertained" rather than the quote, the Committee did not see that such men should have to pay the extra - especially when the costs exceeded the maximum amount allowed under the regulations. Only where the extra amount had been negotiated with the soldier on an individual case should the transaction fairly go ahead.

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92 Ibid.
Table 3.1: Sample Comparison of Materials and Amounts Charged Up to Tasmanian War Service Homes, 1921.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>House ‘A’ - Quantity Charged Up</th>
<th>House ‘A’ - Quantity Actually Used or on the Allotment</th>
<th>House ‘B’ - Quantity Charged Up</th>
<th>House ‘B’ - Quantity Actually Used or on the Allotment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sand</td>
<td>5 yards</td>
<td>3 yards</td>
<td>17 yards</td>
<td>4 yards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricks</td>
<td>11,700</td>
<td>12,061</td>
<td>16,400</td>
<td>4,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>4½ yards</td>
<td>6 yards</td>
<td>8 yards</td>
<td>6½ yards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement</td>
<td>86 bags</td>
<td>27 bags</td>
<td>58 bags</td>
<td>29¼ bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palings</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shingles</td>
<td>10,400</td>
<td>4,331</td>
<td>12,800</td>
<td>4,331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laths</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td>5,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The extra costs associated with some houses under the day labour system were, "as in the main...admittedly due to bad administration and defective supervision," and should not be borne by the soldier.93 Like recommendations concerning capital payment over and above quoted cost, Fowler determined that the soldier should be granted an independent valuation, and that price charged to the soldier.94 This would of course entail losses to the taxpayer. The RSSILA, as active participants in the investigation process, proved useful to W.L. McBean from New Town in his efforts at avoiding paying the inflated capital cost. He publicly thanked the RSSILA and the League's solicitors for defending his claim to pay the original £700 value, saving him £108 2s. 11d., or the risk of becoming a weekly tenant, despite “occupying and improving the house for twelve months.”95

Part of the problem in Tasmania was identified in the inconsistency of its administration. The succession of five Deputy Commissioners produced an atmosphere that was not conducive to stable organization – indeed, Fowler’s Report argued that “each deputy no doubt had different ideas as to how the affairs in the State should be carried out, with the result, as apparent to the Committee at an early stage

92 Ibid., p. 8.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 'War Service Homes', letter to the editor from W.L. McBean, The Mercury, 26 August 1921, p. 6.
of its enquiry, that the position in Tasmania was anything but satisfactory.'\textsuperscript{96} Captain Taylor’s promotion to Deputy Commissioner early in 1921 had found the administration in shambles. Damningly, the Internal Auditor from the New South Wales branch was sent to organise the Tasmanian branch, and his report revealed “an astounding state of affairs”\textsuperscript{97} in regards to the books, accounts and general organization. The chronic understaffing of the Tasmanian branch also compounded these faults, and, despite “urgent requests” to Melbourne headquarters for relief, Tasmanian requirements were “tardily and inadequately met.”\textsuperscript{98}

To demonstrate the organisational disorder and difficulty in obtaining materials (which was partly due to the state of the administration), and the effect it had on housing construction, Fowler’s report compiled a table highlighting three major estates purchased around the Hobart area: Mezger’s, Harbroe’s, and Grove.\textsuperscript{99} Between these three estates, £14,607 had been spent to purchase 48 acres of land. Grove was the largest estate with 141 lots, while Mezger’s and Harbroe’s contained 41 and 46 lots respectively. A table of the statistics has been reproduced (see Table 3.2). In addition to the figures in Table 3.2, Fowler also reported that 7½ acres at Devonport had been purchased at a cost of £900, with its 28 allotments costing approximately £32 per lot. Five homes were in the course of being built as Fowler tabled his report to Federal Parliament.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{96} ‘Second Progress Report From the Joint Committee of Public Accounts Upon the War Service Homes Commission (Tasmania)’, \textit{CPD}, 1920-21, Vol. V, No. 149, p. 3. [emphasis added].
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{99} In Federal Parliament during Question Time, 14 May 1920, (returned soldier) Charles Marr asked Mr Alexander Poynton (the Minister representing the Minister for Repatriation) about returned soldier vocational trainees employed in the construction of War Service Homes. Nationally at that period, there were only 51 vocational trainees working on War Service Homes, but some were working in Tasmania on Hobart’s Harbroe’s Estate. \textit{CPD}, Session 1920-21, Vol. XCI, p. 2113. Marr served in Mesopotamia during the war. For more on his career, see, C.J. Lloyd, ‘Sir Charles William Marr, 1880-1960’, \textit{ADB}, Vol. 10, pp. 418-419. For Poynton, see, R. van de Hoorn, ‘Alexander Poynton, 1853-1935’, \textit{ADB}, Vol. 11, pp. 272-273. The prevalence of the three major estates in reporting on the Hobart scheme did not mean that housing was provided largely in those areas exclusively. On the Eastern Shore of the Derwent River, Alison Alexander argues that, “At least 25 War Service homes were built in Clarence, 16 in Lindisfame and 8 in Bellerive, and a few other returned soldiers were helped to buy land and an orchard.” See her, \textit{The Eastern Shore: A History of Clarence, Rosny Park, Hobart}, 2003, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{100} ‘Second Progress Report From the Joint Committee of Public Accounts Upon the War Service Homes Commission (Tasmania)’, \textit{CPP}, 1920-21, Vol. V, Paper No. 149, p. 4.
Table 3.2: Major Hobart Estate Purchases, War Service Homes, 1921.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estate</th>
<th>Price Paid</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number of Lots</th>
<th>Number of Houses Erected or in Course of Erection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mezger’s</td>
<td>£2,887</td>
<td>8 acres 1 r. 25 p.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harbroe’s</td>
<td>£3,500</td>
<td>7 acres 3 r. 4 p.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grove</td>
<td>£8,220</td>
<td>31 acres 3 r. 38 p.</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>£14,607</td>
<td>48 acres 0 r. 27 p.</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.2 suggests some interesting trends. Land at Mezger’s Estate cost approximately £360 per acre, or £70 per block. The cost of the home was then to be added to that base price, and estimates for them varied from between £650 to £800 before the troubles of inflated costs struck. At Harbroe’s Estate, the figures are nearly £500 per acre, and £76 per lot respectively, while Grove Estate at Glenorchy cost approximately £265 per acre, and £58 per lot. On average, in these large Hobart estates, land cost £304 per acre, or £64 per lot. At these prices, without the inflationary effect of delays with materials causing slow workmanship, administrative carelessness, and incompetence with plans, the affordable housing programme espoused by the scheme was still possible. But as the evidence to the Committee often complained, the final capitalised cost rendered that dream impossible.

The second point, and of more concern, was the delay in building. The Committee heard that obtaining good labour was difficult, and this is no more manifestly illustrated than in comparisons between applications, lots and houses completed or in the process of completion. To 30 September 1921, Fowler reported that jointly, the Tasmanian War Service Homes Commission and the Commonwealth Bank approved 820 applications, at a cost of £490,780.101 By comparing the number of approved applications with the number of houses completed or under the course of

101 Ibid., p. 7.
completion, over 65 per cent of applications for homes had not been met in Tasmania by September 1921. In the three Hobart estates, only 67 homes were completed or in the course of completion out of 228 Lots available. Fowler added that around Hobart, 25 acres of land costing over £8,000 were idle with not a single house built, while in Launceston some 20 acres costing £4,000 were not in use. He added that there was additional acreage around both cities that had been compulsorily acquired, but no price had been settled.\textsuperscript{102}

The complaints made by Harrison regarding rural prejudice were translated into Fowler's report, and his argument that the process of purchasing existing homes as preferable was further expanded. As illustrative of his argument, Fowler outlined that the Commission called for tenders at Wynyard for a four-roomed house on land owned by the applicant. The lowest price received was £460. The applicant was later able to buy a "nearly new" five-bedroom "modern" house, \textit{with} the land, for £450.\textsuperscript{103}

Overall, Fowler reported that the Commission's plans were "in many instances unsuitable for local conditions, and the designs were too expensive."\textsuperscript{104} The trend elicited from the Report was that the cost of housing varied significantly between rural and urban areas, and then also between the north and south of the State. The impracticality of building houses in rural regions led to a policy of purchasing existing homes, and these could be bought for significantly less than in urban areas. Housing and land prices in Hobart were clearly the most expensive in the State, and it is an interesting point that the closer the proximity to the central administration in the State's capital, the greater the costs and problems with applying the scheme in an efficient way.

Fortunately, the homes themselves were deemed to have been of generally good quality\textsuperscript{105}, the Commonwealth Bank in its brief administration managed to satisfactorily build 50 brick and 19 weatherboard houses at an average cost of £646 exclusive of land.\textsuperscript{106} In addition, 483 existing homes were purchased between the Commission and the Bank, at a cost of £270,335, and 51 mortgages were discharged at a cost of £25,974,\textsuperscript{107} or an average of £494 each.

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p. 7.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., p. 7.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\end{verbatim}
Overall, Fowler reported to the Commonwealth Parliament that the Tasmanian scheme was less than satisfactory. Administration, costs, labour, materials, and the paltry number of homes built under the scheme were damning indictments of the poor progress made in Tasmania in just under two and half years of operation. Some concerning points were raised regarding dealings during the early administration. The previous Deputy Commissioner, W.J. Earle, had suggested the 60 acres of the Grove Estate for purchase to Minister Millen for £12,000. As purchases over £5,000 required ministerial approval, it was submitted to Millen. He could not decide on the information he was provided with, and advised Earle of that fact. A week later, Earle reported to Commissioner Walker that he had purchased 14 acres at £3,722, and bought other allotments of the estate at varying times, with each costing less than £5,000 per transaction. In this way, Earle purchased 31 acres of Grove Estate without any further reference to Millen. The matter relating to the sale of a motorcar from Tregear to Earle was also noted, which the Committee deemed “its duty” to report. Clearly, Fowler and the other Committee members were concerned at the relationship between the pair in light of their responsibilities in purchasing land for the scheme. Significantly, Fowler found it “quite impossible to make recommendations that would meet all the difficulties which have been encountered.” The process of remedying the Tasmanian scheme was under way when Taylor took control of the Commission, and only through “competent and trustworthy officers vested with a certain amount of discretionary power” could the scheme’s intentions be satisfactorily realised.

108 Ibid., p. 5. See also, Wettenhall, ‘Administrative Debacle, 1919-23’, p. 320. Wettenhall also catalogues the process of purchasing the estate, but credits it to Walker instead of Earle.


110 Ibid., p. 8.

111 Ibid.
Table 3.3: Purchases of Existing Homes and Mortgage Assistance in Tasmania, up to 30 September 1921.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Existing Houses Purchased - Number</th>
<th>Existing Houses Purchased - Amount</th>
<th>Mortgages Discharged - Number</th>
<th>Mortgages Discharged - Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>£112,780</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>£12,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Bank</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>£157,555</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>£12,974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>483</strong></td>
<td><strong>£270,335</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>£25,241</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Rectifying the Problems**

During 1921, building and purchasing operations were brought to a virtual standstill as the administrative and financial chaos wrought by Walker was rectified. Walker's contract was terminated in March 1921, and he was replaced by Repatriation Commissioner Colonel James Semmens.112 By the time of Walker's removal from office due to irregularities in his appointment (technically, that he had been appointed while insolvent113), some 600 people were employed in the Commission, with 98 per cent. of those employees returned soldiers.114 The Public Accounts Committee's Final Report on the War Service Homes scheme outlined the administrative and financial ineptitude of Walker's tenure. The first financial year of the scheme saw Capital Expenditure exceeded by an astonishing £838,000, and the purchase of mills, plantations, materials and land purchased during the high point of the market saw masses of surplus stocks stored by the Commission in anticipation of a frenzied building programme.115 The shortage of labour nationally, and a dearth of

113 Wettenhall describes this in greater detail. While Millen was overseas in 1921, Acting Repatriation Minister A.S. Rodgers received "from an anonymous informant the most timely advice that Walker had been an uncertified insolvent at the time of his appointment." See, Wettenhall, 'Administrative Debacle, 1919-23', p. 315-316. Walker's contract was terminated, proving a final humiliation to him after the Treasury created an impasse by not assenting to his excessive budget demands.
materials like cement and bricks led to serious delays in building. The incredible propensity of Walker's administration to expend monies for the scheme also led to a drastic curtailment of operations, and a virtual freezing of the programme. This inactive period — necessary to restructure the administration after Walker's exuberance — led to disappointment at further delays in acquiring housing. "Disheartened and disgusted", the Committee's Final Report claimed, "many of these [men and women] have gone to other agencies for supplying homes." 116 The Commonwealth was certainly relieved of the responsibility of this "considerable" exodus, but the Committee felt it was "more a matter for regret than congratulation." 117 Despite these difficulties, Lloyd and Rees argue that the building programme was swift and achieved in three short years significant achievements while facing tremendous adversity. 118 Roger Wettenhall similarly attributes the pace of Walker's building programme as "no mean achievement", despite the "crash" it produced. 119 Tasmania too enjoyed the swift construction experienced nationwide, despite the criticisms. While Walker undoubtedly undertook a vast work and managed to accomplish considerable feats, his style brought criticism, condemnation and substantial expenditure. Lloyd and Rees admit that Walker's erratic administration played some part in the "discrediting of the war service homes program." 120

The Committee's Final Report in July 1922 scarified Walker. In reporting to Parliament, Fowler declared that "The lack of effective and systematic accountancy control throughout the whole scheme of operations is an outstanding and deplorable feature which has confronted the Committee in all its investigations of the scheme." 121 The Committee felt that despite disadvantageous working conditions, the State Deputy Commissioners and their staffs "worked hard and well to meet the overwhelming demands made on them." 122 Tasmania's high staff turnover, for instance, was not just due to incompetence in or unsuitability for their positions. The Committee had a suspicion that the frequent dismissals were a corollary of putting

116 Ibid., p. 13.
117 Ibid.
118 Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 162.
119 Wettenhall, 'Administrative Debacle, 1919-23', p. 311. For Wettenhall's argument of the Commission's 'crash' as a consequence of Walker's administration, see pp. 310-315.
120 Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 165.
122 Ibid.
“head-quarters in the uncomfortable position of being transparently at fault in their control of operations.” ¹²³ They added that, while Deputy Commissioners were not always blameless, “they have often had to carry blame which did not belong to them.” ¹²⁴ The policies of land purchase were dictated by Walker in opposition to the Minister’s own directions. Where Millen recommended only acquiring land to meet the requirements for the twelve months, Walker issued instructions that a “minimum programme of three years and a maximum of five years’ acquisition should be effected.” ¹²⁵ The consequence was a massive expenditure on land that was not yet known to have even been required. In fairness to Walker, he was attempting to expedite the process of building operations on a large scale to house soldiers as soon as possible after the war and the following few years. Bulk purchases made in haste were his method of dealing with the issue. Unforgivably, however, Fowler and the Committee found that the respective State agencies and State Government that could and should have assisted in the scheme were not called upon, with the most blatant disregard in this matter being the rejection of the Commonwealth Works Department. It was not consulted nor their services “availed of in any way in the initiation of the scheme.” ¹²⁶ Unlike other States, Tasmania did not have any existing housing agencies that could be utilised to co-operate in the scheme, so their absence was less of an issue in this instance.

¹²³ Ibid.
¹²⁴ Ibid.
¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 7.
¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 5.
Table 3.4: Amounts Expended in Relation to War Service Homes – Tasmania 1918-1922.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Capital</th>
<th>Administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td>£ --</td>
<td>£ --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>£263,781</td>
<td>£7,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>£272,115</td>
<td>£11,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>£49,157</td>
<td>£8,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>£585,053</td>
<td>£26,378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The late rejection of using State Banks in favour of the Commonwealth Bank took an ironic twist with the return to the use of State agencies after Walker’s tenure. The relationship with the Commonwealth Bank was terminated out of hostility between the Commissioner and the Bank, and the unsatisfactory nature of the agreement that saw the Bank take no responsibility in connection with the work it did for the Commission. Regardless, and somewhat surprisingly, the Commonwealth Bank’s work “was put in hand with remarkable promptitude, and on the whole, was carried out satisfactorily.” The Bank’s work in Tasmania drew little criticism, and appeared to have produced good housing at relatively moderate prices.

Table 3.5: Operations of the War Service Homes Scheme to 30 June 1922 – Tasmania.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Commonwealth Bank</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Houses Completed</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses Assisted to Complete</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses Purchased</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgages Discharged</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


127 Ibid., p. 10.
After the turbulence of Walker’s commissionership and removal, control of war service housing fell to the Assistant Repatriation Minister Arthur Rodgers before the Federal administration was wound down at the end of that year. As well as the administrative transferral to the States, the central authorities also had to dispose of the remaining stocks and assets in line with the changing nature of the scheme. In Queensland alone the Commission had expended £531,000 on a timber mill, and these assets had to be sold to recover costs. Heavy losses were met in the process of recovering costs, with surplus land and materials being sold off, and contracts terminated necessitating compensation to the contractors affected. A tile manufacturing machinery plant in Tasmania was sold alongside similar operations interstate, though no large-scale assets were established in Tasmania like the mills in Queensland and Victoria. Losses in respect of disposing of assets were consequently lower. By June 1923, Tasmanian materials and depreciation contributed only £5,758 to the national aggregate losses on materials of £343,177. A further £1,364 was paid to Tasmanian contractors in compensation from the Commission. The dismantling of the Federal administration and its attendant parts was a costly exercise, and compounded the costs involved in purchasing the materials, assets, and losses from unallotted houses in each State. By 30 June 1923, some 330 houses were unallotted around the country, and interest had to be paid on the capital cost of each home. Lands lying vacant were also costing the Commission as interest continued accruing. James G. Bayley, the Chairman of the Committee investigating War Service Homes disposals, was dismayed at the situation facing the Commission:

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129 A Report from the Joint Committee of Public Accounts on War Service Homes Disposals investigated in detail the issue of how the Commission was to dispose of the assets and stocks no longer required under the reorganisation. In Tasmania, the “comparatively small stocks” saw the outgoing Deputy Commissioner W. Taylor act alongside the State Public Works Department representative H. Bucirde to form the Tasmanian disposal Board. The Boards operated from October 1921 to the end of June 1922. The Acting Commissioner took over the role of disposals from this date to June 1923. ‘Public Accounts Committee Report Upon War Service Homes Disposals’, *CPP*, 1923-24, Vol. IV, Paper No. 42, pp. 4, 9.
132 Ibid., pp. 10-11. The national costs in compensating contractors, and from costs awarded by Arbitration, were £148,986.
133 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
“With the present house shortage in Australia, the fact that the Commission has so many of these houses on hand, is a grave reflection on the judgement of those responsible for their erection.”134 In a broader sense, the homes built under Walker, and not occupied signalled a failure of the scheme to deliver affordable housing to returned servicemen. Reducing waste and cost was central to providing affordable housing, and the best way to achieve this was to alter the administration.

The transferral of responsibility for delivering War Service Home services mostly fell to the respective State organisations, with a central office administering funding to the States to continue the work. The Deputy Commissioners were abolished and the administration streamlined in operations and personnel. Despite Walker’s controversial period as Commissioner, under his guidance Lloyd and Rees still note that the War Service Homes Scheme supplied 16,254 homes nationally. Walker’s own ambitious target of 8,000 homes a year had been slightly exceeded for the two years he was in charge.135 For the brief period he was its helm, Walker provided the circumstances to house this large number of men and their dependents. That he was able to do so in such a short period of time was testament to his abilities, but his administration was not viewed fondly in subsequent Annual Reports, as Acting Commissioners remedied the mistakes and substantial expenditure he had incurred. It is notable, however, that following Walker’s removal, the numbers of applicants housed fell sharply.

Upon Colonel James Semmens becoming Acting War Service Homes Commissioner, he negotiated with each State to take over the running of the scheme. In this way, much of the Commonwealth administration was drastically reduced while allowing the utilisation of State agencies. After some difficulty, an arrangement was made between the War Service Homes Commission and the Tasmanian Agricultural Bank to continue the work of the Commission. The Tasmanian Government had declined an earlier offer to take over the running of the scheme, although Semmens noted in his 1922-23 Report that negotiations were in discussion.136 The two parties made an agreement that came into effect from October 1923137, and the War Service

134 Ibid., p. 13.
137 See Section 28, whereby the agreement came into effect on 1 October 1923. The initial period of the contract was to 30 June 1925, but was extended beyond that date. ‘War Service Homes Act:
Homes Commission headquarters in Hobart closed on 30 September 1923. Unlike the Soldier Land Settlement Scheme, the Commonwealth had tighter control of the regulations pertaining to the advancing of monies to house returned soldiers – a clear indication that it was keen to avoid the waste and costliness of the Walker years. The running of the scheme administratively was handled by the agency created to administer Tasmania's *Homes Act, 1919*, and annual reports on the scheme's operation were appended to those of the Agricultural Bank. The Agricultural Bank, as the Commissioner’s agent in Tasmania, undertook the responsibilities of administering the scheme for Tasmanian veterans: purchasing vacant land, houses, erection of houses, selling of land and houses, granting of leases, advancing of monies, providing of insurance, and collecting monies due to the Commission.

The arrangement with Tasmanian authorities was also much tighter than under the Deputy Commissioner system in regards to applications, with every purchase by applicants to be consented to in writing by the Commissioner. The Agricultural Bank were therefore mere administrators in the process. In addition, the construction of homes was only to be done under the contract system, which marked a definitive departure from previous policies. This is especially important in light of conclusions made by the Public Accounts Committee in their Final Report of 1922, highlighting the fact that nationally "day-labour homes were found in practically all cases to have far exceeded the original estimate [of costs for building]."

### The New Administration

Transferring administration for War Service Housing to the Tasmanian Agricultural Bank reaped immediate rewards. Public housing under the *Homes Act* initially suffered a little with the added responsibility for war service homes, but the

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work of procuring housing for veterans proceeded in “a very satisfactory manner.”

This new start for the scheme even brought a small profit, notwithstanding the defalcation of £96 by a former War Service Homes Commission employee seconded to the Agricultural Bank. In the first year of operations under the new system, 145 applications were received in Tasmania, 4 homes were purchased and 1 mortgage was discharged under the scheme. The main problem in Tasmania, as affected other States, was the difficulties unemployment posed to making repayments. Arrears were treated sympathetically owing to the “acute unemployment in a number of industries in the different States”, yet nationally the outstanding instalments for the financial year were only 2.26 per cent— a reduction of 1.09 per cent on the previous year.

142 Ibid.
### Table 3.6: War Service Homes operations in Tasmania, 1919-23.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Applications Approved</th>
<th>Applications Amount</th>
<th>Houses Completed - Contract</th>
<th>Houses Completed - Day Labour</th>
<th>Houses Assisted to Complete</th>
<th>Existing Houses Purchased</th>
<th>Mortgages Discharged</th>
<th>Land Purchased - Acres (approx)</th>
<th>Per Cent of Arrears</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919-23</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>£604,324</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>$2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1924-25 Tasmanian Agricultural Bank Report noted a substantial downturn in civilian applications for housing under the *Homes Act*, due to a very large extent to "the unemployment which is prevalent throughout the State."144 This was echoed by Acting War Service Homes Commissioner James Semmens, who also attributed the reduction in applications nationally to his programme to general employment conditions.145 A small profit was once again recorded in the Tasmanian branch, indicating the profitability of the decision to utilise the State’s agency to administer the scheme. While New South Wales particularly was encountering difficulties securing labour to complete homes, Tasmania and the other States’ schemes were progressing reasonably smoothly on this front.146 Of concern, however, to the central administration were the numbers of unallotted houses, which had risen since the previous year. Tasmania had 34 unallotted houses to the end of June 1925, with 15 of them occupied by tenants.147 This was a rise of 19 from the previous year, and of enough concern to Semmens to explicitly note that the Commission’s primary concern was their disposal. These unallotted houses were built under Walker’s regime, and were difficult to sell for a reasonable price. Semmens noted there was "very little demand for them owing either to the district in which they are situated or the class of construction and the accommodation provided."148 The general downturn in real estate was also depressing the market, and Tasmania was particularly affected by this.149 As a consequence, outstanding Tasmanian instalments rose while the national trend reduced. Semmens attributed this to particularly severe industrial conditions in the State.150

Over the next four years, the scheme continued providing quality housing for veterans despite changing industrial and administrative conditions.151 New South

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151 In central administration, responsibility for War Service Housing had been transferred from the Repatriation Department to the Department of Works and Railways in 1923, but, following a request from Semmens to be relieved of his duty as Acting Commissioner, the Permanent Head of the Department of Works and Railways was appointed Commissioner. W.D. Bingle held the position from September 1925 to April 1926, when his retirement brought H.L. Walters to the position. ‘War Service Homes Act: Report of the War Service Homes Commission 1925-26’, *CPP*, 1926-27-28, Vol. II, Paper No. 69, p. 3. See also Lloyd & Rees, *The Last Shilling*, p. 167.
Wales and Queensland had difficulties with constructing homes economically due to changes in Industrial Relations laws\textsuperscript{152} and advances in the cost of materials and wages, respectively. Tasmanian industry was still in the grip of reasonably high unemployment levels\textsuperscript{153} that saw a further reduction in applications for War Service Homes. Significantly, Tasmania's industrial position brought a steady increase in unallotted homes: In 1925-26, 47 houses were unallotted, with 24 occupied by tenants\textsuperscript{154}; 1926-27, 61 were unallotted, with 44 occupied by tenants\textsuperscript{155}; 1927-28, 50 houses unallotted, and 32 occupied by tenants\textsuperscript{156}; 1928-29, 53 unallotted homes, with 42 occupied with tenants\textsuperscript{157}; and 1929-30, 57 houses unallotted, and 50 occupied by tenants.\textsuperscript{158} The Commission complained that the homes, built under Walker's administration, were built "in isolated districts, making resales very difficult, whilst practically all, when abandoned by applicants, were in a bad state of repair."\textsuperscript{159} The Commission experienced difficulties in disposing of these properties throughout the 1920s, and it was a problem facing the central authorities as they entered the new decade.\textsuperscript{160}

Outstanding instalments owed by Tasmanian soldiers were the highest in the country, sitting at 2.03 per cent in 1925-26, while the national average was only 1.23 per cent.\textsuperscript{161} The following year, Tasmania fell further behind, owing 2.42 per cent of


\textsuperscript{153} See Table 4.2, Employment chapter. In 1926, from union returns, Tasmania's unemployment rate was 13.9 per cent, while the national average was 7.1 per cent. Between 1926 and 1929, Tasmanian unemployment (as reported by union returns) was significantly higher than the Commonwealth average with the exception of 1928, where Tasmanian and Commonwealth figures were almost identical.


instalments when the national average was .97 per cent. In 1927-28, that figure fell slightly in Tasmania to 2.24 per cent, while nationally, outstanding arrears were reduced to only .92 per cent. By June 1929, Tasmanian arrears on instalments amounted to 2.12 per cent, while the Commonwealth average was 1 per cent. The Tasmanian scheme had consistently been the poorest performed comparative to the other States. The combined poor statistics of Tasmania’s scheme in regards to the numbers of unallotted houses and the amount of arrears of instalments relative to the rest of the Commonwealth, drew criticism from Commissioner H.L. Walters in his 1926-27 Report, and he entered into discussions with trustees of the Agricultural Bank to remedy the situation. The “drastic” writing down of the prices of homes in Tasmania during 1926-27, “rendered necessary by the unsatisfactory position generally in that State”, contributed to a decrease in surplus to the Commission of £5,420. The following year, the Manager of the Agricultural Bank, S.R. Adams, held discussions with the Commissioner in Melbourne to attempt to facilitate “a more harmonious working” of the scheme in Tasmania. This was the first recognition from Tasmanian authorities that the State faced difficulties in implementing the scheme.

In order to offset negative material in the annual reports, Commissioner Semmens included in his 1924-25 Report some appreciative responses to the work of the Commission. This process was repeated in the next two years and provides a counterpoint to the grievances and problems related to the disposal of unallotted houses, the effects of adverse media publicity of the scheme, and problems of rising outstanding instalments, particularly in Tasmania. These responses provide a positive outlook on the construction work by the War Service Homes Commission and its satellite agencies, as responses were only included for homes built rather than purchased under the scheme. Aware of the problems that publicly aired grievances

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166 Ibid.
could have on the scheme, its staff, and its ability to attract new applicants, Commissioner H.L. Walters specifically addressed the issue in his Report. "Occasionally, complaints by applicants are ventilated in the press," he noted, "and although it is only to be expected that in such a huge undertaking mistakes will creep in from time to time, it should not be thought that these complaints are typical." 168 A survey of Tasmanian applications up to 30 June 1926 shows that of 3,148 applications made, only 1,190 were approved. 169 It is not known why such a high number of applications were rejected, although presumably they did not satisfy the criteria for eligibility. The Tasmanian scheme, as the Commissioner’s Annual Reports consistently pointed out, suffered the most from economic, real estate, industrial and economic depression that resulted in high unemployment. This seriously prejudiced the ability to obtain a home under the scheme. To be successful, the applicants had to have been able to repay the loan, and defaulters who showed no inclination to honour their contract were removed from the homes. As Walters stated, "Some applicants...hold the view that the Commission should shoulder all their troubles, but in such cases the Commission is obliged to take definite action." 170 It is easy to understand that in this light, negative publicity toward the Commission from failed and disgruntled applicants would be made. Applicant T.W.B.’s letter of appreciation was reproduced in Walters’ 1925-26 Report, and recorded his gratitude and appreciation for his home:

In view of the entire satisfaction I have obtained in connection with the assistance accorded by your Department toward the erection of a home at West Hobart, I have pleasure in recording my appreciation, thinking that possibly it may help to discount some of the publicity of an adverse character so freely disseminated in regard to the administration generally of the War Service Homes Act. I might perhaps state that I had been somewhat prejudiced by the non-flattering report circulated in regard to War Service erections, and had some doubts as to the possibility of securing a good job. I can now state, however, that my experience has proved the means of giving me every confidence in your Department and its officers, and I would be

169 These figures are taken from Appendices L and K respectively from Ibid., pp. 27, 28.
170 Ibid., p. 4. The Commission would not allow the applicant to occupy the home rent-free, “which would be contrary to the Act”, for the intention was to facilitate home ownership for returned soldiers and their dependants.
glad at any time to express that opinion to any prospective applicant for assistance.\textsuperscript{171}

Responses like this were a blessing, and a blow to those attempting to discredit the scheme and the work it was undertaking. “I desire to take this opportunity”, another successful applicant wrote to the Commission, “of expressing my appreciation of your administration. I am prompted to do so by the fact that on occasions certain individuals have depreciated your Department.”\textsuperscript{172}

Table 3.7: War Service Homes: Average Cost of Construction – Tasmania and Commonwealth, 1923-30.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tasmania: Construction Only</th>
<th>Tasmania: Land and Construction</th>
<th>Commonwealth: Construction Only</th>
<th>Commonwealth: Land and Construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>£706 2s. 1d.</td>
<td>£785 6s. 9d.</td>
<td>£703 9s. 1d.</td>
<td>£763 3s. 2d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>£731 1s. 10d.</td>
<td>£870 4s. 8d.</td>
<td>£722 15s. 10d.</td>
<td>£794 7s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>£728 4s. 0d.</td>
<td>£893 3s. 9d.</td>
<td>£739 13s. 5d.</td>
<td>£835 17s. 5d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>£735 18s. 0d.</td>
<td>£854 6s. 0d.</td>
<td>£747 19s. 0d.</td>
<td>£842 16s. 5d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>£800 18s. 0d.</td>
<td>£979 17s. 0d.</td>
<td>£768 18s. 2d.</td>
<td>£876 14s. 1d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td>£778 4s. 0d.</td>
<td>£876 12s. 0d.</td>
<td>£778 15s. 8d.</td>
<td>£892 3s. 4d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>£814 7s. 9d.</td>
<td>£1,024 7s. 0d.</td>
<td>£799 0s. 2d.</td>
<td>£929 0s. 10d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Figures taken from War Service Homes Annual Reports, 1923-1930.

During the 1927-28 financial year, a rise in building costs were noted in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania.\textsuperscript{173} This had the effect to steadily drive up the average house construction price nationally. In the previous few years, Tasmanian prices fluctuated from year to year, but registered a large spike in costs that took the average Land and Construction cost to nearly £1,000, and some £103 more expensive than the national average. The devastating 1929 floods in

\textsuperscript{171} Letter from Tasmanian applicant T. W. B. reproduced in, \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{172} Letter from Tasmanian applicant W. T. C. reproduced in, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 8.
Launceston caused damage to war service homes in the area. Fortunately, the War Service Homes insurance scheme covered the seven homes affected in the April floods. The insurance covered damage of £362 11s. 1d. and paid the instalments on the affected houses during the enforced vacation for repairs.\textsuperscript{174}

**Conclusion**

In Tasmania returned soldiers are exceedingly fortunate, I consider, because the War Service Homes Act enables him to own his own house...\textsuperscript{175}

The early years of the War Service Homes Scheme in Tasmania, and the investigation by the Public Accounts Committee into its administration and labours suggested that the type of administration run by Commissioner Walker was replicated in microcosm in Tasmania. The succession of Deputy Commissioners, understaffing, and high staff turnover were at the basis of the fundamental problems in delivering the service within the spirit it had been framed in. The first Deputy Commissioner, Captain W.J. Earle, had embarked upon a profligate land acquisition programme that contributed to the problems in Tasmania. In fairness, however, he was acting under directions from Walker. The problems facing the Tasmanian authorities with regard to construction, materials and labour were echoed nationwide, although the instability in the local administration was arguably compounding the problem further than it needed. The provision of efficient and affordable housing was therefore prejudiced. The speed with which contracts were entered into, of land purchased, and of labour secured, ensured that shortages in all facets of construction led to delays – unacceptable in some cases – experienced by ex-soldier and dependant applicants.


Table 3.8: War Service Homes operations in Tasmania, 1923-1930.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Applications Approved</th>
<th>Applications Amount</th>
<th>Existing Houses Purchased</th>
<th>Mortgages Discharged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>£81,649</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>£110,118</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>£94,949</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>£36,269</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>£ N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>£ N/A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>£ N/A</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>£ N/A</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Figures taken from War Service Homes Annual Reports, 1923-1930.

Table 3.9: Number of homes provided nationally from inception to June 1929 (including homes built and assisted to build, homes purchased, and homes where mortgages have been lifted).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From inception to 30 June 1921</td>
<td>16,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 1 July 1921, to 30 June 1922</td>
<td>2,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 1 July 1922, to 30 June 1923</td>
<td>2,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 1 July 1923, to 30 June 1924</td>
<td>3,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 1 July 1924, to 30 June 1925</td>
<td>2,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 1 July 1925, to 30 June 1926</td>
<td>2,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 1 July 1926, to 30 June 1927</td>
<td>1,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 1 July 1927, to 30 June 1928</td>
<td>2,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 1 July 1928, to 30 June 1929</td>
<td>2,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>35,036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In accumulating evidence into the Tasmanian scheme, the 1921 Public Accounts Committee had to negotiate the settling of petty scores and the gnashing of wounded pride. Accusatory fingers were pointed, yet, nobody took responsibility for the debacle. More important for the majority of the witnesses were their plaintive cries for “justice” and for their reputations. For most ex-employees, publicly extricating themselves from the farce of its internal organisation was of greater importance than resolving the problem at hand. The Tasmanian administration had been a catastrophe due to various factors both within and outside their control.
However, the greater responsibility of the investigation, as returned soldier Claude Wadley simply acknowledged, had been that the “the big overhead charges had defeated the very objects for which the war service homes had been born, the provision of cheap houses for soldiers.” Regardless of the political machinations surrounding blame, the soldiers wanted to know why their homes took so long to build, and why they cost so much more than they should have.

Table 3.10: Summary of Operations of the War Service Homes Scheme from Inception to 30 June 1929.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tasmania</th>
<th>Commonwealth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Applications Received</td>
<td>3,793</td>
<td>85,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Applications Approved</td>
<td>1,501</td>
<td>40,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homes Completed</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>19,796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homes Purchased</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>12,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgages Discharged</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>2,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers and Re-Sales</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>3,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instalments paid to 30 June, 1929</td>
<td>£353,791</td>
<td>£9,306,669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrears of Instalments as at 30 June, 1929</td>
<td>£7,772</td>
<td>£94,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Arrears</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The remedying of the Tasmanian administration and practices was led by Taylor, and completed by the subsequent reorganisation of the national scheme, and had an immediate impact locally. By farming out the work of the Commission to the Tasmanian Agricultural Bank, costly local administration was removed, and the policy could operate harmoniously alongside the Homes Act utilising the same agency. It is not known how many returned soldiers chose to obtain a home through the Homes Act, but figures between 19 February 1920 and 30 June 1929 show of 965 applications for assistance, approximately half were granted. Of War Service

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Homes, there was a large discrepancy between the number of applications made and the number granted – in fact, only 39 per cent of Tasmanian applicants were successful. This may in part be attributable to the particularly prolonged and severe economic downturn in the State, which affected stable employment and earnings. This is also suggested in the steady rise of outstanding arrears between 1923 and 1929. The Tasmanian percentage of successful applicants was the lowest in the country, and below the national average of 47.23 percent. The numbers of successful applicants fell during the course of the 1920s, and suffered a particularly substantial drop in 1925. This may be attributed to several factors: the provisions and eligibility of the scheme were not widely known; many Tasmanian veterans were considered ineligible or undesirable due to a number of reasons (it must be remembered that statistically, less than half of all applicants nationally were successful, and Tasmania had a smaller pool of eligible applicants); and that Tasmania’s economic position – of which the Annual Reports repeatedly referred to as the worst in the country – conspired to remove the financial means of obtaining a home.

Lloyd and Rees note that one of the interesting aspects of the scheme was the proportionately low take-up of War Service Housing by members of the AIF. They estimate that approximately 14 per cent of eligible applicants actually applied during the 1920s, although they did argue that a consequence of this was “an exceptionally high level of repayment.” Tasmanian numbers were approximately 15 per cent. This issue also vexed Commissioner H.L. Walters in his 1926-27 Report, who felt that the cause was a lack of knowledge of the scheme by prospective applicants. Despite publicity raising the profile of the scheme and its work, as well as advertising

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178 The following percentages of successful applicants were calculated from statistical data contained in Appendix J, ‘War Service Homes Act: Report of the War Service Homes Commission 1928-29’, CPP, 1929-30-31, Vol. II, Paper No. 7, p. 12. They are as follows: New South Wales – 41.17 per cent; Victoria – 44.6 per cent; Queensland – 55.80 per cent; South Australia – 62.55 per cent; Western Australia – 53.36 per cent; Tasmania – 39.57 per cent; Northern Territory – 66.66 per cent; Commonwealth Average – 47.23 per cent. The Northern Territory figures do not contribute substantially to the Commonwealth average, as only three applications were made, with two being successful.


180 This figure is arrived at by calculating the number of Tasmanian veterans by the number of successful applications. If the total number of applications is calculated against the number of Tasmanian returned servicemen, then that figure rises to 39 per cent. What must be borne in mind is that a small percentage of homes were also built or bought for dependants of deceased soldiers, and these are included in the figures published in the Annual Reports. Therefore, they obscure very slightly the true figure of homes obtained by Tasmanian returned servicemen only.
eligibility, the expected rush on homes did not eventuate. To the period up to the end of the financial year in 1929, nationally, only 34,966 homes had been built, purchased or mortgages discharged. In Tasmania, 1,501 applications had been approved in that same period. To 30 June 1929, a total of 671 homes had been built, and 519 had been purchased. An additional ninety-six mortgages had been discharged. Total expenditure on War Service Homes nationally to 30 June 1929 stood at £27,395,174. These figures mirror almost exactly the losses alone sustained in the soldier land settlement scheme to 1929.

It is arguable that the work undertaken by the War Service Homes Commission from its inception to 1929 was profitable in both a financial and social sense. The final years of 1920s saw the Commission make small profits from the scheme, and the benefits too for the ex-soldier and his family must not be underestimated. Commissioner Walters claimed the nobility of the work of War Service Homes in the continuing traditions and social fabric of Australian life:

The influence of the home, its environment and associations from early childhood through youth to adult years, is so far-reaching and so well understood that there is no necessity to comment on this phase, but I should like to point out that the Commission in carrying out its work endeavours to create in and about each dwelling erected an incentive to the purchaser to foster and develop those ambitions which have helped to form the traditions of our national life.

Whether these lofty ideals were indeed felt by those who succeeded in procuring a home under the scheme or not, it cannot be denied that nationally, the scheme was a

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181 Walters notes that, “Some returned soldiers thought that the scheme had terminated, whilst others held the view that they could not obtain a loan unless they were incapacitated or were drawing a pension.” See, ‘War Service Homes Act: Report of the War Service Homes Commission 1926-27’, CPP, 1926-27-28, Vol. II, Paper No. 130, p. 6.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
185 Ibid., p. 6.
general success. Notwithstanding the position Tasmanian War Service Homes repayment and unallotted houses stood at, this element of repatriation policy – for those who were able to take advantage of its provisions – must be viewed as the most successful and satisfactory of all undertaken in the State.
Chapter Four

Returned Soldier Employment in Tasmania

If the boys are to be got to respond to the call of the Empire, you must be able to show them that when they return from the Front they will have a chance to earn an honest living, that there will be work for them to do if they are willing to take it and able to do it.

I have no doubt the returned soldiers contain in their ranks men competent for almost any undertaking, as they are ordinary citizens like ourselves; but it is not always possible to put your hand on the exact man you want for a particular job.

The employment of returned soldiers was of utmost importance to their rehabilitation and sense of self, as well as vitally important in the context of rebuilding a nation after the financial, social and industrial catastrophe of war. While health, medical care and land settlement were higher profile schemes in the whole repatriation system, employment policies and finding work was central to their assimilation back into society. Repatriation as a process of the reassimilation into society (as distinct from Repatriation the Government programme for reassimilation), could never truly be effected until the individual had become a civilian again and taken on the role of a civilian in society rather than as a returned soldier pending civilian status. It was this quasi-existence between military and society that brought uncertainty – the returned man was no longer a soldier, nor was he a civilian. As L.J. Pryor has argued, “Demobilisation did not make a soldier a civilian, until he played a positive part in the life of the community to which he returned.”


\[2\] Senator Edward Millen, Minister for Repatriation, to the Senate, 2 May 1918. Ibid., p. 4309.

\[3\] Returned Soldiers’ Land Settlement, when reduced to a simple concept, was but one branch of an employment program. That it managed to become larger in its public profile than normal employment and vocational programs was due to the enormous sums of money expended on it, the enormous media coverage of its development and progress, and the place of land settlement programmes as part of a broader Australian historical vision.

employment accelerated this process. The journey home from Europe brought introspection that was partly a response to the nervousness of returning, and a realisation that responsibilities and duties were awaiting soldiers on their arrival.

Not all returned soldiers required assistance from the Repatriation Department to find employment on their return. Tasmanian Senator Thomas Bakhap called these people, "Architects of their own fortunes," and many Tasmanians returned able-bodied and generally fit and healthy to resume employment – and many soldiers had their previous employment to return to. In some cases this meant a return to the family farm or business and a resumption of normal activities, while others had their old occupations kept open for them after pledges of support from their employers before they enlisted. For these returned soldiers, the repatriation apparatus was unnecessary and little, if any, assistance was required. Their stories are difficult to access using archival material, and their narratives are not found in these pages. For others, however, lack of employment was the one major obstacle to their reintegration into society, and this obstacle struck at the very centre of their masculine image as heroes of the Commonwealth. Repatriation literature, indeed, repatriation policy, was directed at restoring "manhood in all its connotations" – for it aimed to recover and return men (and their masculinity) to their rightful places as breadwinners independent of welfare. When combined with the necessity of obtaining sustenance allowances from the Repatriation Department in order to survive, this difficulty assumed even greater proportions due to its equation to Victorian charity. While many returned men drifted back into their pre-war occupations or found work in new areas, others, unemployable even before the war, felt more marginalised in a post-war society despite the prestige their war service afforded. Bobbie Oliver argues that "Those who returned whole in mind and body had to compete on the labour market, often with younger, more highly qualified and skilled men. Many suffered discrimination because of incomplete training interrupted by the war, or

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6 This occurred in the case of Ernest Harrison from Launceston, who had enlisted in the war with his brother Raymond. While the brothers served, their positions at the Launceston Bank for Savings were held open for them, and they even received half-pay from the Bank. Raymond died in May 1916 from serious wounds, but Ernest returned to his former position in the Bank as paying teller. See, E.A. Beever, Launceston Bank for Savings 1835-1970: A History of Australia’s Oldest Savings Bank, Carlton, 1972, p. 127.
7 This theme is taken up more broadly by S. Garton, 'Return Home: War, Masculinity and Repatriation', in J. Damousi and M. Lake (eds.), Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 200-201.
8 See also 'Health' chapter.
incapacitation."9 Sporadic employment was not the answer, and some went to the margins and drank.10 Steady employment may have cured some ills, but for many, their war experience had marked them in such ways that reassimilation into society in the positions from which they left could never be complete.

The lack of employment opportunities for Tasmanians during the 1920s was exacerbated by a decline in established industries like mining and timber, while the industrial and manufacturing base of the economy was small – so small that Tasmanians left their island seeking better opportunities interstate,11 while others stayed to start or continue families and eke out a living as best they could. Within this contracted labour market, returned soldiers competed with civilians for available work, many enforcing wherever possible the principle of employment preference for veterans. According to Townsley, the ten years of relative prosperity enjoyed by their mainland counterparts never eventuated in Tasmania, while Lloyd Robson identified the 1920s as Tasmania’s “Dismal Decade.”12

The programme that Federal Parliamentarians in Melbourne envisaged while creating the Repatriation scheme focussed attention on putting things back the way they were for the men, but left little flexibility for any change of heart on their part. However, MP Richard Foster declared that soldiers’ wartime experiences would have worked such a change in the men that it will take them some time before they can get into collar again in their old occupations, and be as effective employees as they were before they went to the war. The life they have led will also produce in some men a complete distaste for the occupations, which they filled prior to going to the war.13

Foster's claim struck at the heart of the problem facing legislators and administrators. The multiplicity of experiences, and responses to those experiences, created a dilemma in trying to resettle a nation of men who had survived the greatest armed conflict the world had yet seen. That there were some difficulties in doing so was a

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10 See ‘Prologue’.
given, and this chapter will focus on those requiring assistance in re-establishing themselves, or who had difficulty in making the transition to civilian employment after their military vocations, rather than those whose made the transition personally, privately and independently, although they should by no means be omitted from this narrative.

The Employment Question

There is a growing tendency to prostitute the returned soldier. Is he to be penalised or pauperised because he once wore khaki? He is welcomed back with all the flowers of oratory, and he is told shortly afterwards that he is worn out and a back number. 14

An August 1915 Federal War Committee memorandum first raised the issue of employment for returning men, and the obligations and responsibilities involved in providing this. It noted that it was the “duty of the nation” to prepare for “the employment and future welfare of Australian soldiers”, and that “it will be necessary to impress upon the public generally to the fullest possible extent a sense of its obligations.” 15 Although lacking detail, the memorandum declared that employment was of central significance in the process of repatriating Australia’s returned servicemen, and that there was an obligation from all Australians to see that this work be carried out on behalf of the nation. 16

The task of understanding the wishes of the men of the AIF as to their prospects for employment after demobilisation saw the Defence Department in 1918 issue a questionnaire concerning employment to assist with planning post-war schemes. 17 The Defence Department undertook educational training and programmes for the men awaiting demobilisation in Europe, but the Repatriation Department, as Lloyd and Rees argue, played little part in assisting the return of the AIF to Australia,

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16 This was a point reiterated by Senator Millen on 17 December 1918, when he requested the cooperation of various local government bodies and all in the community, in addition to the State Governments, in finding employment for returned soldiers. ‘Employment of Soldiers. Assistance of Public Bodies’, The Mercury, 18 December 1918, p. 4.
17 Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 112. This was form 534, in which questions relating to “future career intentions, prospects of employment, dependants, where he intended to live, where he had lived before enlistment, his wishes for education, retraining and employment while awaiting repatriation”, were asked. Ibid., p. 119.
except for a "limited foray into industrial training." The Repatriation Department's real responsibilities in this regard were to begin when the men were discharged. But what of the men who returned prior to April 1918?

When members of the AIF began returning, the predominant national focus was on winning the war and securing sufficient recruits. The Repatriation apparatus was yet to be fully created and put into effect, so State War Councils undertook the responsibility for finding employment for veterans. A meeting of the Tasmanian State War Council at the beginning of January 1916 discussed the issue of employment for returned soldiers. The State War Council undertook important work finding employment for returning soldiers and implementing principles of two Vocational training conferences, before the Repatriation Department took over those responsibilities in April 1918. Returning soldiers, their supporters, and sympathisers were still vocal in their claims for better deals for returned soldiers, notwithstanding the efforts made by the State War Council.

At the time of the introduction of the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Bill in July 1917, the Federal Labor Party formulated its own skeleton response to the returned soldier question titled 'Soldier Policy', and presented it to a Defence Committee. Among proposals for the general return of Australia's returned soldiers, there was a heavy concentration on the issue of employment of returned soldiers. There were liberal proposals to retain soldiers on the payroll until they had been provided with employment; to register employers who had pledged to keep positions open for soldiers or who had offered inducements to enlistees in order to compel them to carry out such promises; that all returned soldiers "receiving preference of employment to receive full standard trade Union wages and to become members of the Union of the trade or calling into the employment of which he enters"; and that disabled soldiers should receive special attention to prepare them for the workforce. The Labor Party proposals acknowledged the inherent responsibility of the

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18 Ibid., p. 112.
19 Hesmer, 7 January 1916, p. 4.
20 With regard to employment, the State War Council's final statistics were as follows: 219 registrations for employment; 136 placed; 13 work offered and refused; 37 work withdrawn or lapsed; 20 registered and not heard of again; 13 unplaced (fit only for light work). 'Defunct War Council: Premier Entertains Members', The Mercury, 27 April 1918, p. 4. For statistics of Repatriation Fund monies disbursed, and other activities of the Council, see 'Politics' chapter.
Government to provide for the well-being of its soldiers, and went beyond the actual legislation drawn up by the Government.

During the war years, Tasmanian ex-soldiers made strong suggestions in the press about employment and those who should be able to fill new positions. Preference as a defined policy was not in effect by mid-1917, yet 'Returned Soldier' expressed a desire that the Government and all employers of labour give preference to returned men, while simultaneously liberating physically fit and otherwise eligible single men from their positions to go to the Front.22 ‘Recruit’, writing in February 1917, felt that not utilising returned soldiers as recruiting officers was insulting and hypocritical, particularly as the civilian recruiting officer in his electorate of Denison had not enlisted. “A returned soldier”, he reasoned, “could do the work just as well as the present recruiting officer.”23 At a Soldiers’ and Patriots’ Political League meeting in May 1917, Sapper Duncan McRae complained that “Preference to returned soldiers had not been observed”, knowing of instances where they had been “turned down by Government, municipal, and private employers.”24 Returned soldiers favoured preference well before legislation enshrining the practice was formulated.

In early August 1916, the newly formed RSA in Hobart discussed the issue of employment.25 Its grievances even at this early juncture highlight the critical and essential role employment played in soldiers’ ability to return and reassimilate. On a general level, they discussed the notion that the Association could “form a labour bureau and help each other in obtaining employment.”26 A Corporal Nielson noted during the meeting that since he had returned to Australia “he had heard several

22 See, 'The Call for Men', letter to the editor, The Mercury, 26 June, 1917, p. 3. Similarly, two more ex-servicemen felt that eligible men should fill no Government positions while those who had “rendered their services for their King and country” were willing and able to do the work. This assumes that returned men possessed the abilities required to perform the jobs offered. See, 'Government Positions and Eligibles', letter to the editor from 'Another Returned Soldier', The Mercury, 27 July 1917, p. 3. See also letter previous to this, 'Public Positions and Eligibles' letter to the editor from 'Returned Soldier', The Mercury, 25 July 1917, p. 2. Gerald Caiden notes that returned soldiers criticised the implementation of the Commonwealth Government's Public Service Act, 1917, arguing that “more vacancies could be created by dismissing eligibles and women.” G.E. Caiden, Career Service, Melbourne, 1965, p. 124.

23 ‘Recruiting’, letter to the editor from 'Recruit', The Mercury, 1 February 1917, p. 3.

24 'Returned Soldiers' and Patriots' League', The Mercury, 31 May 1917, p. 2. When a returned soldier was not given a job over someone else, as in the passing over of a mail tender from a returned soldier for the Lefroy-Launceston mail service in December 1918, the reasons were usually investigated. In the case of the Lefroy-Launceston mail service tender, the George Town Municipal Council intended to ask the Deputy Postmaster-General why preference was not given to the returned soldier. 'Mail Contracts and Returned Soldiers', The Mercury, 17 December 1918, p. 4.

25 See 'Politics’ chapter.

complaints with regard to the employment of returned men", threatening that if the employment impasse was not resolved, and "if the Government did not take some steps he thought the State would lose population, and the men would go to other States or to New Zealand. It was the duty of the association to work for the good of its members.\textsuperscript{27} Nielson implied that the Earle State Government was not supporting its returned soldier population sufficiently, and that the only options open to them were emigration, or introspective sanctuary within the association among men who had an understanding of their unique requirements. It was also a direction to the Association to represent returned soldiers when the Government was appearing to fail them. Importantly, returned soldiers' employment, as early as 1916, threatened to become a significant political issue.\textsuperscript{28}

Opening Parliament in July 1917, Governor Sir Francis Newdegate focussed attention on the great issues ahead. Prayers for a swift victory in the war were followed by the pressing need to deal with the repatriation of Tasmania’s soldiers: a matter regarded "as one of the utmost importance."\textsuperscript{29} Newdegate felt that the responsibility for finding them employment constituted more than the simple discharge of an obligation, but that, "Employment and occupation suitable to the individual taste, character, and ability of each soldier must be provided."\textsuperscript{30} In addition, he acknowledged the need for training mechanisms and of the responsibility of the State, in partnership with the Commonwealth, to achieve these outcomes. This individually tailored approach was an obligation accepted by State and Commonwealth authorities, but was also to cause the State War Council, and later the Repatriation Department, enormous difficulties in placing returned men within an occupation suited to their interests and abilities. The Governor had officially acknowledged the growing employment issue by mid-late 1917, and in communicating it in Parliament, had placed the issue firmly on the agenda for the next

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} It did become a political issue to Labor MHA David Dicker, who raised in Parliament the issue of an unemployed returned soldier in the Huon. He could not continue working at the Huon Timber Company's Mill, as the work aggravated a pre-war injury. He was therefore reduced to living in a bark hut, and catching fish from a Channel jetty to help keep his wife and three children. Dicker attempted to use this case to attack Lee's Government. See, \textit{Daily Post}, 26 September 1916, p. 7; \textit{The Mercury}, 26 September 1916; also covered by, C. Martin, 'War and after War: the Great War and its Aftermath in a Tasmanian Region: the Huon 1914-1926', Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1992, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{29} The State Parliament: The Opening Ceremony: The Governor's Speech: Business of the Session', \textit{The Mercury}, 1 August 1917, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
session. Parliamentarians as well as the citizens they represented, were thus bonded to the commitment to facilitate the successful employment of returned soldiers as fellow citizens, and as a central tenet of their repatriation responsibilities.

By early 1917 employment bureaus where established in the capital cities for returned soldiers to register for employment. During 1917, Tasmanian veterans were advertising for employment, indicating the need for some form of organised structure to deal with what was likely to be a growing problem. The State Government’s employment preference policy had not yet been implemented in legislation, although there were many employers willing to yield to patriotic sentiment and employ returned labour where possible. As one returned soldier declared in June 1917: “Returned soldiers are walking about the streets of Hobart, willing to do work of any kind.” This was reinforced by calls made publicly by the Secretary of the State War Council, Frank Lindsay Gunn, for employers willing to accept returned soldiers. Employers were encouraged to contact him at Anglesea Barracks, and by early November 1917, already two dozen returned men desirous of employment.

Once the Repatriation Department came into operation, the onus of finding work for returned soldiers fell to it, and it took on the responsibility of placing men in suitable employment. Returned men seeking employment were asked to register with the Department, then report on a daily basis until employment was found for them.

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32 See letter from ‘Another Returned Soldier’ to the editor of *The Mercury*, 15 June 1917, p. 2.
33 *The Mercury*, 8 November 1917, p. 5. A meeting of the State War Council on 22 May 1917 reported that a call had recently been made in the press for employers to contact them with work offering for returned soldiers. Only two replies were received. See, *The Mercury*, 24 May 1917, p. 5. See also a call for light work for returned soldiers, also made by Gunn, *The Mercury*, 28 August, 1917, p. 5. Another call for employers to take on injured returned soldiers was made by the Repatriation Department in May 1918, See *The Mercury*, 14 May 1918, p. 5. In a letter to a Hobart newspaper in the same month, one member of the public was concerned that the soldiers’ own debility and incapacity resulting from war injuries would prejudice their chances of employment. If they were physically unable to do a full day’s work, Hobart Council Alderman and lawyer William Bottrill feared that employers would shun them out of a need to employ cost-efficient workers capable of earning the wages they were paid. Bottrill urged a sympathetic response to the question by devising a scheme along the lines of a proportionate pay to work done that would not further obstruct the employment of returned soldiers. As sympathetic as this suggestion was, the demasculinisation felt by returned men faced with this position would have undermined the positive effect it was meant to achieve. ‘Employment for Returned Soldiers’, letter to the editor from W.E. Bottrill, *The Mercury*, 1 November 1917, p. 3. At least one limbless returned soldier found employment at Beaumaris Zoo in Hobart manning the turn styles. See, A. Alexander and S. Petrow, *Hobart 1846-2000: A History of Hobart City Council*, Hobart, forthcoming publication, ‘Tramways’ chapter, p. 13.
34 Reinstatement of returned soldiers to their former employment was the topic of a *Mercury* article in February 1919, that outlined the general process of registrations and work placements. A ‘Form 2’ was
but with the lapse of one week without work, a graded sustenance allowance was granted to support the soldier. This sustenance allowance was generally continued for as long as the ex-soldier continued to look for work.\textsuperscript{35} Should a position offered be refused, the case was referred to Repatriation Comptroller J.F. Humphris. The employment section of the State Repatriation Board reported in June 1918 that an increasing number of applicants desired work, particularly light in character.\textsuperscript{36} By October, an article in the \textit{Mercury} argued that, “every applicant in Hobart who has been able to undertake anything but light work has been found a position”.\textsuperscript{37} However, this only referred to those men registered with the Department. A representative of the Trades Hall Council sat on the Repatriation Board to further assist the employment issue.\textsuperscript{38} As increasing numbers of soldiers returned toward the end of the year and into 1919, the employment situation worsened with criticisms from the soldiers that promises for their repatriation had not been fulfilled.

At the end of November 1918, because of the looming General Election, the \textit{Mercury}’s editors mooted the possibility of a Tasmanian Minister responsible for Repatriation appointed to oversee the re-establishing of returned men back in civilian life.\textsuperscript{39} The imminent arrival of large numbers of healthy and able bodied men

\textsuperscript{35} The rules for sustenance eligibility were clarified in May 1919, whereby a case was used to demonstrate when a veteran was eligible and when he was not. The fundamental principle was that upon being satisfactorily repatriated, ie. if the soldier had gained employment that offered him at least the same conditions as before his enlistment, he was, in the event of normal industry depressions and consequent unemployment caused therefrom, not eligible for sustenance payments. ‘Normal’ unemployment between jobs (the usual period in civilian employment when changing occupations etc.) did not constitute eligibility for the allowance, for to do so would, “in effect, undertake to do something for the soldier that places him in a class apart from the rest of his fellows in similar occupations, inasmuch as it provides him with insurance against unemployment.” See, ‘Repatriation. Sustenance Allowances: Statute of Limitations,’ \textit{The Mercury}, 8 May 1919, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{36} ‘State Repatriation Board: A Proposed New Red Cross Drive’, \textit{The Mercury}, 4 June 1918, p. 6. Later that month, circulars were posted to employers appealing for their assistance in placing returned soldiers in work, with a “gratifying” response, and increased ex-soldier employment. A newspaper report of the Board’s meeting found that “employers generally had expressed a willingness to assist the department, which is very encouraging.” ‘State Repatriation Board’, \textit{The Mercury}, 22 June 1918, p. 8.


\textsuperscript{38} M.H. Eyre was accepted as the Trades Hall Council’s representative to facilitate the co-ordination of returned soldier employment with official labour associations in June 1918. ‘State Repatriation Board: The Formation of Local Committees’, \textit{The Mercury}, 15 June 1918, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{39} ‘The State and Repatriation’, editorial, \textit{The Mercury}, 27 November 1918, p. 4. In Debate on the Address in Reply in the newly elected State Parliament, MHA George Pullen felt that there was no
concerned them enough to place this suggestion in the public arena, particularly in view of their opinion that, "The next six months will be a crucial period in the business of repatriation, and it will be almost impossible to avoid complications and blunders, perhaps of a serious kind, if steps are not taken at once to get the business in working order." An appraisal of the work of the Repatriation Department revealed the failure of some men to adapt themselves to the work in which they were placed. Returned soldier discontent became evident to a greater degree in Tasmania in early 1919.

By January 1919, the employment situation for returned soldiers in Tasmania had altered little. Increasing numbers of returned soldiers had arrived with no immediate employment to return to, and relied upon the Repatriation Department, the RSSILA, or their own private efforts to find work. Unemployment figures for returned men were reported to hover around two hundred in Hobart alone, with some taking it upon themselves to begin advertising for employment. Writing from the Red Cross Hostel in Hobart, A. McClymont alleged broken promises to returned soldiers concerning employment:

The cry of no economic conscription is a mean insinuation, and a cloak to those that took the jobs of the men that went away and risked their lives to save the country. I say to these gasbags that make speeches, do something for us and not misguide the public. What sort of treatment is it we are looking for? Only the means for existence, a job. So much for this splendid treatment, which looks like causing trouble very shortly.

McClymont issued a veiled threat that the returned soldier community in Tasmania did not want feeble excuses for pre-war promises. As the new year opened, McClymont noted: "That discontent is brewing one only has to get amongst returned men to find out, and I can safely say that the same attitude is going to be adopted by necessity for the creation of a State Minister for Repatriation, for "after a few years the necessity for a Minister of Repatriation would have vanished." See, Report of House of Assembly debates, 23 July 1919, The Mercury, 24 July 1919, p. 8. It appears that the proposal for a special Tasmanian minister for Repatriation was never seriously entertained.

40 'The State and Repatriation', editorial, The Mercury, 27 November 1918, p. 4.
41 The Mercury provided the following explanation: "The mere fact that a man who enters upon work with which he is not familiar does not find the task congenial, or fails to master its intricacies, need not be wondered at, and the failure to qualify is not very serious." The Mercury, 2 December 1918, p. 4.
42 See 'New Senator', letter to the editor from a returned soldier's wife, The Mercury, 7 January 1919, p. 7.
soldiers in Tasmania, as in Victoria, New South Wales, and West Australia.\textsuperscript{44} While
returned soldiers did not take to the streets and engage in violent protests such as the
Queensland Red Flag Riots,\textsuperscript{45} Tasmanian returned men were still aggrieved at what
they perceived was a withdrawal of employment promises, jostling Labour speakers
in Launceston in the lead up to the 1919 State election.\textsuperscript{46} As Kent Fedorowich has
argued, these frustrations were rarely the manifestations of subversive or radical
political intrigue, but a consequence of the frustrations and “dissatisfaction over the
slowness of the demobilisation process, their inability to find employment or delay in
receiving their gratuities...”\textsuperscript{47} Lack of employment allowed idle returned soldiers the
opportunity to ponder their position and formulate a frustrated response in the form of
riots and disturbances, while correspondent L.O.E. felt that generally, employment
was the question of greatest importance in Australia, as a cure for unrest and a way to
“remedy our social position.”\textsuperscript{48} Writing to The Mercury, ‘Wanderer’ asked people to
understand returned soldiers’ position:

Let those who think it hard for one man to be put out to make way for
another consider the facts. That other man left such a job as he is
asking you to give him back for a bigger and rougher job, which it was
said was one all fit men should take in hand. He was told then what a
good fellow he was, and how he would be looked after when he came
back; and a good many of them didn’t come back to trouble people’s
memory a out t e1r promises.\textsuperscript{49}

The author appealed to the public to honour promises to enlisting soldiers on their
return. Returned soldiers faced further difficulties finding employment because

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. Claims made in McLymont’s letter regarding threats made to cut off sustenance payments if
men did not take up work on the Great Lake hydro-electric scheme was refuted by correspondence to
The Mercury from the Deputy Comptroller of Repatriation in Tasmania, Col, J.F. Humphris. See,

\textsuperscript{45} Kent Fedorowich argues that such confrontations in “Adelaide, Brisbane, Fremantle,
Melbourne...between 1917 and 1919, in which returned men were participants on both sides, were
confrontations born as much of war-weariness as of Bolshevism and the creation of a new political
order.” See, Kent Fedorowich, ‘Ex-Servicemen and the Politics of Soldier Settlement in Canada and

\textsuperscript{46} ‘Soldiers and Labour at Launceston’, letter to the editor from (Miss) P. Bagley, The Mercury, 10
April 1919, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{47} See, Fedorowich, ‘Ex-Servicemen and the Politics of Soldier Settlement in Canada and Australia,
1915-1925’, p. 67. In solidarity, the Tasmanian RSSILA sent their support to their Queensland
companions after the riots, with The Mercury supporting their actions in doing so. See, The Mercury, 7
April 1919, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{48} ‘Employment as a Cure for Unrest’, letter to the editor from L.O.E., The Mercury, 1 April 1919, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{49} ‘Repatriation Employment’, letter to the editor from ‘Wanderer’, The Mercury, 14 February 1919, p.
8.
“Employers in general do not look with favour on returned men,” despite the best efforts of the Repatriation Department in placing them in work.

During the 1917 Denison by-election, George Foster reportedly spoke of prejudice against employing returned soldiers in Tasmania: “A great many people today considered that because a man was a returned soldier he was not qualified to hold a decent position in the community. The attitude of some people was, ‘Do you think you can manage the job?’” Foster obviously felt that such questioning was without basis, claiming that “some of the best people in the State had gone away as private soldiers.” Publicity surrounding returned soldiers and alcoholism certainly added to employers’ caution in employing returned soldiers who had been out of the workforce during two or three years on active service. The disillusionment over employment erased the gloss from soldiers’ return and the eulogising speeches of appreciation made for their efforts:

And no pussy-footing sissy
Shall grab at my one good hand,
And make me feel drunk with the good old bunk,
Just to make himself sound grand.

For I’m damned if I’ll be a hero,
And I ain’t a helpless slob;
After what I’ve stood, what is left is good,
All I want is – A JOB.

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50 Ibid.
51 The Mercury, 14 June 1917, p. 6.
52 Ibid.
53 Duncan McRae, member of the RSA was reported to have claimed at a prohibition meeting at the Hobart Town Hall on 18 December 1918 that, “The greatest difficulty the authorities had was to deal with soldiers who had succumbed to the drink evil.” Member of the State Repatriation Board, Lt.-Col. Robert Snowden, had these claims investigated, with the officer in charge of the employment section at the Repatriation Department in Hobart stating in his report that: “Of the 1,075 men who have applied for employment since the department started it would be difficult to pick more than about 12 to 15 whose drinking habits interfered with their chance of employment.” If these figures are correct, it would suggest that any correlation between alcoholism and the inability of ex-soldiers to find work in Tasmania was spurious. See, ‘Returned Soldiers and Drink. A Statement Officially Corrected’, The Mercury, 16 January 1919, p. 6.
54 Excerpt from ‘The Wounded Man Speaks’, by Henry Oyen, Repatriation, Vol. I, No. I, March 1919. This journal, and the poem, was national and not Tasmanian. Garton uses this same poem when engaging the nexus of disability, employment, and masculinity. See, Garton, ‘Return Home: War, Masculinity and Repatriation’, p. 199. Losing limbs or suffering other war-related injuries causing disability was not, and should not, according to repatriation literature, diminish the returned man’s masculine ability to find work. His masculinity was intact, even if his body was not.
Unemployed veterans wanted concrete and tangible demonstrations of society’s appreciation rather than emotive but ultimately empty panegyric—a sentiment shared by the father of one soldier who claimed that the sincerity of the community’s promises could only be shown by actions, and not by empty words.\textsuperscript{55} Returned men, generally, evidently felt a separation from the wider community, and their insistence on preference policies and special treatment in employment only served to stress that difference and estrangement.

The Repatriation Department placed men in employment whenever suitable employment could be found.\textsuperscript{56} However, some returned soldiers reportedly found their placement on the hydro-electric construction on the Great Lake was unpalatable, returning to Hobart complaining that “it was not a fit job” for returned soldiers.\textsuperscript{57} The Department investigated but found little substance to the complaints, although J.F. Humphris did state that no further returned men were to be sent on these works without prior medical examinations assessing them for suitability to that class of work.\textsuperscript{58}

MHA George Foster used hydro-electric employment to criticise the sustenance allowance and employment policies of the Repatriation Department. A man with a wife and four children, Foster reasoned, would receive £3 6s. per week in sustenance payments until he found a job. That same man, employed through the Department on the Great Lake hydro-electric works, earned 1 Os. a day, but lost 6s. per week by doing so with the additional burden of keeping his wife and family in Hobart.\textsuperscript{59} If he refused to take work offered by the Department, even if it meant a

\textsuperscript{55} ‘Employment of Returned Soldiers’, letter to the editor from Father of Soldier, \textit{The Mercury}, 25 April 1919, p. 2. Poignantly, this letter was published on Anzac Day.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{The Mercury}, 12 July 1919, p. 4, reported that Col. Humphris had spoken with the Chamber of Commerce to organise a meeting of Tasmanian employers to facilitate the employment of returned men along the lines of a similar meeting held in Sydney.

\textsuperscript{57} ‘Hydro-Electric Construction. Employment of Returned Soldiers: Complaints Investigated’, \textit{The Mercury}, 27 February 1919, p. 2. The men were paid 10s. per day, and, after mess costs of 2s. a day were deducted, an 8s. profit was made. Food and accommodation were also investigated and found to be satisfactory.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{59} ‘The Repatriation Scheme. Returned Soldiers Condemn It: Meeting in the Town Hall’, \textit{The Mercury}, 7 March 1919, p. 6. Insufficient wages in the wake of price increases for essential foodstuffs, versus stagnant wages for the working classes, prompted the wife of a returned soldier to vent her frustration over the Government’s inaction in adjusting wages to inflation: “The Government has promised to help all returned men in their efforts to get along, and this is the way they are placed.” The Government’s apparent inability to ensure living wages were commensurate to the increased cost of living—even for returned soldiers—sparked the angry outburst, although exactly what the correspondent intended by assisting ‘returned men’s efforts to get along’ is not clear. See, ‘High Prices of Food’, letter to the editor from Soldier’s Wife, \textit{The Mercury}, 16 April 1919, p. 3.
lower income, a returned man risked having his sustenance allowance withdrawn – such were the anomalies inherent in the regulations.  

Returned soldiers in Tasmania had their supporters over the lack of employment opportunities for them and vocalised their discontent. As Jericho resident W. Revell Reynolds noted in March 1919, the sight of a returned soldier on the streets was now “no novelty; he is abundant.” Veterans’ demands for employment were reasonable according to Reynolds, after the experiences the returned man had endured – “only being back from the gates of hell and death”, and yet their claims were evidently not seen as such. Despite his experiences, the returned soldier was “nevertheless a very wicked fellow – he wishes as soon as possible to be back in civil employment.” The Tasmanian public were generally supportive of the right to employment for returned soldiers, and, while many were willing to take the next step and speak out in favour, others perhaps realised that they constituted competition for what little work was available in a depressed post-war economy. Despite this, the Tasmanian public rarely expressed frustration and occasional hostility unless claims for preference in employment were too vigorously pressed.

A myriad of active suggestions as to avenues of employment for returned soldiers were expressed in the Tasmanian community. An article from The Mercury’s New Zealand correspondent reported that several industries were suggested for the employment of their returned men, among them poultry-farming, fruit culture, dairy

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60 A returned soldier, E. Anderson wrote a letter to the editor of The Mercury complaining that after registering for employment, the Repatriation Department sent him to Bothwell on “pick and shovel work” at 9s. a day. Board and lodgings at Bothwell were £1 2s. per week, and, finding it too hard to stay and keep his wife and children in Hobart, left, and informed the Repatriation Department of the impossibility of maintaining two homes. The State Repatriation Board considered 9s. enough to run two homes. Anderson’s sustenance allowance was therefore cut off. See, ‘Work for Returned Men’, letter to the editor from E. Anderson, The Mercury, 10 May 1919, p. 4.


62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Poultry-farming was the subject of a letter to the editor of The Mercury from R. Loveless, who enquired as to whether the Tasmanian Poultry Society had formulated a scheme to start returned wounded soldiers poultry-farming. See, ‘Poultry Farming for Returned Soldiers’, letter to the editor, The Mercury, 4 June 1917, p. 6. Poultry farming for returned soldiers was again the issue of a more considered response in April 1919, where one respondent considered the financial contingencies necessary to make a living from it. “To make poultry farming a paying industry for returned soldiers, the letter contended, “it is absolutely necessary that the price of poultry commodities should be based on the cost of production.” The meticulous calculations appended to that statement suggest that whoever wrote the letter was trying to advise returned soldiers of the costs involved in making it a profitable undertaking. ‘Poultry for Returned Soldiers’, letter to the editor from ‘Spero Meliora’, The Mercury, 22 April 1919, p. 8. See also, article on poultry farming, The Mercury, 10 July 1917, p. 7. Roger Kellaway notes that “Poultry farming in Tasmania was a minor activity whose commercial potential was virtually undeveloped”, and that there was the belief that “poultry farming was an
farming and bee keeping – all industries returned soldiers in Tasmania engaged on their return. The Hobart Branch of the RSSILA circulated a letter to the Hobart City Council in September 1917 suggesting that returned soldiers be employed to plant trees in its gardens and parks, with the trees attached with a plaque inscribed with the name of a soldier. This Victorian proposal would have been of "great advantage, both to [the returned soldiers of Tasmania] and the community generally." \(^{65}\)

Returned soldiers were also suggested as suitable polling clerks during the State's general elections in 1917\(^ {66}\) and on 31 May 1919,\(^ {67}\) but these suggestions were merely temporary positions, so the greater problem of satisfactory and more permanent employment remained. Similarly, problems in employing returned men in the Post Office led the Superintendent of Mails to complain that they did "not stay long."\(^ {68}\) It was reported that, "on two occasions [the Superintendent] had notified the next on the list to report for work, but had no response."\(^ {69}\)

This was not surprising considering that men who were on an employment register would have been placed in the next industry that could be entered by the enthusiastic amateur with a modest capital base." See his, Geographical Change in Tasmanian Agriculture during the Great Depression, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1989, pp. 349, 350.

\(^{65}\) "Tree Planting and Returned Soldiers", The Mercury, 28 September 1917, p. 4.

\(^{66}\) "Returned Soldiers and the Elections", letter to the editor from W. Honey, The Mercury, 26 July 1917, p. 3. Honey wrote to the RSA asking if they had been approached to provide returned soldiers for polling clerks for the Commonwealth elections. George Fisher, then-President, replied that no-one had contacted them offering this work to returned men. Honey cited the response of a man connected with the Government who reportedly stated that positions of poll clerks had been offered to returned soldiers, but were refused by them. Clearly, two different sides to the story were provided by the RSA and the Government's representatives.

\(^{67}\) This suggestion was made by William Bottrill in a letter to The Mercury, 24 April 1919, p. 7. It was later rejected by electoral authorities, owing to the fact that Bottrill made the claim without relevant authority to do so, and that all clerk positions had already been filled. In a further development of returned soldiers' employment as electoral officers, W. Honey remarked that in his experience, only one out of eight returned soldiers was successful in gaining employment in that position for the upcoming 1919 election. See, 'Returned Soldiers and Elections', letter to the editor from W. Honey, The Mercury, 28 April 1919, p. 3. After the 1919 election, one ex-soldier protested the largely absent returned soldier polling clerks, remarking acidly: "Is it surprising that returned soldiers feel sore when they see men being transferred from one good permanent position in the Civil Service to another and better in the Defence Department, and over the heads of others who were not too 'cold-footed' to leave their comfortable positions and homes in Tasmania to fight?" 'Election Poll Clerks', letter to the editor from 'A Returned Soldier', The Mercury, 3 June 1919, p. 3. The electoral poll employment issue for returned soldiers was raised again later in 1919 during the Federal elections, with the Clarence Council enquiring as to the possibility of returned soldier employment. The electoral officer promised to employ them whenever possible, which in practice was a non-committal response. See, The Mercury, 11 December 1919, p. 6. Criticisms of Defence Department employment practices toward returned soldiers were frequent, and dealt with by the RSSILA Congress in Hobart, 'RSL: The Third Annual Congress: Governor-General's Address: Resolutions on Eligibles and Aliens', The Mercury, 2 March 1918, p. 11. One ex-soldier already had a position, but wanted "to see fair play to my comrades." 'Preference to Returned Soldiers', letter to the editor from 'A Returned Soldier', The Mercury, 27 June 1919, p. 7.

\(^{68}\) The Mercury, 24 May 1917, p. 5.

\(^{69}\) Ibid.
available position, regardless of their interest in that position. Post Office work may have proven anti-climactic to this soldier after his wartime experiences. For others, war-weariness brought a lack of motivation for any sort of work, plaguing their efforts at finding employment and committing to hard work as it did their comrades who went on the land.70

In July 1918, The Mercury's 'Woman's World' section noted that suggestions were made almost on a weekly basis for new industries suitable for employing returned soldiers. The column itself suggested squab (juvenile pigeon) rearing, particularly suitable for those men who had taken up land.71 George Foster revealed in Parliament in August 1918 that the RSA was "often approached" by men for farm work at a mere 12s. a week.72 In May 1919, the Sorell Council had difficulty in finding returned men for employment, having advertised four times with only a lacklustre response. The council decided to arrange for the Repatriation Department to send men along to them,73 suggesting that returned men, while desirous of employment generally, were not content with piecemeal jobs that would only see them returned to the unemployment queue in a short period. Returned soldiers also proved, like any other section of the community, that they were open to the same lethargies toward employment as anybody else.

**Unions and Industry**

W.A. Townsley has argued that in 1919, excepting the influenza epidemic,74 the return of Tasmania's soldiers appeared satisfactory.75 However, those who expected to return to the life they had before leaving "were quickly disillusioned," as their activity and debate on the circumstances of their return attest.76 The economic

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70 For more on exhaustion related to war weariness and its effect on employment, consistency and application toward work, see my Soldier Land Settlement Chapters.
71 See, ‘Woman’s World’ by ‘Clio’, The Mercury, 13 July 1918, p. 11. The raising of squabs as a table delicacy was recommended due to an increasing emergence of a market for pigeon meat, both locally and interstate.
73 'Work for Soldiers and Dearth of Applicants', The Mercury, 14 May 1919, p. 4.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
depression in Tasmania and the consequent contraction of Tasmanian industries heightened the state of class antagonism and union agitation. Returned soldiers, whose unionist sympathies were more important than their status as returned soldiers, played their part in union action to protect their jobs. The Labour newspaper the *Daily Post* in 1916 saw the manipulation of the returned soldier as potentially undermining the principles of labour and unionism. It referred with trepidation and anger, to “the exploitation of returned soldiers.”77 The battle for the hearts and minds of veterans was already underway, and the two sides – conservative forces trumpeting Empire, tradition, the status quo, in conflict with the progressive press that viewed the war as capital versus labour – fought for the sympathies of Tasmanian ex-servicemen:

There is in existence a desire on the part of a section of employers to make use of returned soldiers for the purpose of attacking the vital principles of unionism. There is an attempt, we state, being made by some members of the capitalistic class to take advantage of the sympathetic feelings attachable to the soldiers... The attitude of those seeking to use soldiers to betray unionism is an unpatriotic attitude. They [returned soldiers] learned the value of comradeship when in the field. They will learn its value now they are at home.78

The labour press contended that the majority of recruits were workers, and that their predominant loyalty would be with labour, but the effective exploitation by conservatives of the threat of IWW-ism, One Big Union, and the suspect tendencies of the Labor Party toward winning the war rendered impotent their attempts at obtaining significant returned soldier support.79 As it conspired, the official organ of the returned soldier group – the RSSILA – was associated with the conservative rather than progressive wing of politics.

Union protests in the Huon after the war saw bombings at Geeveston and Kermandie, and violence toward Hobart contractors working for the Huon Timber Company in protest at their preference to local unemployed unionists. Charges were brought against the unionists, and among them, a returned soldier accused Louis Rapp (the contractor) of being pro-German. He reportedly said that when “he was at the war bleeding, you tried to pull the flag down, and now you are trying to pull down our

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78 Ibid.
79 See also the ‘Politics’ chapter.
conditions." Returned soldiers asserted their claims for employment as a distinct group, as did unionists. The conflict between claims for soldier preference and union preference in employment predictably caused tremendous friction, and returned soldier dissatisfaction. As the RSSILA was a non-union aligned entity, it vehemently attacked union claims to preference. In return, labour groups categorically rejected soldier preference claims if they were not unionists. The Daily Post noted with alarm in 1916 that, "There is being made some attempt at organisation to give ex-soldier non-unionists preference over civilian unionists. Such a course is bad. The soldiers went away willingly to defend the land they left, and if they are good soldiers they may also be good unionists." Returned soldier union members straddled this divide, adding complexity to the issue of returned soldier unemployment in the battleground of the labour/conservative dichotomy.

The worldwide depression in 1929 came as an extra blow to the Tasmanian economy. Major industries and employers established themselves in the State after the soldiers' return, among them the electrolytic zinc works in 1916 and Cadbury's confectionary plant at Claremont in 1920. However, the general lack of large industrial enterprises meant that Tasmania still maintained a large agricultural sector, which partly explained the hope for the success of the returned soldier land settlement scheme in Tasmania as an avenue for both employment and as a stimulant for the economy. For returning and returned soldiers to Tasmania not intending to take up land, consideration as to their employment as an important step in their process of repatriation was of immense importance, as it was the cornerstone of their reassimilation into the society from which they had left.

**Vocational Training**

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Vocational training was crucial to the continued education of a generation of young men that offered themselves for the service of the Empire.\textsuperscript{82} It was only reasonable then that the Repatriation authorities provide the opportunity for these men to resume the training they had left upon their enlistment. Vocational Training was eventually offered to both fit and disabled returned soldiers who were under the age of twenty,\textsuperscript{1} or who had been in that trade before enlistment, although James Nangle, the Director of Vocational Training with the Department of Repatriation, noted that the scheme was initially proposed to serve injured soldiers only. In line with other State Premiers, Tasmanian Premier (and Minister for Education) Sir Walter Lee placed at the disposal of Repatriation authorities the use of his State’s technical education facilities in a letter to Prime Minister Hughes on 19 January 1918.\textsuperscript{83} The operation of vocational training courses was to be the responsibility of Repatriation authorities, with facilities provided by the State.

The State War Councils administered the scheme until the formation of the Repatriation Department in April 1918, whereby their responsibilities in placing and training men were superseded by the larger parent body. Nangle undertook a reorganisation of the vocational training scheme in April 1919 after the original was deemed inadequate\textsuperscript{84} in view of widening responsibilities concerning men who had enlisted before the age of twenty. The Vocational Training scheme mainly focussed (in pure numbers) on instructing men in trades rather than professional training, and Tasmanian cases certainly reveal the same trend. Vocational Trainees were assessed every three months, and Soldiers’ Industrial Committees\textsuperscript{85} assessed the wages of industrial trainees. The small instructional booklet published in 1919, \textit{Repatriation at a Glance}, outlined the obligations of the Department in terms of a whole range of re-establishment policies, among them Vocational Training and employment policies. Among the major responsibilities of the Department was the payment of sustenance allowances to ex-soldiers on their discharge until they found work, and to soldiers

\textsuperscript{82} American veterans were also offered Vocational Training as a way to rehabilitate them into society. For a brief summation of their program, See W. Waller, \textit{The Veteran Comes Back}, New York, 1944, pp. 238-240.

\textsuperscript{83} The text of the letter sent to the respective State Premiers concerning the utilisation of their technical education facilities, and Premier Lee’s reply, was published in \textit{The Mercury}, 15 February 1918, p. 6. The arrangement between Lee and Hughes with regards to the use of Tasmanian facilities reported was in February 1918. See, Editorial, ‘Repatriation and Education’, \textit{The Mercury}, 15 February 1918, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{84} Lloyd & Rees, \textit{The Last Shilling}, p. 212.

\textsuperscript{85} A State Repatriation Board meeting in July 1919 heard that there were eight Soldiers’ Industrial Committees in operation to assess trainees’ efficiency. ‘Employment for Ex-Soldiers: Meeting to Decide the Best Means: Vocational Training’, \textit{The Mercury}, 23 July 1919, p. 8.
undertaking vocational/industrial training. Sustenance was also paid to make up any
difference in wages to indentured apprentices and industrial trainees, with the
intention, as in all claimed activities of the Repatriation Department, of "repairing, so
far as practicable, the economic loss which military service has entailed." Their
education was thus paid for by the Repatriation Department.

The original vocational training scheme proved inadequate after a year under
the auspices of the Repatriation Department, and on 10 April 1919, a reorganised
scheme was launched under the direction of James Nangle. Those men who had
enlisted under the age of twenty were formally incorporated under this reorganisation,
partly as a way to provide opportunities to young men whose careers had been
prejudiced by their enlistment, and, as Nangle argued, because the men had lived
through new experiences: "Travel abroad, even though within the limits of war
service, had broadened their outlook. [M]ost returned with an increased desire to take
a useful part in the civil life of the country, if they could be put into the way of so
doing." Vocational training allowed the opportunity for these men to become
valuable producers for themselves and the country — something that Nangle’s account
of the scheme stressed throughout.

The central principle of sustenance payments to repatriation has been clearly
defined by Lloyd and Rees, who claim that "sustenance was the lynch-pin of
repatriation administration" during the early years, despite its unpopularity with the
public. The importance of sustenance payments to ex-soldiers was brought into
sharper clarity when they were suspended or cancelled. The Department demanded a
reciprocal obligation in return for sustenance allowances and vocational and

87 Ibid.
88 The Tasmanian branch of the RSSILA expressed frustration and anger at the delays involved in
launching the vocational training scheme in Tasmania in March 1919. The reorganisation could not
come soon enough for the Tasmanian returned soldier representative body. ‘The Repatriation Scheme.
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90 In an editorial in a late May edition of The Mercury, the editors were also cognisant of the practical
benefits to the community that vocational training could provide. The need to import from interstate
and overseas men with the abilities to operate in the “higher grades in industrial organisations” would
be less pressing. The editorial forecast a dearth in skilled labour, and saw the Vocational Scheme as a
way to fill that vacuum: “If the efforts made to provide means of living for returned soldiers lead also
to the training of skilled of a large number of skilled workmen, the whole community will get the
benefit, and the financial troubles of Tasmania will be the nearer to a solution.” ‘Vocational Training
91 Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 104.
employment assistance. One Tasmanian ex-soldier who availed himself of the vocational training scheme could not adequately provide that reciprocity to the Department. From a pre-war occupation as a bicycle mechanic, he was offered vocational training due to enlisting at less than twenty years of age. As no fitting and turning classes were then offered in Hobart (where he desired to attend), he was placed in a plumbing class and received sustenance payments, eventually finding employment as a trainee plumber with Charles Davis Co. Ltd in July 1920. After fitting him out with all the items necessary for his work at considerable cost, the Department received a letter from the Company at the end of his first month in a fifteen-month training period, stating great difficulty in finding suitable work for him due to his inexperience. He made poor progress and proved careless to the point of being untrustworthy to complete even the smallest jobs unsupervised. As a result, he failed to reach the mandatory forty per cent minimum competency level necessary to retain his employment and was effectively sacked. His sustenance payments were withdrawn as a consequence of “not availing” himself of the opportunities offered him by completing his plumbing course. The Department withdrew him from Industrial Training soon after. Throughout October and November in 1920, the soldier repeatedly appealed for the resumption of sustenance payments, eventually being allowed a second opportunity at training.

Attempts by the Department to place him in employment constructing War Service Homes were rejected by Captain Taylor from the War Service Homes Department due to his indifferent record and the risk in employing someone of ‘doubtful’ character. The Department nonetheless persevered with this soldier, placing him in employment in Launceston in March 1921, only for his tenure to again be terminated due to unsuitability for the work. J.F. Humphris had reached his limit with this particular case after repeated failures:

The training of a man who enlisted under 20 years of age is given as a privilege and is contingent on the trainee making an honest attempt to qualify as a tradesman. [This soldier's] character is such that few care to employ him and in view of the length of time he has been training, should be fairly efficient. Both employers reported adversely on him.

92 See, NAA: P 130: R 5798. Due to the closed access on this series of files, the name of the soldier has been omitted.
and it seems useless to persevere with him. The Department cannot recommend him to any employer.93

Despite the offer of vocational training to assist in his reassimilation into society, this soldier did not – like some soldiers assisted in starting small businesses – make a success of his opportunity. The Department ultimately removed him from all assistance. The problem may have lay with the fact that this soldier was not initially placed in the trade he wished to follow,94 so his consequent unsuitability may have stemmed from a lack of stimulation with the plumbing trade. The Department’s exasperation at his inability to come to terms with his work led them to remove him from all assistance. Humphris clearly felt the Department had expelled its duty of responsibility in providing the means to repatriate the soldier, as he had not availed himself of his opportunity.

In January 1923, The Mercury reported that this same ex-soldier had been sentenced to three months’ imprisonment for housebreaking,95 and he eventually died a little over a decade later. In view of this ex-soldier’s post-war fortunes, did the Repatriation system fail him by not finding work for him or satisfactorily repatriating him into civilian life, or had the Department expelled its duty of care and patience with him, over and above their requirement to do so? So many variables interfere with any sort of answer to this question – not least the question of what he might have been doing had he not enlisted in the first place? Would he have remained a bicycle mechanic, or would he have wandered from job to job, as his experiences through vocational training suggested? One fact beyond dispute in this case is that the opportunities provided under the repatriation apparatus failed successfully to rehabilitate this particular soldier back into the workforce. Other Tasmanians, however, profited from their time spent in Vocational Training.

Another soldier who had spent some time in Tasmania since his discharge but had unsatisfactorily repatriated himself applied for vocational training after applying for land as a soldier settler. His war injuries prevented him from pursuing this avenue, and the ex-soldier argued his case to the Repatriation Department:

93 Report by Deputy Comptroller J.F. Humphris, 1 June 1921. NAA: P 130; R 5798.
94 Nangle, in his Critical Account of the Commonwealth Vocational Training Scheme, p. 7, published in February 1927, noted that Selection Officers were “cautioned against forcing any man into training for a trade or calling against his will”, but in this case, it was the lack of availability of his preferred option that forced this soldier into a trade that he ultimately had no aptitude to follow.
95 The Mercury, 5 January 1923.
The reason why I did not apply for V.T [Vocational Training] within six month[s] of discharge was I was not aware of the regulation. I did not intend to bother with the Repatriation Dept for assistance. I struck out for my self as a Labourer but now find I cannot get on too well owing to the GSW in my left Hand.⁹⁶

The soldier was twenty years of age when he enlisted, so was eligible and, with his old employer agreeing to take him on as an industrial trainee, he was granted assistance by the Department. The Officer in Charge, Vocational Training Section stated in an internal memo: “I consider that as [the soldier] has endeavoured to re-establish himself in civil life, but has been unable to earn and owing to his war disability, the circumstances should warrant him being trained...”⁹⁷ The Department’s memo is illuminating for the way it demonstrates their willingness to be flexible in dealing with applications.

The general criticism of the Department as being an unsympathetic institution was not always deserved, and, as Garton has shown, was propagated interstate at least, by Smith’s Weekly.⁹⁸ Sustenance payments and Department contributions to subsidise the soldier’s pay until he reached one hundred per cent proficiency kept this Industrial Trainee at Genders Ltd. until he obtained his qualification certificate as a black saddle maker in early July 1922. He was one of 469⁹⁹ Tasmanian returned soldiers to attain one hundred per cent and acquire his certificate by successfully completing Industrial Training by 30 June 1926. Despite achieving his qualifications under the vocational training scheme, this soldier left Genders Ltd in early 1923 to become a tram conductor for Launceston Tramways¹⁰⁰ and partake in another chapter of his post-war employment. Another soldier also found he could not satisfactorily repatriate himself and so turned to Vocational Training as a way to reintegrate into society. Five months after his discharge, and unable to undertake work mining at Mt Lyellon the State’s west coast, he underwent vocational training in carpentry and was an industrial trainee in Launceston until November 1920.¹⁰¹ He was then employed

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by the Railway Department as a carpenter in Launceston before taking his skills to Melbourne, until poor health from being gassed at the Somme curtailed his work after twelve months there. The Repatriation Health system provided for him after 1925, but he would likely have gone on to forge a career in the trade he learnt through his vocational training. In all of these examples, the training provided by Repatriation authorities allowed a new start at life that would otherwise likely have been closed to them. Like everything, however, it was up to the individual to make the most of their opportunities.\footnote{102}

**Vocational Training and the Community**

In October 1917, *The Mercury* published an article by A. Hart from the Working Men’s College in Melbourne on technical education for returned soldiers.\footnote{103} It prompted one reader to question the capacity for Tasmania to absorb her fourteen thousand soldiers back into the industries they had left years before, suggesting that the value of vocational and professional education was limited. He argued that their experiences in war would lead them “to have no time again for becoming scholars and apprentices”, but that their strenuous experiences would have led them to a maturity beyond any desire for technical education – their experiences maturing “them for the lives of full-grown men...”\footnote{104} This opinion is contested by Lloyd and Rees, who have argued that one of the principal functions of the Repatriation Department by the 1920s was the vocational training of returned soldiers,\footnote{105} but in a more local application, numbers in Tasmania generally tended to be lower, with *The Mercury* claiming that “it does seem as if there is not quite so much enthusiasm among the men eligible for such training as might be expected.”\footnote{106} Nonetheless, the first boot repairing class had been opened in July 1918.

\footnote{102} A. Tiveychoc took up this thread in his 1935 book, *There and Back*. His point of view was focussed on disabled soldiers, but it is useful to apply this view more broadly to all returned soldiers making the transition to society: “The Repatriation Department did much to train and place disabled soldiers in work, but, generally speaking, the problem was one for the individual himself to solve.” A. Tiveychoc, *There and Back: The Story of an Australian Soldier, 1915-1935*, Sydney, 1935, p. 270.

\footnote{103} Technical Education and Repatriation: What Should be Done?”, *The Mercury*, 8 October 1917, p. 7.


\footnote{105} Lloyd & Rees, *The Last Shilling*, p. 211.

\footnote{106} There were projections by the Repatriation Department that some 525 men were eligible for training under the scheme. See, ‘Vocational Training for Soldiers’, *The Mercury*, 14 August 1919, p. 4.
Appeals for donations of old boots were made in the media in early 1919 to continue the boot repairing classes, while in July Senator Millen had approved vocational training classes in Cabinet Making in Launceston, with Frank Ellis, the organising Inspector of Technical Education in the State Education Department arranging advisory committees for an early start to the classes. Less than twelve months later, in Launceston alone, eleven vocational trainees under the Department’s care engaged in trades as varied as carpentry, collar making, a printer’s machinist, photo engraving, bricklaying, motor mechanics, plumbing, wood machinists and black saddle making. The Technical School in Hobart conducted Vocational Training classes in boot repairing, electrical wiring, fitting and turning, jewellery manufacture, motor mechanics, carpentry and joinery, tailoring, motor body building, bricklaying, painting and paperhanging, plumbing and gas-fitting, and plastering.

In August 1919, a Mercury representative assessed the state of vocational training for soldiers in Tasmania, and was both impressed and disappointed with what he saw. The high levels of aptitude and proficiency displayed by trainees was especially admired. The boot repairing classes were proving useful entries into employment, with seven soldiers trained reportedly finding a place in the trade. Jewellery making classes were useful for incapacitated soldiers requiring a “sedentary occupation”, while the reporter was amazed to find one armed men taking business classes, often having to learn to write with their surviving hands.

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107 Advertisement appearing in The Mercury, 22 March 1919, p. 8. This advertisement was published in other editions as well.
109 The list of Launceston apprentices was found in Departmental correspondence between the Deputy Comptroller of Repatriation in Hobart and the OIC Repatriation Department in Launceston, in a Repatriation case file. See, NAA: P107/4: R 4845. The Repatriation files listed as belonging to men undertaking vocational training in Launceston at this time were: R 8521, R 9074, R 4283, R 5887, R 5989, R 5634, R 8423, R 9704, R 10598 and R 5964.
110 In February of 1919, a six week course for training Motor Car driving was undertaken at Robert Nettlefold’s garage, the electrical wiring classes opened in April, the next month saw jewellery manufacturing classes, motor mechanics and carpenters and joiners classes begun. At the end of July, fitting and turning classes were started, and in early August, plumbing and gas-fitter courses were underway. Tailoring and motor body building started in October, and classes in bricklaying, painters, paperhangers and plasterers were opened in November. See, J. Waters, The Cultured Mind – The Skilful Hand: A Centenary History of the Hobart Technical College, Hobart, 1988, p. 84. See also, ‘Vocational Training’, The Mercury, 13 August 1919, p. 4.
112 Ibid.
However, two criticisms of the scheme in Tasmania were identified: accommodation and equipment. Accommodation for training, particularly in Hobart (where the majority of training occurred), was criticised as being “more or less makeshift in character” and in almost every case “inadequate.” Exacerbating the accommodation issue was the absence of the necessary equipment to run these classes, due to shipping strikes delaying their delivery from interstate. Over £1,000 worth of woodworking machinery was delayed because of the strikes and then the influenza epidemic, setting the classes back even further. Consequently, the dual problems of accommodation and equipment were cited by the Hobart Mercury as “preventing eligible men from obtaining within a reasonable time after their return the vocational training they were promised…” Some fifty men were reportedly on Vocational Training waiting lists, “that would probably have numbered more if some men, tired of loafing about on a sustenance allowance for an indefinite period had not given up the wait in disgust and taken other jobs offering, doubtless of an unskilled character.”

Vocational Training in Tasmania then, even after its restructuring by Nangle, faced difficulties in some trades to offer the level of education and instruction available to soldiers in the mainland States. It was not an issue that the Department or its instructors could remedy, but a victim of industrial conflict that prevented important equipment from making the journey across Bass Strait. The accommodation problem identified by The Mercury’s correspondent was being remedied at that very moment, as in August, the Repatriation Department negotiated to purchase the large thirty thousand square foot brick building on the corner of Harrington and Melville Streets in Hobart. The Repatriation Trades School was housed here until the scheme’s Tasmanian end in 1921, whereafter the Hobart Technical College took over all of the machinery and the building in mid-1922.

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114 'Ibid.'
117 'Ibid.'
118 Waters, 'The Cultured Mind - The Skilful Hand', p. 84. Waters notes that much of the renovation work on the building was undertaken by the returned soldier students themselves, as a form of on-the-job practical training. On the Hobart Technical College taking over the Repatriation Department’s property, see, p. 85.
A small problem identified at the beginning of 1920 concerning union influence and vocational trainees had *The Mercury* condemning union politicking as prejudicing trainees’ placement. A vocational trainee’s letter outlined a case of “Trades-hall people” hindering the successful placement of trainees to gain the requisite trade experience. The complainant’s letter noted that his work placement collapsed because the business did not comply with the ratios between trainees and journeymen. A conference convened between Minister Millen, representatives of the Trades and Labour Councils, and federated trades organizations in August 1919, had agreed on the ratios of trainees to journeymen. Humphris agreed that that regulation most affected Tasmania:

In this State business and trade establishments are limited in scope, and do not in many cases employ a large number of journeymen. Consequently we find that many traders who would be pleased to employ a trainee on the basis set out in the regulations are debarred from doing so by the fact that they do not employ a sufficient number of journeymen.

The Soldiers’ Industrial Committee, comprised of representatives of employers’ and employees’ organizations, could alter the ratio of the journeymen to apprentices. Their involvement in circumventing this problem was one of the regional variations that the scheme in Tasmania faced, although *The Mercury* used the issue to suggest union involvement restricted employment opportunities to new apprentices, thus retaining a monopoly over trades’ labour. Deputy Comptroller Humphris acknowledged the problem, but refuted any assertion that “the trade unions are opposing the entry of vocational trainees into the skilled trades.” He argued that the conference demonstrated that the “Labour Federations as a whole have endorsed the scheme of vocational training, and have agreed to render assistance in the training

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119 ‘Soldiers’ Vocational Training: How Union Rules Defeat It’, letter to the editor from ‘Vocational Trainee’, *The Mercury*, 15 January 1920, p. 7. The irony of this situation was that, as noted earlier, a representative of the Trades Hall Council sat on the State Repatriation Board in order to assist in the employment of returned soldiers.
of soldiers and in placing them in employment when trained."¹²³ The newspaper, however, preferred to stick to their line on the issue.¹²⁴

Most soldiers took to their training well and had no difficulty in being placed with employers as industrial trainees on their way to being journeymen, but, as Nangle revealed in his account of the scheme, unsatisfactory placements, or a depression in the business saw the men returned to the Department. The re-placement of industrial trainees occurred in a "fair percentage" of cases, particularly in the building trades,¹²⁵ but the numbers that benefited from vocational training in Tasmania as at 30 June 1926 was 828,¹²⁶ while thirty-six men completed Professional Training out of an original Tasmanian enrolment of sixty.¹²⁷ The cost per head nationally for the vocational training of returned soldiers to 30 June 1926 was £254,¹²⁸ although it is likely the cost per head for Tasmanian soldiers under the scheme was marginally less than that.¹²⁹

That the Vocational Training scheme held little appeal for returned soldiers is evident in the relatively small numbers who enrolled in the scheme.¹³⁰ However, this

¹²³ Ibid.
¹²⁵ Nangle, Critical Account of the Commonwealth Vocational Training Scheme, p. 8.
¹²⁶ This figure is taken from Nangle’s exhaustive national figures that comprise a Tasmanian total figure of 1,246 ex-soldiers. See Nangle, Critical Account of the Commonwealth Vocational Training Scheme, Table No. 2, p. 13. From this number, Nangle suggests the subtraction of those who withdrew prior to and during school, as they would have benefited too little from their time to be able to implement their training in any real practical sense. He suggests the retention in the final figures of those who withdrew during Industrial Training noting that “it was pretty well known during the working of the scheme that many of the men who withdrew during this stage, left because they felt able to relieve the Department of further responsibility about them — because they could manage for themselves.” p. 14. Jill Waters cites substantially lower numbers for trade courses — roughly 300. She takes her figures from Education Department correspondence between the School’s Lucien Dechaineux and the Superintendent of Technical Education, 2 June 1921. Dechaineux claimed that 76 returned soldiers had attended trade classes at the College for the year 1921, and that similar numbers attended each year since 1918. See Waters, The Cultured Mind — The Skilful Hand, Footnotes, Chapter 3, fn. 128, pp. 111-112.
¹²⁷ Nangle, Critical Account of the Commonwealth Vocational Training Scheme, Table No. 4, p. 15.
¹²⁸ Nangle argued that, “In the more scantily populated States [like Tasmania], there was a much narrower scope for employment, and training had to be confined to comparatively few callings, such as commercial subjects, stationary engine driving, motor driving, and boot repairing, for which, as a matter of fact, the training was less expensive.” Ibid.
¹²⁹ Returned soldier and early Tasmanian RSSILA activist Duncan McRae wrote a letter to The Mercury in March 1919 on linking vocational training with soldiers’ co-operative businesses as a way to absorb these newly vocationally trained men in industry. Protective tariffs for these co-operatives were part of McRae’s proposal, and he likened the lack of forethought on the establishment and protection of secondary industries (for returned soldiers’ employment) as a “rock” that would “wreck”
did not mean that the returned soldier community and the Tasmanian community at large debated it any less. It was contentious for the Tasmanian branch of the RSSILA until Nangle’s reorganisation, absorbing public debate and the thoughts of former Premier and contemporary Senator John Earle, and a member of the House of Assembly and Secretary of the RSSILA in George Foster. Nonetheless, the vocational training of Tasmanian returned soldiers aided their civil re-establishment by educating, employing and absorbing them into the community. By the acknowledged criteria of returning soldiers to a requisite position from which they left, the increased potential that the trained man possessed compared with the untrained state he began must count vocational training as a successful investment in Tasmania, regardless of the numbers.

Employers were not compelled to accept Industrial Trainees nor enter into any contract agreeing to take the trainees until the completion of their training, but did so out of a spirit of patriotism, which may partly contribute to the number of Industrial Trainees returned to the Department. Nangle identified difficulties in placing men with employers as the distance from the war increased:

[As soon as the vividness of the war began to wane, so did the enthusiasm of the community in matters such as, for example, redeeming the promises made to the soldiers when they enlisted. It therefore happened that that as time went on it became increasingly difficult to place trainees.]

This decline in interest in matters involving returned soldiers and their repatriation was not confined to the placement of men within vocational training, but is representative of a decline in interest in the affairs of returned soldiers more generally. In these conditions, returned soldier representative bodies like the RSSILA assumed a

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repatriation. See, ‘Vocational Training: Co-operative Enterprise’, letter to the editor from D. McRae, The Mercury, 12 March 1919, p. 8. On 18 March 1919, The Mercury’s editors criticised McRae’s insistence on raising tariffs, contributing to the prohibitive cost of labour, and consequently, goods. Since McRae had formed political opinions outside of strictly returned soldier interests, and embroiled himself in temperance and other political issues, he had ceased to be the ‘darling’ of The Mercury’s editors and thus came in for severe criticism in their columns rather than the support he formerly enjoyed.


133 Nangle attributed the success of the scheme to the patriotic spirit in which employers and employees embraced it. Nangle, Critical Account of the Commonwealth Vocational Training Scheme, p. 13.

134 Ibid., p. 8.
more prominent position in communicating the grievances and difficulties facing returned men to the community as memories of the war faded. The difficulty alluded to by Nangle was experienced by Tasmanian authorities around mid-1922, when Humphris acknowledged difficulties in “disposing of vocational trainees.” Nonetheless, the work of the vocational training scheme generally can be counted as among the most successful programs under the Repatriation umbrella, more so because “the social and economic value of the scheme as an attempt to add many thousands of men to the skilled workers of the community was not generally recognised.”

**Employment Preference**

Commonwealth authorities planning for the repatriation of the AIF felt that their war service should not prejudice their employment on return. Despite assurances from many employers of job security on their return, the Commonwealth Defence Act moved to secure that employees should not be penalised from Government positions for enlisting. The Commonwealth moved toward offering absolute returned soldier preference “as an encouragement to volunteers and as an assurance to returned soldiers that public employment, at least, would be guaranteed to them on their return.” Some States also moved to guarantee employment preference for returned soldiers in their own Public Services, under lobbying from returned soldiers’ groups. Certainly in Tasmania, Hobart daily *The Mercury* assertively advocated employment preference for returned soldiers in July 1917 before legislation in Tasmania took effect.

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135 This information was found in correspondence in, NAA: P 107/1: M 1684.
139 In an article entitled ‘Soldiers and Public Service’, *The Mercury* felt that the Public Service Board should institute a preference policy to the exclusion of single eligibles in the public service, although no claim was made to extend that the private sector. They suggested that all eligibles might be “weeded out,” and that “there was no reason at all why preference should not be given, not as a favour,
A few months later, the Tasmanian State Government was one of the Governments to provide this extra assurance, amending their Public Service Act to provide employment preference to returned soldiers. The amending legislation guaranteed that soldiers wanting work in the Tasmanian State Public Service “be considered for employment in priority to any other person who is not a returned soldier” except those not eligible for enlistment, not single, or who had dependents. Similarly, no “male person other than a returned soldier” was eligible for any new appointment unless the Chairman of the Public Service Board certified in writing to the newly created Returned Soldiers’ Employment Board that no “duly qualified returned soldier” had applied for the vacant position. Soldier preference was also enshrined in The Education Act that made the same promises of preferment within the State’s Education Department. The Returned Soldiers’ Employment Board was to retain a record of all eligible men to fill new positions.

The Tasmanian legislation stipulated that preference in the Public Service was only open to men whose discharge was not due to misconduct or incapacity resulting from his own fault, but the general vagueness in the wording of the legislation caused considerable difficulties and misunderstandings when the policy was applied in practice. The Returned Soldiers’ Employment Board, as an arm of the Public Service Board, was to liaise closely with the latter to fill new positions within the public service with returned soldiers whenever the opportunity arose. The preference policy only applied to public sector positions. Military doctors were also accorded preference by the Tasmanian branch of the British Medical Association “in line with

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but as a close rule, to returned soldiers, in all cases where place and pay are to be provided for someone by the State.” 27 July 1917, p. 4. The next day, the Director-General of Recruiting was reported to have issued instructions that returned officers should have preference over others for home service duty provided they were fit for the job. See, The Mercury, 28 July 1917, p. 7.


141 The Returned Soldiers’ Employment Board was created in this legislative amendment to the Public Service Act. Members of this Board, to recommend and liaise with the Public Service Board for the appointment of returned soldiers and to retain records of returned soldiers eligible for Public Service employment, were heads of major Tasmanian Government Departments as well as a nominated representative from the RSSILA. See, 'The Public Service Amendment Act, 1917', Acts of Parliament, 1917, Vol. XXIV, Part II, Paper No. 14, p. 609.

142 Ibid., pp. 608-609. Robert Parker notes that under Tasmanian legislation, returned soldiers were granted preference under modified entrance conditions, and that the principle of preference continued “even when junior recruitment was resumed more than a dozen years later...” See, R. Parker, Public Service Recruitment in Australia, Melbourne, 1942, p. 70.

public opinion regarding the rights of soldiers” as a reward for their war service.\footnote{Military Doctors’, \textit{The Mercury}, 27 January 1920, p. 4. A similar call was made by the Society of Returned Medical Officers of Queensland for preference in medical promotions to returned soldier medical officers. See, ‘Preference to Returned Soldiers’, Correspondence, \textit{Medical Journal of Australia}, 10 April 1920, p. 350.} It was an opportunity for them to have first offer of new positions in the State after many other doctors chose to stay and build their practices, but was not announced until January 1920.

Parliamentarians in Tasmania discussed the offer of employment preference to returned soldiers in terms of an obligation and reward for war service, with future Tasmanian Premier and Australian Prime Minister Joe Lyons arguing that giving preference was the least the Government could be expected to do for the men.\footnote{See report of House of Assembly debates from Wednesday 15 August 1917 in: \textit{The Mercury}, 16 August 1917, p. 8.} There was clear bipartisan support for preference in Tasmania, but it should not, as Lyons argued, mean that married men and ineligible single men should be dispensed with in order to provide work for returned soldiers.\footnote{Ibid.} MHA George Foster also did not feel that employment preference should displace ineligibles and married men from positions for returned men,\footnote{Ibid.} yet outside parliament, with the backing of the RSSILA behind him, Foster assertively advocated the right of preference for soldiers in employment in most respects.

Preference policies in employment for returned soldiers drew some criticism in Tasmania in the early years, but were largely based upon the calls to displace employees to accommodate returned soldiers in those positions. The preference policy also antagonised rejected volunteers who had offered their services but been rejected by the AIF. In the practical application of preference policy, these men were denied positions in favour of returned soldiers. Such a case occurred as early as September 1916, when a rejected volunteer tried to obtain temporary employment at the Hobart GPO, but was told that there was “no chance whatsoever”, and that only returned soldiers had “the preference.”\footnote{Rejected Men’, letter to the editor from ‘Reject’, \textit{The Mercury}, 20 September 1916, p. 8. Another military reject complained of the lack of opportunities for those who were not returned men, and as he had offered his services but been rejected “he should receive the same consideration as the returned man,” particularly when he too had a family to raise. See, ‘Returned Soldiers and Rejects’, letter to the editor, \textit{The Mercury}, 28 April 1919, p. 8.} Such a state of affairs would become all too common as preference became enshrined in legislation and more men returned home.
General disquiet over the preference issue for employing returned soldiers reached Federal Parliament by mid-1919, with reservations about how the policy was being received by non-soldiers. Hector Lamond, member for Illawarra, revealed that there was a good deal of opposition “in every Department to the policy of preference to returned soldiers.”¹⁴⁹ William Watt responded that he was aware of such “passive resistance”, and also of difficulties in giving effect to the preference policy in its spirit, but noted that, “It is difficult to apply the policy of preference to returned soldiers in the spirit without hurting some men whom it is hard to have to hurt.”¹⁵⁰ Peculiarly, returned soldier members like Charles Marr¹⁵¹ supported Billy Hughes’ desire for preference inside and outside the public sector, despite the opposition of other members and sections of the community. Hughes, according to Marr, was “desirous of safeguarding the interests of public servants who went to the war,”¹⁵² according with the concept of not penalising those who enlisted. Marr was furious to discover that interests of returned soldiers were not always preserved, citing examples of soldiers discovering that others who had remained had “gone over their heads.”¹⁵³

Employment preference did not enjoy universal support in Federal Parliament. ALP member for Melbourne Ports, James Mathews, was vocal in his opposition to returned soldier employment preference because of the discriminatory nature of the policy at the expense of those who also needed work. Mathews felt that it was the “duty of the Government to find work for every man and woman as well as the returned soldier.”¹⁵⁴ Mathews considered the impact that preference policies and returned soldier exclusivity would have on the rest of the community:

If the returned soldiers adopt the attitude of insisting that nobody but they should be considered they will engender a feeling of bitterness amongst the growing population – those who were too young to go to the war but who five years hence will be wishing to take their place in the ranks of industry – the result of which will be appalling.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Hector Lamond, member for Illawarra, to the House of Representatives, 8 August 1919. CPD, Vol. LXXXVIX, p. 11472.
¹⁵⁰ William Watt to the House of Representatives, 8 August 1919. Ibid.
¹⁵¹ Charles William Clanan Marr. Nationalist Party member for Parkes, New South Wales. He was later knighted.
¹⁵³ Charles Marr, member for Parkes, to the House of Representatives, 17 March 1920. Ibid.
¹⁵⁴ James Mathews, member for Melbourne Ports, to the House of Representatives, 17 March 1920. Ibid., p. 492. [Italics my emphasis]
¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 492-493.
While all reasonable efforts should be taken to rehabilitate returned soldiers into society, particularly in view of the service they had given the Commonwealth, he did not advocate doing so to the detriment of the remainder of the community. Mathews’ position was the polar opposite of that advocated by Marr and the RSSILA. He felt equality rather than exclusivity should dictate the policies for employment, not only because of community bitterness, but simply on the basis of the Government’s responsibilities to all members of the community rather than the special cases of returned soldiers: “[N]ot only should the returned soldiers claim as their right to be found employment in which they can earn a decent living, but they should also admit that every man and woman in the community has the right to rely upon the Government for the same protection.”

Matthews appealed to the Australian diggers’ masculine sense of fair play in arguing against preference for returned soldiers above all else. In July 1919, he noted that

there appears to have grown up a system of providing work for returned soldiers by displacing somebody else who happens to be in a position. All I can say is that any returned soldier who wishes to see an old man, possibly the father of another soldier, thrown out of work to provide employment for him, is no man at all.

Mathews felt that abhorrence to such outcomes of the preference policy, and examples like the one he provided in parliament perhaps informed his consistent opposition to its implementation and practice. It is clear, however, that the exclusive arrangement claimed by politicians and returned soldier advocates for employment preference was not embraced by the entire community, and that resistance to it was expressed not only by the unemployed, but by those who arguably had every reason to support it due to the sympathy for, and power of, the returned soldier vote.

Tasmanian soldiers and some supporters, however, felt that returned men should be given the first opportunity at employment, particularly displacing those they felt had evaded their obligations by not enlisting for the front. Bitterness over promises to returned soldiers were voiced in the Tasmanian media immediately after

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156 Ibid., p. 493.
the end of the war. On the last day of 1918, in the midst of state-wide celebrations for Tasmanian soldiers' triumphant return, a dissenting voice was published in *The Mercury* claiming that the “fulsome” speeches made to the men were all “froth.”\(^{158}\)

This supporter felt that the men had received a poor deal, and anger at the non-fulfilment of promises boiled over into invective against a Tasmanian society that was content to cheer their men home, then promptly forget their responsibilities to them:

> Many of the men were able, willing, and competent to take on duties which are now filled by others, who have seen no service abroad, and who, had they been ordered to leave the State, would have shirked it, and who are now getting kept in fat positions, whilst men who have done their bit are compelled to hunt round for a job so as to live.\(^{159}\)

The respondent felt that such jobs instead belonged to returned soldiers who had “risked their lives to save their country”, believing that any sense of equity on the issue was “rot!”\(^{160}\) The lack of action in replacing these shirkers amounted to a betrayal to the returned man on two fronts – betrayal from those who did not enlist to help fight the Germans; and a betrayal on their return when the jobs they had vacated to fight for the Commonwealth were taken by “stay at homes” and “cold feet.”\(^{161}\)

Clearly, there was a strong undercurrent of tension in the community regarding preference for returned men that did not accord with the pronouncements of equality expressed by James Mathews. The feelings of bitterness would have been thrown into even sharper relief by the welcome home celebrations that lauded the heroism of the men and the gratitude of the community.

Emerging in Tasmania from 1918 was an increasing hostility toward employment preference policies – from people criticised for being employed while

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\(^{159}\) Ibid.

\(^{160}\) Ibid.

\(^{161}\) Ibid.

Respondent Chas. Fleming described the men who stayed at home instead of enlisting as “cold feet.” See, *ibid*. Another letter published in August 1918, declared that, while it was ‘correct’ to provide preference to returned men, the apparent lack of action by the military authorities in implementing the same policy allowed men ‘too old for their jobs’, and young men who had “dodged Pompey” to hold down work deserved by returned men. See, ‘Business Firms and Returned Soldiers’, letter to the editor from ‘Patriotic’, *The Mercury*, 20 August 1918, p. 2. Another respondent felt that, the “boost and appeals to the patriotism of men to go out and fight for their country, and on their return to be turned down by their former employers (often their place is filled with a shirker), is both mean and despicable.” ‘Preference and Returned Soldiers’, letter to the editor from ‘Fair Play’, *The Mercury*, 26 June 1919, p. 8. This respondent also suggested that firms refusing to take on their old employees after war service in favour of incumbent ‘shirkers’, should be publicly listed in the newspaper.
returned soldiers were not; from people displaced and unable to find work due to preference policies; and from returned soldiers and their supporters who felt that preference was not applied to its logical conclusion, thereby allowing shirkers work while ex-soldiers were left to walk the streets.\textsuperscript{162} The great difficulty for authorities was balancing the demands of all parties into a workable formula, but the very nature of accommodating assertive claims for employment from a body like the returned soldier community against responsibilities for the remainder of society meant that a universally popular outcome was never likely to be reached.

\textit{The Mercury} carried an appeal from Duncan McRae on behalf of the RSA to gain a pledge from all employers of labour “to give a fair chance to returned soldiers.”\textsuperscript{163} Although the Hobart daily championed the employment of returned men until the end of the war, as early as mid-1918 letters in the Tasmanian media expressed frustration about the preference given to returned soldiers. ‘Militia’ was a bitter casualty of the patriotic desire to re-establish returned men in employment, as being a married man over the military age he and his family felt “cast aside,” feeling as though he was “never going to be allowed to work again” due to preference.\textsuperscript{164} A returned soldier replied, indignant that ‘Militia’ should question that such preferential treatment be given to men who had risked their lives.\textsuperscript{165} Another letter from a returned soldier in December 1918 was angry at not getting preference from a “big firm” over men who stayed at home despite more than two years service at the front. He signed off that “Returned soldiers want work, not lip sympathy.”\textsuperscript{166}

Commonwealth and State Public Service positions were not the only area where claims for employment preference for returned soldiers were being voiced in Tasmania. A Local Council clerk in southern Tasmania had his employment queried by the Secretary of the Channel Recruiting Committee in April 1917, claiming that

\textsuperscript{162}Western Australian, A.B. Facey’s, well-known autobiography describes one situation seeking work with an employer supposedly instituting preference to returned men. When the employer had offered him the job and asked whether he received a war pension, to which the answer was yes, the employer replied, “Well, you don’t expect to receive a war pension plus full wages do you?” Facey was angered at this attempt to underpay a returned man for work he did, simply for being in receipt of a war pension, drawing the ‘shirker’ and ‘cold-footer’ rhetoric well known in Tasmania at the time: “Are you trying to get cheap labour? If you are, try it on some other mug. What did you do about enlisting and doing your bit or are you one of those cold-footed bastards that stayed home to take advantage of the enlisted man’s wife or girlfriend for your own filthy lust!” See, A.B. Facey, \textit{A Fortunate Life}, Ringwood, Victoria, 1981, p. 286. The preference promises made to returned soldiers did not always stand, or stood with conditions.

\textsuperscript{163}‘Employment for Soldiers’, \textit{The Mercury}, 26 February 1918, p. 4.


\textsuperscript{165}‘Married Men and Work’, letter to the editor from ‘Stung Anzac’, \textit{The Mercury}, 8 June 1918, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{166}‘Soldiers and Work’, letter to the editor, \textit{The Mercury}, 23 December 1918, p. 2.
“every available opening should be reserved for soldiers as they returned, so as to diminish the number who would require positions when the war was over...”\textsuperscript{167} Similarly, the Hobart City Council grappled with implementing a policy of returned soldier employment preference, with some councillors expressing a desire to put it into practice with a particular case involving the lease for the Domain Swimming Baths.\textsuperscript{168} The Hobart City Council decided at a meeting less than a fortnight later that employment preference for returned soldiers would henceforth be Council policy, acknowledging “public opinion.”\textsuperscript{169} This claim was made well before the onset of the recession in 1920-21, where employment and jealousies resulting from preference policies were even more marked.

Hobart City Council Alderman Louden McLeod was a strong supporter of the employment preference policy, and aimed to have it implemented wherever possible within the Council, urging other bodies to follow suit. So strong were his views that he claimed to have no compunction with taking men of military age out of employment and filling their positions with returned soldiers.\textsuperscript{170} McLeod urged the community to do “something substantial”, and not be content waving flags and cheering as the sum total of their obligations to the returned men on their homecoming.\textsuperscript{171} Leven Council affirmed absolute employment preference for returned soldiers,\textsuperscript{172} while Penguin and Premaydena Councils confirmed preference, “all things being equal.”\textsuperscript{173} One Koonya resident declared he would donate £5 to the

\textsuperscript{167} See, 'Returned Soldiers and Vacancies', \textit{The Mercury}, 17 April, 1917, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{168} The Mayor (Alderman Lord), however, felt that rejecting the previous system by not calling for applications would constitute a dangerous precedent. \textit{The Mercury}, 6 June, 1917, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{169} Alderman Davis declared that the Council was acknowledging “that the trend of public opinion was in the direction not only of doing what they could to find employment for returned men, but if possible, straining a point on their behalf”\textsuperscript{169} \textit{The Mercury}, 19 June, 1917, p. 5. Alison Alexander in a forthcoming book on the Hobart City Council has also acknowledged the Council’s strong position in supporting the RSSILA’s demand for preference. See Alexander & Petrow, \textit{Hobart 1846-2000: A History of Hobart City Council}, Hobart, forthcoming publication, chapter ‘Hobart City Council 1914-1939’, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{170} See, 'Returned Soldiers. Employment by City Council: Views of Alderman McLeod', \textit{The Mercury}, 31 July 1917, p. 5. McLeod’s opinion was largely unconsidered rhetoric and would have posed great difficulties in implementing in any real practical sense, even without the problem of filling positions with untrained men.
\textsuperscript{171} McLeod suggested that the Council teach the returned men to be tram drivers, or subsidise their employment if they were not entirely fit. While heroic in its intentions, the practical life-span of such a scheme would barely last beyond people’s concerns about the war: when their debt of honour to the men subsided.
\textsuperscript{172} \textit{The Mercury}, 15 July 1918, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{173} Penguin Council: \textit{The Mercury}, 28 January 1918, p. 4; Premaydena Council: \textit{The Mercury}, 4 February 1919, p. 3. In a discussion held at Premaydena Council Chambers on 1 February 1919, the question of returned soldier employment and preference was debated vociferously. One suggestion desired that all the positions the Council had should be declared vacant for returned soldiers, while
Local Repatriation Committee fund only if the Premaydena Council Clerk's position was given to a returned soldier.¹⁷⁴

Was preference, as Alison Alexander has noted, “preference ‘all things being equal’, so that a returned man would be preferred over a civilian if their qualifications were equal, or should all jobs go to returned men?”¹⁷⁵ This issue also vexed ‘Antill’, writing to The Mercury in July 1919. In regard to the meaning of preference, Antill wrote:

Has it not become absolutely necessary that there should be a clear definition of the above phrase? Does it mean that where a returned soldier and a civilian are applicants for a particular situation, and the qualifications of the civilian are manifestly superior to those of the soldier, the latter is, notwithstanding his inferiority, to be preferred to the civilian? Or does it mean that where, in such a case, the qualifications of each are equal, or nearly so, the preference is to be given to the soldier?¹⁷⁶

The confusion over the status of preference undoubtedly fuelled a large proportion of the antagonistic responses to it, as employers and returned soldier supporters appeared to approach the topic from two entirely different directions. Municipal Councils around Tasmania debated this very question with their own preference policies, and the outcomes of employment preference for returned men created local furores, as in Clarence in 1924, when absolute preference was not invoked.¹⁷⁷

One newspaper correspondent believed that the displacement of female labour was the best way to place returned men in work, questioning how their temporary employment was allowed to continue in the face of returned soldier unemployment. Women, according to ‘Observer’, were occupying jobs that belonged to men - and returned men at that. While the post-war displacement of female labour occurred to a

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¹⁷⁶ A civilian filled Clarence Council’s Inspector vacancy in 1924 over a returned soldier, causing a public and media uproar. John Gellibrand, founder of the forerunner to Legacy, resigned his Council position over the matter, and such pressure was brought to bear that a married returned soldier was employed instead, with preference remaining the Council’s position into the late 1930s. Alexander, The Eastern Shore, pp. 169-170.
greater degree in the United Kingdom than Australia, this respondent questioned the wisdom of retaining women any longer than needed when there were returned soldiers to be employed. 'Observer' desired a clearer division between male and female labour, declaring that, "women should be relegated to their own sphere, which is not that of occupying positions suitable to men, and belonging in all justice to our returned soldiers."178

Preference was followed most vigorously in the Repatriation Department where Millen made every effort to ensure that returned men staffed almost all of the positions. As early as one month after the creation of the Department in April 1918, Millen informed the Senate that "at least 90 per cent. [were] from the ranks of the returned soldiers."179 An RSSILA deputation to Acting Prime Minister William Watt under Senator Bolton revealed Millen's desires for employment in the Repatriation Department. Watt reportedly noted that, "The Minister [of Repatriation] was particularly anxious that the whole machine should be run by returned soldiers, and by this means they would be bound to have the soldiers' point of view in administration."180 It was also designed (somewhat unsuccessfully) to deflect accusations of an unsympathetic administration. The Repatriation Department was the only Government institution to consistently follow the preference policy,181 and continued to do so throughout the following decades. It must have been a bitter pill for employees to be charged with callousness and an unsympathetic attitude toward their returned comrades.

176 'Returned Soldiers', letter to the editor from 'Observer', The Mercury, 24 July 1918, p. 8. Carmel Shute has noted that the threat of women in Australian industries in place of men (and returned soldiers) was used by the anti-conscriptionists to argue their case: "They [anti-conscriptionists] contended that the introduction of conscription would result in returning soldiers being faced with the 'nice prospect' of their jobs being filled mainly by women and children." Hughes had intimated his desire to utilise women in industry along similar lines as Britain and France, and anti-conscriptionists were aghast at the prospect of women abandoning their traditional domestic roles to work in factories. Carmel Shute, "'Blood Votes' and the 'Bestial Boche': A Case Study in Propaganda', Hecate, Vol. II, No. 2, July 1976, p. 13. See also, Marilyn Lake, 'John Earle and the Concept of the 'Labor Rat', Labour History, Number 33, November 1977, p. 37.

179 CPD, Vol. LXXXIV, p. 4309.

180 'Repatriation: Soldiers' Grievances: Deputation to Mr Watt', The Mercury, 5 June 1918, p. 6.

181 See, Garton, The Cost of War, p. 91. "In practice, the only department with a consistent soldier preference policy was the Repatriation Department. This policy was followed partly in response to the insistence of the RSL that only returned men had the necessary sympathy to be able to deal with the problems of their comrades."
**Advocates of Preference**

The RSSILA position on preference in Tasmania before July 1919 was to demand for it in all cases, in all sectors of employment.\(^{182}\) While large sections of the community supported claims for preference, the aggressive nature of RSSILA demands raised the ire of others. In one case, the Warden of Penguin Council declared the demand for preference for a Clerk position as "over the fence."\(^{183}\) The Secretary of the Penguin RSL claimed "without prejudice" that the office of council clerk be given to one of the many incapacitated and returned men in the area at the expense of the incumbent clerk. The employee held a rejection badge, having volunteered on three occasions and being declared medically unfit, while two brothers were on active service. His father was MLC Hubert Nichols. The Penguin Council reacted angrily to the demands of the RSL, no doubt because the latter considered the clerk eligible for service. *The Mercury* argued that, "A good deal of feeling [had] been aroused by the hard things said on both sides, but it is perhaps, as well to get this business of redeeming promises put on a sound and proper footing at once, so that ex-soldiers and councillors may know where they are."\(^{184}\) The Council did, however, reaffirm employment preference for returned men, "all things being equal,"\(^{185}\) but a difference in interpretation of the preference policy had arisen causing friction between the requests of those returned and the requirements of those that stayed. Not everyone in the community viewed employment preference the same way as the League, and the fact that there was room for interpretation on what preference actually meant saw conflict between returned soldiers and the community, which came to a head in 1919 with the case of John Whittle VC, to be discussed in the next section.

The fathers of returned soldiers formed their own Association and took an active role in the affairs of repatriation in Tasmania. The Sailors' and Soldiers'
The Fathers' Association drew large attendances from concerned parents and supporters at both ends of the State, as well as communicating with other branches interstate.\textsuperscript{186} The Association acted as a pressure group in co-operation with the RSSILA in supporting employment preference, questioning repatriation policies,\textsuperscript{187} and generally lobbying and petitioning for the most positive outcomes for returned men.\textsuperscript{188} The Fathers' Association took part in a public debate over employment preference at Clarence Council in 1924, reportedly declaring, “councillors who voted against a returned soldier had no right to occupy such representative positions unless they carried out the wishes of the people.”\textsuperscript{189} Evidently, they believed that only returned men should be considered for new positions.\textsuperscript{190} The Association's vocal and active support for returned soldiers made them a useful pressure group for returned soldier activities in Tasmania, constantly agitating for a better deal for returned soldiers,\textsuperscript{191} although some fathers raised issues regarding employment preference that caused waves within the community against the special privileges they attempted to claim for returned men.\textsuperscript{192} ‘Father of Soldiers’ attacked the employees at the Anglesea Barracks who “had never left the fireside, while the dinkum returned men walk the

\textsuperscript{186} It is worth noting that the President of the Hobart branch was Hobart City Council Alderman Richard J. Meagher. Consequently, returned soldiers had a sympathetic voice on the Hobart City Council.

\textsuperscript{187} Richard Meagher, as President of the Fathers' Association, supported resolutions moved by the RSSILA at a public meeting on repatriation at the Hobart Town Hall, 6 March 1919. Meagher was also chairman of the State vocational training committee, and was placed in the difficult situation of defending his position in the face of criticisms made by the Tasmanian branch of the RSSILA regarding the lethargy of vocational programs up to that point. Nangle's national reorganisation was not to eventuate for another month.

\textsuperscript{188} It was reported that the Launceston Branch for instance was, in early 1919, involved in securing a more “equitable pension system” for incapacitated soldiers. ‘Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Fathers' Association: Repatriation Discussed’, \textit{The Mercury}, 16 January 1919, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{189} Alexander, \textit{The Eastern Shore}, p. 169.

\textsuperscript{190} The same heated Council meeting saw Councillor Chapman claim that the returned soldier did not have sufficient qualifications for an Inspector position. Following crowd uproar, a voice was heard to note: “He had four and a half years’ service and his discharge.” Applause followed this remark. It appeared that years in the trenches on active service qualified a man for any job. \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{191} See, ‘Employment of Returned Soldiers’, letter to the editor from Father of Soldier, \textit{The Mercury}, 25 April 1919, p. 2. This letter claimed that there was too much talk and too little action in regards to efforts for the employment of returned soldiers. The consistent publication of Fathers' letters ensured that the issue rarely left the pages of the daily newspapers during the first half of 1919. Marilyn Lake argued that the “utterances of the members suggest the association saw itself as a kind of vigilante group.” M. Lake, \textit{A Divided Society}, Melbourne, 1975, p. 174.

\textsuperscript{192} Even when the preference that fathers had fought for was freely acknowledged as given, in the case of messenger positions granted within the Public Buildings (Public Service), ‘Watchdog’ from the Fathers’ Association criticised the rate of pay as inadequate considering the increasing costs of living. See, ‘Soldier Messengers’, letter to the editor from ‘Watchdog’, \textit{The Mercury}, 2 August 1919, p. 9.
streets wondering what to take on." The letter drew harsh rebukes from sympathisers and employees at Anglesea Barracks that asserted their right to work there. One reply revealed that the vast majority of employees were returned soldiers, Boer veterans, rejects, and married men, who had offered their services but failed. ‘Reject’ felt that the object of the writers of such letters was simply to “stir up in the hearts and minds of returned soldiers and the general public contempt and scorn for the men now doing military service at Anglesea Barracks.” The fact that relatively few eligible men were employed there did not mean that the public haranguing in favour of returned soldiers ceased.

The atmosphere in Hobart at the beginning of 1919 saw many ‘positions’ vacant and some returned soldiers and their supporters pushing their claims for preference and special treatment. The columns of newspaper space devoted to the issue of returned soldier employment reveal that it was the most politically sensitive immediate post-war aspect of repatriation in Tasmania, largely due to the visible nature of unemployment. Returned soldiers walking the streets looking for work focussed the public gaze on the issue, so it is no surprise that the more patriotic in the community called for preference to be enacted in all cases, although they were also often in the position of having nothing to lose by it. An almost unwritten patriotic challenge underwrote these demands, which served to appreciably damage the employment prospects of those who did not enlist. Criticism of anyone who was of military age and who did not wear the returned soldiers’ badge indicated the existence of a new battleground for ex-servicemen within their communities; but instead of bullets, accusations questioning the patriotism of fellow citizens marked this conflict, despite the fact that war had officially ended.

**Preference and John Whittle VC**

The preference rift that arose between the Hobart City Council and the RSSILA illustrates the extremity that emotions could reach on the preference issue in

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Tasmania. It demonstrated a fundamental difference in opinion between the soldiers and the public about what preference really meant, and stretched to breaking point the sympathy and patience of an affirmed employer of returned soldiers. It is also important in illustrating the powerful political position of the RSSILA in the heady days of 1919, when sympathy for returned soldiers was at its zenith, and repatriation and employment considerations were foremost in Tasmania.

The appointment of a civilian over a returned soldier to a Council position became the subject of an intense media activity through June and July 1919, when the position of a Mountain Park Ranger in the Hobart City Council went to a non-soldier over the applications of some fifty-three others, among them four returned men. The events illustrate the emotive nature of claimed returned soldier exclusivity in employment, and status generally, within the Tasmanian community in the year after the Armistice. Sergeant John Whittle, a Victoria Cross winner no less, was among those overlooked for the position, and his name and standing became the focal point of the issue that eventually resulted in a public rift between the Hobart RSSILA and the City Council.

The reason this appointment was so contentious in the eyes of the RSSILA was that the entire principle of employment preference was annulled if a Victoria Cross Winner would not receive preferment over a civilian, especially by an avowed preference employer. In making the issue public, The Mercury claimed a reluctance to report the appointment, but felt “that the public promises made to the soldiers are not being kept in the spirit when a Victoria Cross man is refused his chance of a position under the City Council.” In effect, the appointment was as much a test of the principle of employment preference as it was of the RSSILA’s powers as an advocacy and rights organization, and of the Council’s integrity as a democratically elected and representative body. The ‘Whittle preference case’ epitomised the

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195 The position was for a Park Ranger to operate on Mount Wellington that overlooks the city of Hobart. The Mercury felt that the position did not require specialist knowledge, while Alderman Davis from the Council felt that the position did require specialist knowledge of the Mountain and its tracks. Davis voted for Mr Pitman to fill the position - the non-soldier who was eventually employed.

196 Within months of his employment, perhaps as a consequence of the public dispute and debate about the appointment, Pitman resigned his position and the Council applied for applicants in October 1919 again.

197 'Preference for Soldiers', The Mercury, 26 June 1919, p. 4. For a picture of Whittle, see p. 423.

198 If the Council’s actions, as a representative body of its constituents, embody the community’s wishes, then preference was not as widely supported and implemented as the print-media’s public pronouncements suggest. Alderman McLeod and others had already declared their full support for
nature of the broader preference debate, and represented a pivotal point in how far support for the policy was to extend. Other returned soldiers emerged demanding answers for why this “gross injustice” – the turning down of veterans for employment – was allowed to go on, declaring with bitterness and disgust that “many of those promises were never intended to be carried out.”

The schism over the appointment of a Mr Pitman in favour of John Whittle grew partly out of two conflicting ideas of what the position entailed: the RSSILA believed no special qualifications were necessary to be a Mt Wellington Park Ranger, while the Hobart City Council defended their appointment by arguing that Whittle did not possess the requisite specialisation for the position. Pitman had been employed in the position, and had an intimate knowledge of the tracks and paths in the reserve, which was necessary, so the Council argued, for facilitating emergency rescues and other important work.

George Foster’s letter to the Council, representing the RSSILA’s position, was highly critical of the Council’s appointment, and this criticism found strong advocates within the Council in Aldermen McLeod and Snowden. McLeod felt that Whittle’s rejection “was the worst thing that had happened to returned soldiers”, adding that, “the impression caused thereby had done a great deal of harm to the Council, and was likely to do more in the future.” Snowden also considered the impact such publicity would have on the Council as well as returned soldiers in the State, for he had a special interest in the welfare of returned men, being among their number himself. He saw the employment of Pitman in place of Whittle or the other three ex-soldier candidates as a wasted opportunity in reducing the “considerable” returned soldier unemployment problem, as well as a blow to the Council’s reputation as a public body to show the lead in a commitment to preference and returned soldier employment more generally.

A roll call of the number of returned soldiers

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200 One father of three soldiers scoffed at the suggestion that the Mt. Wellington Park ranger position required ‘special’ qualifications and knowing certain ‘shortcuts’: “I ask how long it would take the boys who found the ‘shortcuts’ on the unknown (to them) barren, rugged, scrubby peninsula, or on the strange forests, lanes, and roads in France or other places, in the dark, and return covered with blood, mud, and glory, to find their way in dark and light all over Mt. Wellington?” ‘Preference to Returned Soldiers’, letter to the editor from ‘Dad Old Three’, The Mercury, 8 July 1919, p. 2.
202 Ibid.
employed by the Council did little to stymie the debate or appease the element that advocated Whittle’s appointment, due to the public and highly contentious rejection of a VC winner in place of the re-employment of a former council employee.\footnote{Despite this, the Mayor had his supporters, who expressed their support in The Mercury. ‘Argus’ wrote that ‘the winning of a V.C. does not necessarily fit a man for all public positions in life that he would like to fill.’ ‘Soldiers and the City Council’, letter to the editor from ‘Argus’, The Mercury, 5 July 1919, p. 9. See other letters of support in the same issue.}

McLeod also raised the issue of Bolshevik and Anarchist elements who might use the rejection as a platform for rebellious activity.\footnote{Alison Alexander has also noted this aspect of the debate, noting in an upcoming history of the Hobart City Council that, “Aldermen said Council should set a good example – if returned men were not treated fairly they could become a menace to the community, which would create an opportunity for anarchy and Bolshevism – though others observed that employees had to be up to their job.” Alexander & Petrow, Hobart 1846-2000: A History of Hobart City Council, Hobart, forthcoming publication, ‘Elections’ chapter, p. 15.} Despite widespread media concern over Bolshevism, this was of relatively minor concern in the context of other issues and the RSSILA’s inclusion in the issue.\footnote{The RSSILA, despite an avowed apolitical stance according to Fedorovich, “became an important and eager political ally, which had been coopted by the powerful conservative elements within Australian society eager to maintain the status quo.” Fedorovich, ‘Ex-Servicemen and the Politics of Soldier Settlement in Canada and Australia, 1915-1925’, p. 79.} The RSSILA in response, however, attacked the City Council’s actions, with particular ferocity directed toward the Mayor J.G. Shield. Lieut.-Col. D.P. Young, Tasmanian President of the RSSILA, declared during a League Branch meeting that the Council had “betrayed the returned soldiers.”\footnote{‘Mountain Ranger: Soldiers and City Council: Strong Criticism’, The Mercury, 3 July 1919, 5.} Duncan McRae was more forceful in his criticism: McRae reportedly preferred enmity from Alderman Davis than Davis’ sympathy for returned soldiers. McRae moved that the Mayor should “refrain from welcoming soldiers in the future, because his actions had proved him lacking in sympathy towards returned soldiers.”\footnote{Ibid.}

The returned soldier community felt the Whittle preference issue was a point worth maintaining, and, secure in the righteousness of their attitude, chose this particular case on which to defend their claims to special employment preference. Any erosion of preference – manifested in the actions of the Hobart City Council in employing anyone other than a returned soldier – destabilised the principle leading to the rhetorical question: if a returned Victoria Cross winner could not secure preference with his decorations and honours, then who would give returned soldiers preference?\footnote{This question was posed in the RSSILA’s Hobart Branch meeting by Mr G. Collis, reported in The Mercury. Ibid.}
The actions of the RSA did not garner the public support it desired if letters to the editor of *The Mercury* are any indication. One soldier's father, W.J. Westcott from Hastings, was surprised at the petulant attitude the soldiers had taken on an earlier motion to boycott the official State Peace Celebrations in the wake of Whittle's rebuttal: "How childish! One can hardly believe it." Westcott appealed to the masculine attributes of the ex-fighting men to deal with the issue and implied that to do otherwise might not result in the support they hoped. This is an important point to consider, for it suggests that even within the soldiers' traditional support base – fathers of returned soldiers – fractures were appearing in the support for a returned soldier exclusivity from the wider community, despite their military service. Westcott cautioned the men to "not split your friends, for united we stand, but divided we fall!" which appeared to indicate a clearer perspective of the matter than the RSA possessed.

Until the Whittle Ranger preference issue, the Hobart City Council had a solid record of employing returned soldiers whenever new positions arose, but this particular conflict arose out of a difference in expectation between the soldiers and the Council. Preference according to the RSSILA implied that if a returned soldier was an applicant, no other candidate should be considered, whereas it was clear that that Council would not exercise it to the same extent. State League President D.P. Young referred to the Council as having "sold us a pup" on promises of preference – a point that regular *Mercury* column 'Mercurius' was moved to comment cheekily, yet wittily on in poetic form:

'Tis not to X's mart to-day
Where the bargains are displayed,
The "R.S.S." must wend their way
With keen desire for trade.
The Mayor himself fresh business learns,
New trade has taken up;
And now an honest penny turns
By "selling them a pup."

The Mayor and Aldermen combine

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With wondrous civic art,
This indescribable canine
To offer at the mart,
The “R.S.S.I.L.A.” now
For “startling bargains” calls,
And buys the mythical “bow-wow”
At Corporation stalls.

This “pup” was ne’er in kennel bred,
Him collar ne’er embraced;
Yet by the sale, ’twas lately said
His worship” was disgraced.
Though he perchance may disregard
The “pups” pathetic wail,
Who wags all round the Barrack yard
His Military tail.

Yet why should discord now prevail?
And why should union cease?
I pray thee, pup, to wag thy tail
As Herald of the Peace.
And at the coming Festival
Send forth, not faint or small,
A joyous bark for Peace, that shall
Be loudest of them all.211

Quite cleverly, the column had attempted to disarm the seriousness of the debate, questioning whether the Whittle case and preference generally was worth destroying a relationship for. The post-war phase required rebuilding rather than antagonism. Politics and class, as Marilyn Lake has demonstrated, had already wreaked enough discord in the Tasmanian community during the war.212

Negotiation about the meaning of preference was the only way to break the deadlock between the returned soldiers and the Council, as continued discord would only further divorce returned soldiers from their communities and would have harmed their ability to both repatriate and assimilate. A successful compromise on this principle was required in order that the returned soldiers’ place could be more clearly defined within their communities, their prestige ensured, and a reconciliation effected between themselves and their community. A definition of the principle and a clearer understanding of when it should or should not be enacted was important in defining

211 ‘Passing Notes’ by ‘Mercurius’, The Mercury, 5 July 1919, p. 9. The reference to ‘Peace’ in the last stanza referred to the upcoming Peace celebrations that the RSSILA were threatening to boycott in disgust over the Whittle preference issue.
212 See her, A Divided Society, passim.
the boundaries of what soldiers could and could not expect on the issue. Its negotiation was pressing, for it had even threatened returned soldiers' participation in the Peace Celebrations.

Under the chairmanship of Chief Justice Sir Herbert Nicholls, the differences on the debate between the RSSILA and the Hobart City Council were resolved amicably. The souring relationship required the intercession of a third party to mediate, and indicated the severity of the split. The discussion was reportedly “long and friendly”, with the Mayor and representatives of the Council meeting the President and representatives of the RSSILA. In the course of the negotiation, the two conflicting opinions on the meaning of preference were discussed, and common ground was found. Clarification on the meaning of preference, as the Hobart City Council and the RSSILA negotiated, was, according to their media statement: “That if, having due regard to efficiency, it is reasonably possible to appoint a returned sailor or soldier to any position, he should be appointed, even though an applicant who is not a returned sailor or soldier might be considered to be slightly better qualified.” This did not mean that a returned soldier should be employed if he did not possess the skills required, but that if he was capable of performing the duties of the office and was of good character, he should be employed. A special statement was crafted that dealt with the phrase, ‘all things being equal’, which the Penguin and Premaydena Councils for instance, had affirmed in their pledges. The RSSILA’s pact with Hobart Council expressly hoped that the phrase ‘all things being equal’ did not deprive a returned soldier from employment that he was capable of fulfilling. The accommodation of each side’s stance on preference allowed the brokering of a truce and the cessation of the very public argument, with important concessions agreed. The ambiguities regarding preference and exactly how it should be interpreted and defined between the two groups was almost entirely removed – at the very least, there was an understanding of the expectations both sides had toward the preference policy. The RSSILA’s acceptance of this definition and application of the principle proved something of a test case in the negotiation of preference policy vagueness. The earlier

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214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
threat of returned soldier boycotting of the Peace Day celebrations were avoided, preventing a potentially more damaging situation.\textsuperscript{216}

\textit{The Mercury} regretted the circumstances leading to the event, but found a positive note from the settlement. It had “cleared the way to a better understanding of the principle of preference to soldiers, and to some definition of the methods to be followed in applying this principle.”\textsuperscript{217} The propositions from the conference “may fairly be accepted by the Government, by all public bodies, and by private employers as constituting a guiding principle in employing men,”\textsuperscript{218} suggesting a desire that any future conflict on this issue be avoided. It also quashed any notion that absolute preference in all cases was in any way an adequate policy for employing returned soldiers, and \textit{The Mercury} was gratified that returned soldiers had acknowledged the same.\textsuperscript{219} The final result of the dispute allowed for the principle of preference to be exercised while still allowing for the appointment of civilians with superior claims, but it was not the end of debate on the policy – it was only a way of defining its boundaries. Individual interpretation and application still remained in all future cases. John Whittle moved to Sydney in the 1920s and became an inspector with a large insurance company.\textsuperscript{220}

Presumably in response to public criticism since the Whittle case, Public Service appointments were published in the newspapers from July, advising of the successful applicant.\textsuperscript{221} The Whittle debate and subsequent public rift it caused also prompted the RSSILA to express in its opinion on the question of preference. The task fell to former MHA and Secretary of the League George Foster, who had this to say:

\textsuperscript{216} The Peace Celebrations were held in Hobart on Saturday 19 July 1919, while in Launceston, the day was postponed to the 21 July by bad weather. The swift conference and subsequent positive outcome avoided a distinctly embarrassing public returned soldier statement, as it appeared that the majority of support on the issue was with the Mayor and the Council rather than the soldiers.\textsuperscript{217} ‘Preference to Soldiers’, \textit{The Mercury}, 16 July 1919, p. 4.\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.\textsuperscript{219} Ibid.\textsuperscript{220} In 1934, Whittle was awarded a certificate of merit from the Royal Life Saving Society for saving a three year old boy from drowning. See, L. Wigmore, B. Harding, \textit{They Dared Mightily}, Second edition revised and condensed by J. Williams and A. Staunton, Canberra, 1986, p. 129.\textsuperscript{221} For instance, John Paterson was selected from four returned soldier applicants for a job at the New Town Infirmary, while Alfred Ernest Weymouth, another returned soldier, was appointed as an Inspector at the Industrial Department, for which 23 out of the 33 applicants were returned soldiers. ‘Public Service Appointments’, \textit{The Mercury}, 17 July 1919, p. 4.
The returned man is not so unreasonable as to ask that a position should be made for him by sacking a married man with a family unless the married man was temporarily filling the vacancy during the soldier's absence. The promise that men would be reinstated on their return must be kept prominently before us as a matter of policy, though in some cases it may mean hardship to the man who temporarily fills the position, always, of course, in cases of undue suffering leaving the final judgement to the returned soldier concerned.222

There remained of course variations on this approach contingent on the different circumstances of each case, but it was patently clear that the League still expected the promise of preference to be adhered to in the vast majority of cases. Foster did, however, cite the difficult case of events in the Railway Department raised in Parliament by Joe Lyons, that confused the principle somewhat. Returned soldiers, temporarily employed by the Department, were sacked to make way for other returning soldiers who had previously been employed with the Department before their enlistment. "What was to become of the policy of preference to returned soldiers?" in these cases, Foster asked. If the non-soldier employees in the Department had married during the absence of the soldiers, then it was entirely reasonable to ask for their dismissal first, before even the removal of the temporarily employed returned soldiers. The preference principle would otherwise be in name only. "The men who lose their jobs as the result of the return of our comrades have our sympathy, but as a matter of right we are upholding the attitude of the Railway Department in so far as it means preference to returned soldiers."223 After July 1919 then, the Tasmanian RSSILA were willing to accord some flexibility in the application of the preference principle where undue conflict could potentially occur, but they reaffirmed the right of preference to be used, earned as a right from their war service and in their status as special citizens.224 It was non-negotiable.

223 Ibid.
224 'Mother of Four' agreed with Foster's position, feeling that "I consider the treatment to some returned men is absolutely rotten, and by the very few firms have the men received the treatment they were entitled to." She remained bitter however of the scant regard preference was given in the community by some: "[A]ll [the] paper talk would make no difference to the class of people who do not see that a returned soldier gets his job back or a better one." Her comments were not shared by the newspaper, but were published as an 'opinion piece'. See, 'Returned Men', letter to the editor from 'Mother of Four', The Mercury, 1 October 1919, p. 2.
Criticisms of Employment Policies

Criticisms of the work of the Repatriation Department in finding employment for returned soldiers was ever constant – from soldiers, the RSSILA, the media and politicians. The authorities administering the scheme defended their position and articulated the difficulties they faced. In September 1918, William Watt summarised the work of the Department nationally, stating that employment was the “first function of the repatriation authorities” for those who had already been discharged. Between April and July 1918, Watt proudly declared that of nearly 16,500 applications for assistance received, the Department placed twelve thousand in employment, while only 2,700 on their books had not been placed. In June 1919, Minister Edward Millen declared that to the end of May 1919, nearly 42,500 men had been placed in employment nationally, with a further 7,500 allotted to vocational training with nearly 2,500 completed and in employment. The figures suggest a reasonably successful programme of resettling men into civilian employment, but as with most things, this was only one aspect of the story.

The figures listed were only the numbers on the Department’s books, and did not include countless thousands others who had tried their luck on the labour market through means other than the Repatriation Department. Therefore, it was not a true indication of returned soldier employment placements and unemployment figures. It also did not include those who had been placed by the Department but where the job had lasted for a few weeks, whereby that soldier was “entered up as having been finalised and returned to civil life.”

David McGrath criticised the Department’s

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225 Duncan McRae, on behalf of the RSA, in January 1918 criticised the attempts made by the State War Council in placing returned men in employment. He advocated the creation of an official Labour Bureau in Tasmania. The RSA, McRae argued, was “the only body which has accomplished any valuable work of this nature...working under many disabilities.” ‘Urgency of Repatriation’, letter to the editor from D. McRae, The Mercury, 8 January 1918, p. 3. Later, in 1919, MHA and Secretary of the Tasmanian RSSILA, George Foster condemned Repatriation bureaucracy in a speech at the Hobart Town Hall, Thursday 6 March 1919, reported in the following day’s Mercury.

227 One instance of this can be found in a letter to the editor of The Mercury in Hobart, in February 1919: “Much criticism of late, both from returned soldiers and the general public, has been levelled at the Repatriation Department. Those who know are satisfied that the department is making the best of a difficult position, but the fact is that the general public is not behind them – with a few notable exceptions – and while this indifference or selfishness lasts, the replacing of all these men back in useful occupations is impossible.” The Mercury, 14 February 1919, p. 8.

228 William Alexander Watt, member for Balaclava, Victoria, was a member of both Liberal and Nationalist parties in his career.


231 David McGrath to the House of Representatives, 10 July 1919. CPD, Vol. LXXXVIII, p. 10573.
regulations because, although that job may last “for six months...at the end of that period [if] he requires further assistance, he cannot get it, because [the] application must be made within six months of his return.”232 Applications after this time could not be dealt with by the Repatriation Department, and so assistance in finding employment had to be found by other means. Yet the basic focus of where to place returned soldiers caused a problem in itself.

As has been stated earlier, the legislators expressed a desire to place returned men in their previous vocations, in effect returning society to a status quo. As Senator Allan McDougall233 stated in parliament in January 1918: “As far as possible men must be returned to their former positions in society.”234 This opinion, then, conspired to restrict the Department’s assistance in finding men employment in their former occupations, aside from the Vocational Training opportunities afforded to eligible soldiers. It could help explain why so many men with no prior experience went on to the land in soldier settlement schemes.235 The return of soldiers to their previous positions did not appeal to many of the soldiers themselves who expressed a desire to begin something new and embark of an alternative future – after all, Richard Foster236 had noted that the soldiers would in many cases return with a different sense of themselves and their place in the world. Federal MP William Gibson237 was angered by the inflexibility in the regulations when dealing with this class of men. “Why should a progressive man, after four years at the war,” Gibson argued, “be required to return to his former employment?”238 His experiences had surely opened his eyes up to broader horizons than that which he would return, as, for instance, a trade labourer probably saw more for his future after his experiences on active service than to cart bricks on his return.

The practical application of this policy saw financial assistance from the Department only granted in cases where a man was in business prior to his enlistment, so if he suffered any material prejudice in giving up his business to enlist, he was

231 Member for Ballarat, Victoria, and ALP member.
232 David McGrath to the House of Representatives, 10 July 1919. CPD, Vol. LXXXVIII, p. 10573.
233 Senator for New South Wales, and ALP member.
235 Chris Martin also argues that Tasmania’s post-war depression “gave added impetus to the soldiers’ desire to acquire a farm or orchard. No doubt many of these men, when facing unemployment, saw resettlement as their only alternative.” See, C. Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 115.
237 Member for Coramgamite, Victoria.
238 William Gibson, to the House of Representatives, 10 July 1919. CPD, Vol. LXXXVIII, p. 10620.
assisted to restart again with an advance. This policy came under consistent fire from soldiers as well as parliamentarians, among them Queensland Senator Hattil Foll, and House of Representatives member David McGrath\(^{239}\) who requested, in 1919, that Millen deal with applications on a case by case basis rather than an inflexible approach. Foll suggested that many men were worth assisting who had not previously been in business (perhaps through no fault of their own), and who were willing to put up some of their own money.\(^{240}\) In those cases he suggested a softening of the Government's attitude to match them pound for pound.\(^{241}\) Millen was firm in his position on the matter, despite acknowledging the criticisms of such a stance. He argued that "if all returned soldiers are to be financed in business undertakings, nine out of every ten will want to go into business instead of seeking employment in the ordinary way. Every one likes to be his own master, and every one thinks he can run a business."\(^{242}\) In addition, the financial demands would be too great in the face of the Treasury's obligations to pensions and the health service, sustenance allowances, and financing returned soldier land settlement. He added that the Repatriation Commissioner was responsible for this regulation, taking the view that, "an effort should be made to place every returned man in his pre-war occupation and the Department will help him to be maintained until he is so placed. If he has been in business before, they will endeavour to re-start him."\(^{243}\) There was no room for negotiation on this issue because of the Department's belief that its obligations extended only so far as adequately to repatriate the soldier to his pre-enlistment level.

There are countless Tasmanian cases of soldiers desiring assistance from the Repatriation Department to move into employment that differed from their pre-war avocations, but failed due to this ineligibility by the regulations. One soldier for instance, applied for a loan of £150 to start a grocer business, but was rejected

\(^{239}\) McGrath, a returned soldier, felt that, "In the Repatriation Department there is muddle and discontent from end to end; and, although we make many suggestions that we know are quite feasible, little notice is taken of them. The Department will not assist a man to enter into business unless he was in business prior to enlistment." David McGrath to the House of Representatives, 10 July 1919. \textit{CPD, Vol. LXXXVIII}, p. 10571.

\(^{240}\) The Tasmanian branch of theRSSILA also felt in February 1919 that the restrictions in the regulations regarding business assistance conspired to prohibit men who had just as much experience (if not more) in business as those men who had owned a business before enlisting, particularly if they had worked in that line of business for many years. See report of speech made by MHA and Secretary of Tasmanian branch RSSILA George Foster at the Hobart Town Hall, \textit{The Mercury}, 7 March 1919, p. 4.


\(^{242}\) Senator Edward Millen to the Senate, 18 September 1919. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 12523.

\(^{243}\) \textit{Ibid.}
because he did not own or work in that line of business prior to enlistment. His qualifications as a telephone mechanic precluded him from assistance to begin this business under Repatriation regulations. Another soldier, formerly a miner, wanted assistance to open a hotel in Zeehan, but was rejected on the same grounds. Millen knew that by depriving business assistance to all but a select few would alienate some, but felt that it could be no other way considering the Government’s avowed position on its responsibilities and obligations: “I know that many soldiers will be disappointed, and that their friends will think we have treated them unfairly; but, in view of the facts given, and of the expenditure involved, it is wise at present to leave the regulation relating to businesses in its present form.”

Even when assistance was given to start a returned soldier business there were failures, echoing to some degree the same pattern in soldier land settlement. One soldier was granted an advance to open a confectionary shop in Mowbray (a suburb of Launceston), despite being eligible for vocational training, and having health difficulties that led to a patchy work history. Deputy Comptroller Humphris wrote to the Officer in Charge of Repatriation in Launceston, R.C.B. Moore, enquiring of the ex-soldiers’ aptitude for business. Moore replied that “The applicant does not impress me as being blest [sic] with too much energy or ability being one of the dopey sort but is [sic] does not require much of either to conduct a fruit and confectionary business.” It was not long before he started shearing in Victoria, leaving his wife to manage the business. By mid-1923, the soldier had sold the business to another woman without the Department’s knowledge or consent, still owing £66, and he and his wife were tracked down in Victoria.

244 See, National Archives of Australia (Hereafter NAA): P107/1: M1606.
245 See, NAA: P130: R5793/C8893.
248 In another case, an ex-soldier was assisted to purchase a fishing boat in partnership for a fishing business, formerly being a sailor. As J.F. Humphris noted in an internal memo on this case, “He failed to make a success of the fishing business and eventually returned the boat to the Department in a bad state of repair. The mast was broken, the sails practically worn out and [a] portion of the gear was missing.” The Department sold the boat to recoup monies, but the soldier still owed £70 that had to be written off. See, ‘Remarks and Recommendation of Deputy Comptroller’, 8/10/1919, NAA: P107/3: M,H,R 148. This was not an isolated incident: by May 1919, Frank Lindsay Gunn, Chairman of the Tasmanian Repatriation Board, revealed that in Hobart alone, five fishing boats were being worked by civilians after the soldiers had not made a success of their businesses. See remarks made by Chairman, State Repatriation Conference, Hobart, Monday 19 May 1919. ‘Repatriation. Conference at Hobart: Address by the Governor’, The Mercury, 20 May 1919, p. 7.
Other returned soldier businesses were more successful. One man started up his own catering business from the Hobart Town Hall after being granted a £30 loan to purchase crockery, tables and linen. Another soldier returned to his trade as stonemason in Ross, receiving money to purchase tools as well as the support of the Local Repatriation Committee at Ross in obtaining land. The fact that men were employed in their own businesses before enlisting was no guarantee that they were good businessmen, and the assistance the Department provided them in establishing a business on their return was as risky as any other business proposition – private or otherwise.

The issue of expanding the repatriation policy to assist men into new avenues of employment was a contentious one, and ultimately, the philosophical argument lies with exactly where the Department’s boundaries of responsibilities lay. Should the Department have only gone as far as arresting the material prejudice suffered due to war service, as the legislation stood, or should their responsibilities have gone further? Did the fact that the first AIF was almost an entirely volunteer body somehow negate the Department’s responsibilities in this regard? The returned men had voluntarily enlisted to fight amongst vague promises for their return, so the Department’s responsibilities for finding men employment arguably went only so far as to re-establish men to a comparative level from whence they came. That the Repatriation Department had the responsibility in finding employment for returned soldiers was not an issue that met with disagreement, but the level of assistance was. It was within this critical and philosophical milieu that Repatriation authorities had to manoeuvre.

By March 1920, Millen reported to the Senate that 6.8 per cent of discharged men remained on the Repatriation Department’s books, still to be employed.

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249 NAA: P1078: M, SDs, H 5389.
250 The Local Committee felt that, “The land applied for is useless for any other purpose – and considering the fact that the applicant – a returned soldier – is resuming his old trade it is the opinion of this Committee that the land applied for should be granted free of all cost.” See, NAA: P1071: M 380
251 Fedorowich similarly notes the task for caring for returned men was a national one: “It was obvious that the responsibility for the returned soldier was a national obligation which had to be met. [T]his marked a recognition that the state had to intervene positively in areas of social policy hitherto the realm of private initiative and philanthropy.” K. Fedorowich, Unfit For Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire Between the Wars, Manchester, 1995, p. 147.
252 Millen noted: “Of the 15,393 men applying for employment, 138,964 were found work; in other words, 90 per cent. of the men who came to us were placed directly in employment by our action, or indirectly assisted by a sustenance allowance until they found employment for themselves. The number of men left on our books was 15,229, representing 6.8 per cent. of the men discharged, and I do
criticism still came from those who saw the re-employment of all discharged men as a Government responsibility. Tasmanian Senator Thomas Bakhap noted that there could never be enough done to satisfy some men: "I know that many complaints are made by a comparatively small percentage of dissatisfied men." He added that, "The great trouble...is that a small minority are querulous." For members like Michael Considine, returning and returned soldiers were being "deluded" and "misled" on the issue of employment and their opportunities for obtaining same:

The men, as they are repatriated, are being disillusioned, and becoming the most dissatisfied section in the community. When they rejoin the ranks of the civilian population they find nothing but lack of employment and broken promises; and there will come a dark day of reckoning when they quite wake up.

Considine forecast something akin to a revolt of labour – a consequence of idle but militarily trained returned soldiers displeased at the lack of opportunities on their return needing an outlet, in the face of unemployment and other frustrations, to vent their dissatisfaction. Such public demonstrations of returned soldier dissatisfaction were exhibited in Queensland in 1919 in riots in Brisbane and Townsville. Stephen Garton, among others, has examined riots and returned soldier disturbances, and situated them within a locus of frustration, bitterness and anxiety in the process of returning and engaging once again with a civilian society. Broken pledges of employment, or antagonism toward forces perceived responsible for unpatriotic behaviour (ie. Labor, and labour), prompted these outbursts. Rallying to preserve the society they had fought for, returned soldiers came into conflict with elements they perceived were subverting the institutions colleagues had died defending. Reluctance to make the shift to a civilian status, Garton argues, "was amplified by returned-soldier unemployment, anger at government ineptitude, and union opposition to soldier preference."
Hence, employment was crucial not only to the economic and industrial growth of post-war Australia, but the social stability of the nation. The need to remove the feeling of disenfranchisement some returned soldiers felt, and giving them responsibility could, only really enact their removal from the societal margins, and employment was the most positive and effective way of achieving this. Employment required a new focus that smoothed over discontent and aided in the resettling process. As Garton notes, by the early 1920s, riots and returned soldier disturbances had calmed:

A crucial factor in this was that most returned men had made some adjustment to civilian life – jobs, family life, and reasonable repatriation benefits meant they were no longer on the margins of society, hovering as a threat, but civilians with responsibilities.\(^{256}\)

They had made the transition to civilian life by making L.J. Pryor’s transition to positively contributing to the life of the community to which he had returned. The *Mercury* in Hobart warned of the need to repatriate returned men in view of alternative ideas in labour and union politics after the Armistice, but felt safe that they would not fall prey to I.W.W. or Bolshevik influences. They did, however, forecast “unrest and discontent” if the work of the Repatriation Department was unsuccessful.\(^{257}\) The finding of employment was, therefore, ultimately the most important Repatriation responsibility in terms of the reassimilation and retention of returned soldiers’ within the margins of society.

**Changing Attitudes and Continuing Difficulties**

In order to alleviate the increasingly acute returned soldier unemployment issue around the nation, the Federal Government in March 1919 provided funds to each State to be disseminated equally among its councils for the temporary employment of returned soldiers. Tasmania’s share of the £500,000 national funding was £20,331 on a proportional basis, which equated to £406\(^{258}\) for each municipality.

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\(^{256}\) Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 61.

\(^{257}\) ‘Editorial’, *The Mercury*, 29 November 1918, p. 4.

in the State. The money was distributed by the State Government to the councils, and was granted for the immediate employment of ex-soldiers not already provided for, which excluded land settlers. The funding was contingent on works for soldiers in their own municipalities, although the State Minister for Lands and Works J.B. Hayes revealed that the Repatriation Department reserved the right to send returned soldiers to other centres for employment. The money had to be expended on works commenced and completed within six months of the grant, but no part of the funds could be used for administrative costs. The Mercury in Hobart canvassed its readers for suggestions as to suitable works, and uncharacteristically for the broadsheet, criticised those returned soldiers it perceived were guilty of not trying to find work:

[I]t would be an excellent thing if somebody could hit upon an employment which every municipality could adopt as a remunerative standby, at which any man could work rather than be idly subsisting on a “sustenance” allowance, seeking work and praying not to find it, as some do; whilst some others are cadging, in various ways neither creditable to themselves nor useful to the community.

For Clarence Council, the money allowed it to undertake critical roadwork while also providing employment for their local unemployed veterans, embodying the dual positive outcomes envisaged for the scheme. Devonport Municipal Council, with the Local Repatriation Committee Secretary present, divided their allocation of funds to clearing drains, fencing, widening roads and clearing their cemetery. New Town Municipal Council, in the greater Hobart area, decided to proceed with the construction of Creek Road, with further works referred to their Works Committee. New Norfolk Municipal Council in the Derwent Valley decided to divide their money equally between the wards, with special instructions as to where men from which

260 The time limit was to allow the greatest number of returned soldiers to be employed rather than a few over a long period. See, ‘Returned Soldiers. The Federal Gift: Municipalities Schemes for Work’, The Mercury, 7 April 1919, p. 4.
261 It was uncharacteristic due to its usual championing of all things returned soldier. It was usually a staunch supporter of and sympathetic to, returned soldiers and their grievances.
264 The allocation of their monies on local works was thus: Clearing table drains, £30; clearing fencing Alexandra Parade East Devonport, £25; Spreyton Road widening, £102; clearing and fencing cemetery, £100; clearing fencing golf ground, £60; opening up Elizabeth Street, £50; with a £39 balance for the Ward Streets. The Mercury, 20 March 1919, p. 4.
ward were to be employed. Works involved scrubbing, draining, clearing and widening of roads.\textsuperscript{266} The Tasman Council also used returned soldier labour on roadwork schemes.\textsuperscript{267}

Minister J.B. Hayes' circular to the Councils stated that fifty per cent of the returned soldier applicants for employment were seeking work light in nature, so the Councils should pay special attention to that aspect when considering their activities.\textsuperscript{268} The wage rates were an issue of concern to some Local Repatriation Committee members,\textsuperscript{269} but otherwise the Councils took their opportunity to complete overdue maintenance and works and remove idle ex-soldiers from their streets.\textsuperscript{270} The money from the Repatriation Department, however, was really only a temporary measure to ameliorate the immediate employment crisis, and provided authorities with a six month period during which returned soldiers could find more permanent employment in the community – a point which State Repatriation Department Chairman Frank Lindsay Gunn emphasized during Repatriation Conference proceedings later that year.\textsuperscript{271} While these work placements provided a much needed boost to the community and to returned soldiers' self esteem, the value of such short term employment must be questioned when those same veterans faced unemployment.

\textsuperscript{266} 'Employment of Soldiers: New Norfolk's Allotment', \textit{The Mercury}, 26 March 1919, p. 4. The Council's instructions on employment were specific: "that the Department be requested to supply seven men, one of whom must be competent to act as a ganger, and preference to be given, if possible, to men of the district for the wards other than the Upper Derwent ward, and that another party of seven men be sent to the Upper Derwent ward." The insistence on such specific details suggests that New Norfolk Council were extremely keen to divide the money as widely as possible rather than to the most heavily populated areas, unlike, as Alison Alexander as found, the Clarence Council's weighting of roadworks to the urban areas rather than more rural locales. See her, \textit{The Eastern Shore}, p. 128.

\textsuperscript{267} P. MacFie, 'World War I and Tasman Peninsula', \textit{Tasman Peninsula Chronicle: The Tasman Peninsula Historical Society}, No. 1, September 1986, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{268} 'Returned Soldiers' Wages' letter to the editor from A.H. Sibley, Committee member, Kempton, \textit{The Mercury}, 3 April 1919, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{269} See, \textit{Ibid.}, who believed that anything less than 10s. per day payment went "close to a sweating wage"; 'Returned Soldiers' Wages', letter to the editor from A.C. Hirst, Local Repatriation Committee member Bothwell, \textit{The Mercury}, 8 April 1919, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{270} By the end of the first week of April, Campbell Town, Sorell, Evandale, Latrobe, Siraham, Emu Bay, Port Cygnet, Scottsdale, Devonport, Bothwell, New Town, Waratah, New Norfolk, Longford, Portland, Circular Head, Beaconsfield, Hobart, Zeehan and Queenstown Councils had had their works approved by the Works Section of the Repatriation Department. For the division of Council monies, see, 'Returned Soldiers. The Federal Gift: Municipalities Schemes for Work', \textit{The Mercury}, 7 April 1919, p. 4. A few days later, the Tasmanian Repatriation Board had considered proposals from Esperance, Brighton, Glamorgan, Fingal, Westbury, Launceston, King Island, Ross, Oatlands, Kentish, Glenorchy, St. Leonards, Georgetown and Hamilton Councils for works in their jurisdictions. 'Repatriation Money for Municipalities: How the Money is to be Spent', \textit{The Mercury}, 10 April 1919, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{271} See Report of, 'Repatriation. Conference at Hobart: Address by the Minister: Employment for Returned Soldiers: Vocational Training', \textit{The Mercury}, 21 May 1919, p. 7. Gunn also explained that the scheme was to assist the ex-soldiers by keeping them close to their homes.
again at the termination of their contracts. Derwent MLC, Ellis Dean, argued during a 1919 Repatriation Conference that “blind-way temporary employment,” as the municipal grants equated, “led to nothing except the sack.” While grateful to the Commonwealth Government for the money as a temporary response, the real issue of permanent returned soldier employment would gain little through this initiative, except perhaps their retraining, in Dean’s words, “into a proper condition for work.”

In late May 1919, local Tasmanian Repatriation Committees met in Hobart to discuss the entire repatriation process in the State, and more specifically, the role of the local committees in administering repatriation policies. One of the more pressing issues discussed concerned the employment of ex-soldiers, as, by May 1919, the employment question was increasingly moving beyond the capacity of the Repatriation Department to place returned men, and the willingness of employers to absorb them. The Conference discussed resolutions relating to more direct and efficient methods of advertising vacancies, fostering a stronger relationship between the central Tasmanian Employment Section Office and the local committees. It was agreed that lists of “employment desired and available” be circulated to the Committees in an effort to place what was becoming a growing returned soldier unemployment problem. In addition, each Local Committee was urged to form its own employment sub-committee consisting of, if possible, representatives of employers, employees and local industrial unions to assist with work placement. Vocational Training was a topic of discussion, as was the issue of placing returned men in temporary positions – a move that the Conference did not entirely support. The increasing numbers of men returning home and seeking work also dictated this more formalised structure.

272 Pryor argued that “many returned soldiers discovered to their cost that it was one thing to get a job and another to hold it.” Pryor, ‘Back from the Wars: The Ex-Serviceman in History’, The Australian Quarterly, June 1946, p. 49. This could be a consequence of temporary employment in the offing, or of war-related difficulties that prevented the ex-soldier from remaining in one job for any period of time.
274 Ibid.
275 The formation of local committees to assist in administering repatriation policy was directed in correspondence to the State War Councils from Melbourne headquarters through May-June 1918. By mid-June, the Tasmanian Repatriation Board “was in possession of most of the information needed to enable active measures to be taken for the formation of [local committees].” ‘State Repatriation Board: The Formation of Local Committees’, The Mercury, 15 June 1918, p. 8.
In the post-State election period in 1919, the press re-examined the issue of returned soldier employment, reporting that deputations from leading soldier advocacy organisations and returned diggers took place attempting to secure favourable employment conditions for veterans. A June 1919 deputation to the Launceston Council from members of the Launceston RSSILA and the Fathers’ Association had within its party Victoria Cross winner J.E. Newland, as well as members of the Repatriation Department. The deputation attempted to secure employment preference for returned soldiers previously employed in the Tramway Service, but found that the Australian Tramway Union impeded their request. The unions were hostile to returned soldier preference as it was a direct challenge to union preference, but union membership allowed them employment with union dominated industries.

Others supporting returned soldier interests criticised the lack of opportunities granted to ex-soldiers and the excuses made as to why civilian appointments appeared to be preferred. ‘Dad O’ Three’ felt that “Governments, Federal and State, and our municipal bodies, are, in the matter of preference to returned soldiers, the greatest transgressors.” The private sector, he felt, was far kinder to their employment. The perceived lack of action on returned soldier employment by July 1919 was attributed by the soldiers’ father as symptomatic of a detachment from the plight of the men: “Too few of our public are directly affected to be truly sympathetic. [I]t seems to me that it has to come right home to the fireside before you know what true sympathy means.” His formula would deconstruct in the following way: sympathy for returned soldiers would correlate to an increased understanding of their struggles in repatriating, and a consequent increase in job opportunities would result as a method in assisting their difficulty. But how pressing was the employment situation at the time? Were these criticisms justified?

Unemployment figures for Tasmania had shown a general increase from the end of the war. By late June 1919, the problem of employment for returned

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278 ‘Preference to Returned Soldiers’, letter to the editor from ‘Dad O’ Three’, The Mercury, 8 July 1919, p. 2. Peter McFie argues that community ill-feeling over the plight of returned soldiers in their area “caused local residents to try to remove the Council Clerk at a public meeting, so a returned soldier could apply for the position.” MacFie, ‘World War I and Tasman Peninsula’, p. 34.
soldiers in Tasmania was “becoming more serious each week.”281 A table of pending applications for assistance was published in The Mercury illustrating the growing gravity of the situation. The meeting of the State Board of Repatriation in late July noted that officially, to 30 June 1919, of 6,299 returned Tasmanians there were 454 applicants waiting for employment, representing 6.4 per cent of applicants to men returned.282 In addition, a further one thousand men were expected to arrive in Tasmania soon after the meeting, with a further two thousand by the end of 1919, stretching the Repatriation authorities’ capacity to find employment for them. The meeting was called to discuss the possibility of forging closer links between the Repatriation Department and employers for the purpose of employing returned soldiers. Sir Henry Jones, chairman of the internationally recognized IXL company, was absent from the meeting but indicated that he would be willing to take on twenty men for training in his factory.283 While Governments had indicated preference in employment, the problem still faced was convincing private employers to accept returned soldiers, exacerbated by the fact that so many men required light work only.284 The placements of 454 applicants before the arrival of the other contingents was a pressing issue, and the difficulty in placing that number from their books in the aftermath of a worldwide Spanish influenza epidemic leading to depressed local conditions, increased the burden palpably. The RSSILA could be forgiven in protecting its members by its aggressive demands for preference, as it was around this time that Whittle’s preference case arose.

In such a climate, criticism of employment efforts by the Department were understandable, even if there was little the Department could do in addition to their current course of action. MHA George Pullen stated to the new State Parliament in July 1919 that “some of the weaknesses the Repatriation Department was up against lay in the men themselves.”285 He outlined a group of returned men who appeared to have no intention of finding work (echoed by his Federal counterparts), but who were instead content to draw sustenance allowances – “that was not going to make them

282 ‘Employment for Ex-Soldiers: Meeting to Decide the Best Means: Vocational Training’, The Mercury, 23 July 1919, p. 8. According to the Board’s figures, 144 men from Hobart desired work, 140 in Launceston and 170 in the “country” areas.
284 Ibid.
good citizens,” nor contribute in a positive sense to their communities. By contrast, veterans who had returned seeking no assistance at all from the Department demonstrated, according to Pullen, “their pluck, initiative, and ability.” The controversial inference in Pullen’s statement was that men who required assistance somehow did not possess these attributes, and their reliance on Departmental assistance implied a weakness not evident in their hardier colleagues, who “went back to civil life off scratch, because they would not ask for assistance.” Hence, his criticism was focussed more on the soldiers than the Department, as though partially attributing their current employment woes on their own inability to repatriate themselves.

By late 1919, the returned soldier unemployment situation had appreciably worsened. In November, an RSSILA meeting passed a motion that the Government examine all Civil Service positions to give those jobs to returned soldiers. It felt the urgent necessity in finding employment for veterans. Intermittent labour strikes made the task even more difficult, casting men out of work and further pressuring an already tight employment market. The RSSILA’s concern was reinforced by official figures released by the Tasmanian Repatriation Board, which stated that unemployed numbers on their register had reached 945. The discharge of more soldiers had placed extra demands on the Board’s capacity to dispose of cases already on its hands. To add to the strain, a clerk’s position in the Returned Soldiers’ and Closer Settlement Department went to a British migrant rather than a Tasmanian returned soldier. This, the fortunate applicant later wrote, “was a godsend but to the [Public Service] Commissioner it was a political headache. He was assailed in the press and charged with not looking after the interests of returning men.” The Federal funding grants had run out, casting many returned men back onto the Department’s books, particularly causing an increase in rural returned soldier unemployment. Urban placements were easier for the Board to arrange, as Gunn had noted an increase in

286 Ibid.
287 Ibid.
288 Ibid.
289 The Mercury, 20 November 1919, p. 4.
291 N.W. Lamidey, Partial Success: My Years as a Public Servant, Hunters Hill, Sydney, 1970, p. 11. The applicant was Noel Lamidey, and he later rose to become Chief Clerk in the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Department. The irony of this appointment was that the Public Service Commissioner at that time was Sir John Gellibrand, who usually championed returned soldiers’ rights.
offers from employers from fit men, but this in turn produced problems of placing incapacitated men requiring light work. He anticipated that vocational training would cater for the majority. Despite the high figures, Gunn was confident of discharging the Board's obligations, and felt confident at the prospects offered by the hydroelectric developments, expansion of the zinc works, and the approach of seasonal harvest work.293

Statements like those made by Pullen in State Parliament often undermined the Board's work — he represented the employer's side of the preference story:

If an employer has a reliable and trustworthy man in his business whose ability and integrity were beyond doubt, and who was a good economic asset, he could not be expected to replace that man with a returned employee whose ability and integrity might have been materially reduced by such contaminating influences as might have been in operation on him during his absence.294

This pro-employer statement only served to widen the gulf between returned soldier advocacy groups and their demands for fairness, and unfairly impugned the abilities of returned soldiers to take up positions within society again. But it also raised the question of just how the community was expected to embrace returning soldiers. There was significant trepidation on both sides among the joyousness of return as to how they would be accepted into the community after their experiences at war. Pullen had a point: for an employer to risk the stability and cohesion of his business and staff with the potentially disruptive influence of a returned soldier meant the taking of a significant risk, and their reluctance generally to make that decision made not only the process of placing soldiers in employment more difficult, but also deepened soldiers' sense of frustration over broken promises. Preference was not and could not be legislated for in the private sector despite Hughes' desire to, so returned soldiers could only look toward sympathetic and patriotic private employers,295 or those that had made a pledge to keep positions open for them. The Launceston Bank for Savings kept open jobs for its two employees who had enlisted in the war. When

293 Ibid.
295 In Western Australia, A.B. Facey managed to find work in the Tramways after being passed medically fit to work for them. Facey recalled: The Doctor “said that if I wasn’t a returned soldier he would have had to fail me but they could not reject a returned man on war injuries. He said, ‘As long as a returned man thinks he can do the job we must give him a chance.’ ” See, Facey, A Fortunate Life, p. 289.
the Bank opened new branches on the North-West coast in Burnie, Ulverstone, and Devonport, "Three young local men, ex-servicemen with banking experience, were quickly recruited as branch managers..." \(^{296}\) The Bank demonstrated a tendency to employ returned soldiers wherever possible, provided that they possessed the requisite skills to fulfil the position.

**The New Decade**

James Nangle's difficulty in placing vocational trainees due to a general diminishing interest in the affairs of returned soldiers was also evident when Federal Parliament revisited the *Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Bill* in 1920, further amending eligibility for employment and business opportunities. From the dramatically patriotic pronouncements of the war years, the mood shifted to a less generous outlook.\(^{297}\) Herbert Pratten, a National, argued that the soldiers had had enough money spent on their repatriation without any further grants for co-operative business loans or other opportunities: "I am not going to stand here and assist in voting away any further money in connexion with repatriation, war gratuities, or anything of that nature, because we have reached our limit."\(^{298}\) The largely uniform attitude toward soldiers during wartime was fading as memories of the war had passed and the threat had been dealt with. Fiscal economy was becoming the call.\(^{299}\) The desire to assist the returned soldier in every way possible now had to be tempered by

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\(^{297}\) This was the topic of a newspaper letter that examined the attitudes to returned and demobilised soldier employment as early as February 1919, noting: "There is a common belief amongst soldiers, and I think it is pretty right too, that the soldier is thought to be a jolly good fellow, etc., when he first enlists, but after he is no longer required, the enthusiasm drops to zero, and he is left to shift for himself as best he can, and he is looked down on, if not forgotten entirely." The important note is that this type of treatment is perceived so early. The fact that the war had finished meant that obligations and promises to returned soldier repatriation – in this case employment – had ceased to be a major factor since the threat had passed, and this respondent was acutely aware of the change of heart in the community. 'Returned Soldiers and Employment', letter to the editor from 'One Who Appreciates', *The Mercury*, 27 February 1919, p. 2.

\(^{298}\) CPD, Vol. XCII, p. 2053.

\(^{299}\) Senator and former Tasmanian Premier John Earle called for financial accountability in a letter to *The Mercury* in March 1919. On discussing the merits of a Tasmanian RSSILA motion to extend vocational training opportunities to all returned men, Earle felt that the financial cost would be too great a burden for the Commonwealth to bear – quite apart from the impact a large body of men moving into trades would have on industry. The financial subsidies for these men as apprentices would amount to a prohibitively high cost according to Earle, but his concerns were borne more out of practicalities than 'penny-pinching'. Regardless, the open promises to returned soldiers were no longer in currency. 'Training Soldiers: Senator Earle's Views', letter to the editor from J. Earle, *The Mercury*, 10 March 1919, p. 8.
the need to be economically responsible. The House of Representatives’ early-1920 offer of £1 to £1 for returned soldier business co-operatives was created with the best intentions for the soldiers in mind (a constant refrain), but the dictates of responsible government required a firm grasp of, and accountability with, the public purse. Since the end of the war, and as returned soldiers arrived home in ever larger numbers, attitudes to funding for returned soldiers’ programs had perceptibly shifted.300

While promises and goodwill continued to issue from both chambers of Federal Parliament, as realisations of the enormous financial cost dawned on members (for employment and vocational programs, pensions, loans, War Service Housing, Health Care and Soldier Land Settlement), fiscal concerns increasingly became more important and predominant in debates in both houses. This may have been a response to criticisms of escalating costs and inadequately repatriated soldiers. Up to late March in 1920, Millen stated, £10,120,408301 had been spent on repatriation. This was substantial, and the cost was growing daily with the War Service Housing scheme budgets in crisis, and the continual underwriting of the soldier land settlement scheme. Disability pensions and sustenance allowances were other functions administered by a Government increasingly aware of the large sums being committed for the repatriation of Australia’s returned servicemen. Criticisms of repatriation policy also came from returned soldiers, who felt that the Department was not doing enough to assist them in re-establishing themselves in civilian life. While there may have been a certain element of the returned soldier population who had little intention of finding work for themselves, and were prepared to subsist off a department sustenance allowance (this group of people received a lot of attention during debates in Federal Parliament), criticism also came from returned soldiers who had a different sense of their place in the world and would no longer settle for the same life they left when they donned the khaki. As the member for East Sydney, Mr John West noted in April 1920, “They [returned soldiers] are all strong minded men, who have seen something at the other side of the world, and they have now a larger conception of

300 Loftus Hills argues that this was one of the problems the RSSILA faced in the decade 1920-1929 in their role as the premier returned soldiers’ body. He noted that there was a tendency for the public to escape or repudiate their obligation toward repatriation. See, L. Hills and A. Dene, The Returned Soldiers & Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia: Its Origin, History, Achievements and Ideals, Parts I & II, Melbourne, 1938, p. 40. See also, G.L. Kristianson, The Politics of Patriotism, Canberra, 1966, p. 25.

301 Senator Millen on the costs of repatriation up to 24 March 1920. This figure included amounts advanced for ‘land purposes’ and for ‘forestry enterprises.’ CPD, Vol. XCI, p. 658.
their position in the community.”

Providing employment opportunities for these men was a difficult task that was not always, nor could ever hope to be, successful.

Table 4.1: Figures for Registered Unemployed, Tasmania 1919-1925.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year ending:</th>
<th>Registered Unemployed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 June 1919</td>
<td>857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June 1921</td>
<td>897</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 June 1922</td>
<td>1580</td>
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<td>30 June 1923</td>
<td>1578</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 June 1924</td>
<td>1647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June 1925</td>
<td>3125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: No figures were provided for 1920.


The 1921 Census revealed that of a total population of 213,780 people, some 4,063 Tasmanians were out of work, while union reports indicated 16.7 per cent unemployment. Lloyd Robson described 1921 as marking “the beginning of another major period of depression for the island state.” Apple prices dropped, mining industries declined, and the tourist industry slowed, while Tasmanians left to look for better prospects interstate. The collapse of Australian exports in line with the worldwide collapse of commodity markets in 1921 had severe ramifications for Tasmania. E.A. Beever argues that, while this decline caused only a temporary setback on the mainland due to the “rapid manufacturing development and heavy public-

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302 Mr West to the House of Representatives during the Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Bill, CPD, Vol. XCI, p. 1298.
303 Table: ‘Grade of Employment’, Part II, Statistics of Tasmania, 1921-22, p. 11. Different figures are provided in, ‘Case for Tasmania: Presented to Sir Nicholas Lockyer by the Hon. A.G. Ogilvie, and Hon. Tasman Shields’, JPPP, Vol. XCIII, 1925-26, Paper No. 52, where the authors note that the statistics for the registered unemployed in Tasmania for 1921 were 897. See, p. 12.
304 See, Official Year Book of the Commonwealth, No. 15, 1922, p. 872. These figures are from union returns, and useful as a general guide to unemployment only.
305 Robson, A History of Tasmania. Volume II. Colony and State from 1856 to the 1950’s, p. 390. See also, Beever, Launceston Bank for Savings, p. 135.
306 Robson, A History of Tasmania. Volume II. Colony and State from 1856 to the 1950’s, pp. 390-391. As noted earlier, the celebrated VC winner John Whittle was among them.
works expenditure”, in Tasmania, the “lack of profitable outlets for farm produce” was crippling.\(^{307}\) As Tasmania was predominantly an agriculturally dependant State in the 1920s, the consistently low prices for Tasmanian produce realised in interstate and British markets left such growers, particularly apple-growers, sinking into an “impoverished, semi-subsistence existence.”\(^{308}\) The effects for soldier settlers engaged in the fruit industry were predictably catastrophic. The mining industry had declined as fields became exhausted and no new ones were discovered. This led to a drop in employment in the industry, from 7,000 men at the start of the century, to only 2,500 by the early 1920s.\(^{309}\)

Writing in 1946, L.J. Pryor argued that “by 1921 nearly all returned soldiers were housed and in remunerative employment.”\(^{310}\) Such a claim had less substance to Tasmania’s particular case as the economic situation declined. Leading editorials and articles in *The Mercury* in September 1921 argued a crisis in unemployment in Tasmania.\(^{311}\) The week before *The Mercury*’s editorial, State Secretary of the RSL Duncan McRae announced that after negotiations between the League and the Repatriation Department, the Federal Government were contributing a sum of money to open a labour bureau. This bureau was to supplant efforts by the Department by making a “special effort” to alleviate returned soldier unemployment.\(^{312}\) Scouts in the north and south of the State were to assist the two major centres in Hobart and Launceston, and registers were also established to place unemployed diggers with

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\(^{308}\) Ibid. John Reynolds similarly argues that, “The important apple and fruit exporting industry almost ceased to contribute to the economy...” Combined with the decline in the mining industry, the post-war years were not prosperous times for Tasmanians: “The island’s economy, never very securely based, was weakened by wartime conditions, which had withdrawn capital in the form of labour and money and had returned no economic benefits in the form of assistance from the wealthier, mainland states.” See, J. Reynolds, *Launceston*, Hobart, 1969, p. 156.


\(^{310}\) Pryor, ‘Back from the Wars: The Ex-Serviceman in History’, p. 49.

\(^{311}\) For instance, see, ‘Increasing Unemployment’, *The Mercury*, 7 September 1921, p. 4. Editorials on unemployment were constant during this period, indicating the seriousness of the issue to the Tasmanian community.

\(^{312}\) ‘Unemployment of Returned Soldiers: R.S.L. to Open Labour Agency’, *The Mercury*, 1 September 1921, p. 2. The employment issue was discussed at a RSL meeting at the end of August explaining the decision made by the Federal Executive. The State Executive was then in the process of advertising for scouts to assist with this venture. See, *The Mercury*, 3 September 1921, p. 11. The League advertised in their December *Tassie Digger* for people to phone or write “If you can give a returned out-of-work Digger a job of work, even for one day only...” The League’s Employment Officer in Hobart was John Whittle, VC, while in Launceston it was a Mr Hammersley. See, *The Tassie Digger*, December 1921, p. 21. In the same issue, the League wished to gratefully acknowledge the assistance given by the Zinc Co., Cadbury’s and the Department of Public Works in particular, who demonstrated a willingness to absorb returned soldier labour. See, ‘Unemployment’, *The Tassie Digger*, December 1921, p. 36.
employers. With this employment drive, a subtle change can be detected from previous RSL-backed returned soldier employment programmes. Interestingly, the League was explicit in its affirmation that in order to secure the confidence and cooperation of employers, they had to provide “reliable labour.” This slight shift in emphasis should be placed within the context of broader civilian unemployment and a realisation that assertive demands for preferential treatment (outside of enshrined government preference) could be damaging to their cause. The League insisted that it would not provide repeated assistance to “those men who will not act fairly to employers,” indicating that a secure relationship with business was the only way to ensure success. The RSSILA’s work was swift in this regard. Within two months, the Department of Repatriation, the Public Service Commissioner and the Postmaster-General were negotiating a scheme to appoint a limited number of repatriation trainees as mechanics. McRae was involved in the process. Between September 1921 and February 1928, nationally the League’s employment bureau placed 66,699 returned servicemen into employment, in a time when the Repatriation Department could not or would not continue to do so. In Tasmania, a significant 4,128 positions were found, which equates to approximately forty-two per cent of all soldiers that returned to the State after the war. The average cost involved in placing Tasmanian veterans was the highest in the country at 10s. 6d each, against a 6s. 2d. national average. As the economic condition in Tasmania deteriorated and employment became harder to come by for everyone, ‘A Married Hard-Up Dig’ complained that his four years at the war now counted for nothing when he desired work. Back in civilian life,

314 ibid.
316 See, Appendix IV, ‘Statement of Results of League’s Employment Activities. Positions Found from 1st September, 1921, to 28th February, 1927’, Hills and Dene, The Returned Soldiers & Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia, p. xi. For a brief discussion as to the reasons behind the creation of a League-based employment bureau, see, p. 51.
317 This figure was arrived at by calculating the approximate number of soldiers returning to the State - approximately 9,700 (per A.G. Butler’s figures, Table 14, The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918, Volume III, Canberra, 1943, p. 884.), with Hills’ total number of Tasmanian placements, Appendix IV, Hills and Dene, The Returned Soldiers & Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia, p. xi. These figures would almost certainly include repeat cases where the same man was assisted on several occasions.
he claimed, “I have suffered more and have been put to greater straits than I ever was during my service abroad.”319 Despite holding temporary positions in the State and Commonwealth services, he was forced to make way for a non-returned man:

But what do they care about the poor old dig. now; all the fighting is over, and he kept many of them safe in their comfortable home for four years while he gave up position and home to go and help save his King and country. [...] We hear of a Repatriation Department certainly; let a decent digger go and ask them for a little assistance, and see what happens. I am speaking from experience.320

The palpable bitterness is born out of disgust and discontent at the lack of special treatment he believed a returned man deserved—“all men are not alike” he declared, and his status as a married ex-serviceman was clearly expected to carry some weight when employment was at stake.321 Just as confusion reigned over the preference issue, so the Tasmanian (and larger Australian) community had to negotiate the issue as to how long assistance should be granted. What juncture could reasonably be deemed as being an adequate period of assistance? At what stage had Repatriation authorities and the broader community discharged their obligations to repatriating returned soldiers? Moreover, in a tight employment market nearly three years since the end of the war, should the demands of returned soldiers still carry pre-eminence?

A respondent to the ‘Dig’s’ letter answered that question. ‘C.D.’, while sympathetic to the ex-soldier in question felt that holding temporary positions, even only for a short period, indicated “he has had a fighting chance to make good.”322 The letter’s respectful tone suggested that the time for relying on status and public goodwill had largely passed:

Surely our friend does not think it is the duty of the State to continue to find jobs for returned men until they die, and that they on their part are not expected to take advantage of the opportunities granted to them to make good! [T]here must be a limit to the time when a man has a right to expect he should always have first call on a billet supposing him to be mentally and physically fit.323

320 Ibid.
321 Ibid.
323 Ibid.
In addition, in a time of general adversity, this particular correspondent felt it was time to move beyond the exclusive cries for special assistance as a digger, as by 1921, ex-servicemen enjoyed preference arrangements, vocational training programmes, the soldier land settlement scheme (which had cost taxpayers tens of thousands of pounds and whose poor progress was being investigated by a Select Committee), sustenance and pension allowances, and a very vocal advocacy organisation. Continued demands for assistance on the basis of war service – giving up “position and home to help serve King and country” claimed the letter, were “overdone.”

‘C.D.’ further illustrated this point with a simple story of a returned soldier friend who had returned with a “badly damaged heart”, and, unable to get light work, was employed as a bricklayer’s labourer. “The work may again damage his heart,” the letter continued, “but he still keeps going and never complains. I honor that man.” The message was clear. If this sentiment is taken as representative of even a portion of the Tasmanian community in late 1921, then the special privileges extended to returned soldiers in a climate of general unemployment no longer carried with them unquestioning compliance.

Naturally, ‘C.D.’ was attacked by indignant returned soldiers – including Duncan McRae – but in response, he stood firm stating that in a general period of economic depression, and in such proximity to the war, everyone was now facing the same challenges: “To the returned soldier who has just got going nicely it is particularly disheartening, and as an individual he is likely to view his case as an exception, when there are hundreds of civilians in the same plight.”

324 Ibid.
325 Ibid. Predictably, replies were published that attacked C.D.’s letter and apparently unsympathetic approach. The question was asked: was a ‘fighting chance’ enough? See, ‘Hard-Up Diggers’, letter to the editor from J. Campbell, The Mercury, 24 September 1921, p. 9.

326 Returned soldiers also played on the sentiment from the public, and these individuals received the wrath of the Tasmanian RSSILA in their December 1921 issue of The Tassie Digger: “complaints are frequently voiced by the public that men wearing returned soldiers’ badges were hawking and begging from house to house, and thereby playing upon the sentiment of the public towards the Digger. The League made representations to the [Defence] department in this connection, with the result that the Commandants of all districts were ordered to prosecute under the Defence Act any person so caught.” See, ‘Respect Your Badge!’, The Tassie Digger, December 1921, p. 5. The League were cognisant of the negative impact that returned men playing on public sentiment could have on the their standing in society, and claims for greater assistance.

327 For more correspondence on this matter, see, The Mercury, 19 September 1921, p. 6; 21 September 1921, p. 8; 24 September 1921, p. 11; 26 September 1921, p. 2; 1 October 1921, p. 14.

328 McRae’s response was particularly vitriolic and indignant, as he was replying on behalf of the RSSILA. He claimed that C.D. “is apparently unwilling to concede him [the returned soldier] anything of material value.” McRae even questioned C.D.’s competence to express an opinion. See, ‘Unemployed Soldiers’, letter to the editor from D. McRae, The Mercury, 24 September 1921, p. 11.

The employment situation worsened to the extent that in mid-1922, a special soup kitchen was established in Launceston to feed returned soldiers and their families. The names of approximately forty families needing help were on the list, and a few single men also received assistance. The soup kitchen was required owing to "great distress among returned soldiers' families owing to unemployment", and that the ladies administering the service had found some families "on the border of starvation." The Examiner was moved to comment on the unfortunate requirement for such a service, arguing that the Red Cross should assist the work. "It is unthinkable", their editorial proclaimed, "that returned men and their families shall go unrelieved in their dire distress while thousands of pounds of war funds remain in the bank." Chronic unemployment had led to the desperate situation that found these ex-soldiers and their families in such distress, and not even preference policies or the prestige of military service could ease their plight.

The policy of preference for returned soldiers in the Public Service continued in Tasmania during the 1920s, restricting the ability of non-soldiers to obtain government work. The Returned Soldiers' Employment Board continued to monitor appointments in accordance with the 1918 legislation, effectively freezing out a large proportion of people who required work to survive. Preference also came in to play for returned soldiers, Lloyd Robson argues, with regard to vacancies for promotion, "so that Tasmanians who had returned from the war had the benefit of repeated preference throughout their career in the public service of the state." Writing in 1942, Robert Parker assessed the impact of veteran preference in employment on the Commonwealth Public Service, and found that it created a severe interruption in the

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330 The soup kitchen was run by the ladies' committee of the Launceston sub-branch of the Returned Soldiers' Relief Fund, and operated out of the rear of the Repatriation Building in Cameron Street. See, 'Returned Soldiers' Soup Kitchen. Relief of Acute Distress', The Examiner, 22 July 1922, p. 13.

331 Ibid.

332 'Soldiers in Distress', editorial, The Examiner, 22 July 1922, p. 12. Interestingly, The Examiner's editorial noted that they had it "authoritatively that that only really deserving cases are relieved." This comment hints at suspicion that returned soldiers or the poor were somehow requesting assistance when their plights were not 'deserving enough.' It is also difficult to quantify what constituted a "really deserving case."

333 Robson, A History of Tasmania. Volume II: Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980's, p. 463. Caiden argues that new returned soldier recruits complained at embargos on promotions for the sake of their comrades who had been in the Service before enlistment, and complaints from those that enlisted that they had missed out on opportunities for promotion to those who stayed. The Government therefore faced criticisms on several fronts for Public Service reform, emanating out of their desire to offer preference to returned servicemen. See, Caiden, Career Service, p. 126. Verbatim RSSILA reports of a deputation to Hughes noted the Prime Minister's offer to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the grievances of returned soldiers in the Public Service, "especially the complaint that non-returned soldiers were being promoted over them." p. 152.
recruitment of qualified juniors.\textsuperscript{334} This had the effect of removing from the Commonwealth Public Service a large proportion of talented and qualified junior recruits who would otherwise have filled those positions,\textsuperscript{335} and lowered the general quality of the Clerical and General Divisions because of the wider age qualifications and lower standards of examinations held to facilitate the preference policy.\textsuperscript{336} The policy of preference was continued in the Hobart City Council too, despite the highly public stoush over the Whittle park ranger appointment in 1919. Relations between the RSSILA and the Council were on good terms throughout the 1920s, and preferment continued to be applied, although the onset of the Depression made this task more difficult.\textsuperscript{337} In late 1925, E.H. McDevitt, Employment Officer at the RSSILA contacted the Tasmanian Rifle Range Association complaining that returned soldiers did not have preference in being employed as markers. The request was passed to Anglesea Barracks, who instructed the Rifle Range to give preference “firstly to unemployed returned soldiers, then returned soldiers in employment and lastly any other unemployed.”\textsuperscript{338} As employment in Tasmania was so difficult to find in the 1920s, any position that could be filled by returned soldiers was pressed as such by the RSSILA.

In 1923, the celebrated Tasmanian commander Sir John Gellibrand was concerned that returned soldiers in business did not foster a sense of community amongst themselves by granting preferment and business reciprocity. Maintaining a keen interest in returned soldier issues, Gellibrand had returned to Tasmania after an unsuccessful stint as Victoria’s Police Commissioner and lamented the lack of mutual assistance he saw amongst the State’s returned soldier community.

\textsuperscript{334} Parker, \textit{Public Service Recruitment in Australia}, p. 78. The liberal conditions created by returned soldier preference saw them obtain absolute preference in permanent and temporary employment, and physical disability from war service was not necessarily a bar to their permanent employment. In addition, special provisions were made “for soldiers to be retained in temporary employment for indefinite periods.” pp. 78, 79.

\textsuperscript{335} Parker argued that claims of preference for returned soldiers in the Commonwealth Public Service should only have been granted where they shared “equal qualifications with other applicants.” Beyond this”, he claimed, “it is simply a misdirected form of social policy from the community point of view.” He added that there were other ways of alleviating the repatriation problem than “flooding the Public Service with them.” See \textit{Ibid.}, p. 210.

\textsuperscript{336} Caiden, \textit{Career Service}, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{337} Alexander & Petrow, \textit{Hobart 1846-2000: A History of Hobart City Council}, Hobart, forthcoming publication, ‘Elections’ chapter, p. 15. The Council took the position, even in 1932, that all things being equal, preference was still to be exercised, although by the late 1930s the policy became less of an issue. Pryor noted that periodic unemployment, “especially during the depression, was the experience of many returned men...” See, Pryor, ‘Back from the Wars: The Ex-Serviceman in History’, p. 49.

endeavoured, through regular luncheons at Hobart locations, to engender the same sense of camaraderie in the AIF that he had witnessed during the war. He hoped to foster this solidarity amongst the returned soldier business community, and extend that sense to assisting other independent ex-servicemen in need. In a speech to the association, now called the Remembrance Club, Gellibrand desired to promote the general well-being and welfare of fellow returned soldiers, and, as Lyons argues "to encourage returned soldiers who were businessmen and professional men to deal primarily with returned men - particularly those who were members of the Remembrance Club." In such ways, the work of the Remembrance Club would benefit the general employment and business of returned soldiers in the State. The half-yearly business directories published by the Club that advertised the businesses of returned soldiers further augmented this. By 1925, more clearly defined objectives were stated, among them to support and reinforce the activities of the RSSILA in matters pertaining to returned soldiers. The activities of Gellibrand's Remembrance Club inspired some of his former colleagues to create a similar association in Melbourne from which the Legacy Club emerged. Interestingly, while Legacy and its work took off around Australia, the original Hobart Remembrance Club maintained its original focus. The Launceston Remembrance Club was established in 1927 after the Hobart model, and, after undertaking more social and welfare work for its local community, it became a Legacy Club late in 1930. The Hobart Remembrance Club resisted Legacy membership until 1940.

The preference policy had proved of immense value to returned soldiers by the time of the Depression, as "permanent employment became a precious thing." Robson reports that employment preference for returned men had, by 1936, created an obstruction within the clerical division, as they had been able to monopolise promotion opportunities as well under the legislation. Junior workers could find little way in to the State Public Service since 1918, and the conglomeration of older WWI

340 Ibid.
341 Ibid.
342 This Melbourne Club was begun by several of Gellibrand's protégés, and central to the Club's beginning in Melbourne was Stan Savige. Ibid., p. 6.
343 Ibid., p. 96. Lyons argues that Hobart Remembrance Club's resistance to Legacy membership was borne out of a belief that they could do a better job of Legacy-type activities if they remained independent, but also as a result of the influence of Gellibrand and other leading members who saw the main focus in assisting fellow returned soldiers.
veterans could not be cleared until 1936. Legacy continued to support the RSSILA’s push on the preference issue, and in 1924 Gellibrand announced to the Melbourne association that the Remembrance Club was created out of concern “over the failure of returned servicemen to give preference to each other.” The Legacy Club later advocated taking care of those returned soldiers who had not repatriated themselves – the trouble employment cases that the Repatriation Department could not help. While it is known that Hobart and Clarence Councils continued in their preference policies, it is difficult to trace the stories of returned soldiers’ efforts at finding employment as the 1920s wore on, as they slipped into society and assumed civilian roles. It is only when they were identified as ex-servicemen that their experiences can be traced into the decade. Certainly, the RSSILA and Legacy continued to provide employment support for returned soldiers into the 1920s, as part of their role in assisting ex-soldiers in the community.

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345 Ibid., p. 463.
346 Lyons, Legacy, p. 10.
347 Ibid., pp. 10, 13.
348 Geoffrey Bolton’s work on Depression-era Western Australia highlighted the value of the RSL to assist unemployed ex-servicemen in that State. See, G. Bolton, A Fine Country to Starve In, Western Australia, 1994, pp. 100-101.
Table 4.2: Unemployment Fluctuations, Tasmania and Commonwealth, 1919-1929.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reporting Unions</th>
<th>Reporting Members</th>
<th>Unemployed Number</th>
<th>Unemployed Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919: Tasmania</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6,173</td>
<td>220</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>317,413</td>
<td>16,637</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920: Tasmania</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>8,800</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>351,013</td>
<td>27,463</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921: Tasmania</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7,661</td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>16.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>370,491</td>
<td>35,250</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922: Tasmania</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7,977</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>8.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>380,945</td>
<td>35,219</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923: Tasmania</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7,559</td>
<td>287</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>376,557</td>
<td>26,672</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1924: Tasmania</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8,712</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>397,613</td>
<td>35,507</td>
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<td>1925: Tasmania</td>
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<td>7,223</td>
<td>567</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>391,380</td>
<td>34,620</td>
<td>8.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1926: Tasmania</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5,935</td>
<td>826</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>415,397</td>
<td>29,326</td>
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<tr>
<td>1927: Tasmania</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6,702</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>11.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>445,985</td>
<td>31,032</td>
<td>7.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1928: Tasmania</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7,925</td>
<td>848</td>
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<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>423,422</td>
<td>45,669</td>
<td>10.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1929: Tasmania</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9,105</td>
<td>1,244</td>
<td>13.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>424,093</td>
<td>47,359</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* These figures are union returns showing general unemployment among their members. As such, they are only representative of general unemployment fluctuations and trends.
The difficulty in obtaining consistent or reliable figures for unemployment is demonstrated by statistics published in Ogilvie and Shields' 'Case for Tasmania' [see Table 4.1]. When compared to the figures provided in the Commonwealth Year Books based on Union unemployment membership, the numbers vary dramatically. Neither source is likely to be authoritative, posing great problems in defining the precise or true statement of Tasmania's unemployment rate for any given year. Notwithstanding these inconsistencies, the general employment trends in Tasmania in comparison to the Commonwealth average [Table 4.2] show some interesting points. The Mercury's 1921 claim of an unemployment crisis appears to be reflected here, where unemployment spiked at 16.7 per cent. From 1926, Tasmania's unemployment rate was consistently higher than ten percent, indicating the severity of the financial strains on the State.

By 1926, the Tasmanian economic and industrial situation had deteriorated to such an extent that the Government compiled their 'Case for Tasmania', written by Albert Ogilvie and Tasman Shields and presented to Special Representative of the Commonwealth Government, Sir Nicholas Lockyer. The Report outlined some disturbing economic and industrial trends. Tasmania's unique position as an island State had placed it on an unequal footing in comparison with other States. A special grant, paid since 1913 had not contributed enough funding to meet its liabilities to the Commonwealth. The effect of the Navigation Act had brought a reduction in shipping, with available freightage rising in cost. A reliance on shipping made Tasmania particularly susceptible to any increase in charges or reduction in services in both interstate and overseas shipping. Reductions in shipping also brought less opportunity to ship valuable exports like fruit (particularly affecting growers in the Tamar and Huon regions, including soldier settlers), as well as reducing the influx of tourists that contributed to the State's economy. The Lyons' Government also claimed abnormally high taxation on the State by the Commonwealth. This contributed to a decline in local industries that affected investment and employment.
opportunities. The unfortunate consequence was a population exodus of approximately 38,000 people since Federation.\textsuperscript{353} Tasmania’s population had also registered steady losses through migration in 1920 and 1922-24, and a net decrease in 1924.\textsuperscript{354} The outcome was that Tasmanian industry had been at a disadvantage in comparison to its interstate counterparts, and had fallen into a prolonged depression under a succession of Nationalist governments during and after the war. Returned soldiers, like others, had to fight for work in this contracted labour market.

The migration of Tasmanians interstate was, Ogilvie and Shields contended, “due to a number of causes, the chief being high taxation, low exemptions, lack of employment in Tasmania, and, further, improved industrial conditions and better educational facilities offered in the other States.”\textsuperscript{355} Unemployment levels had risen dramatically in 1922, and again in 1925, leaving many thousands out of work. In addition, repayments on loan moneys to the Commonwealth for soldier settlement were crippling a State that claimed its wealth and financial resources as being “very far below the Australian level, and considerably below those of any other State.”\textsuperscript{356} Sir Nicholas Lockyer, the Commonwealth Representative investigating Tasmania’s economic position, responded to the ‘Case’ made by Ogilvie and Shields on behalf of the Tasmanian Government. He concurred that the \textit{Navigation Act} had been a factor in “retarding the progress of the island”,\textsuperscript{357} and that the tariff had not only been of “little assistance in promoting secondary industries, but has appreciably increased the cost of local enterprise for the purpose of industrial development.”\textsuperscript{358} Thus, the depression in industry experienced in Tasmania in the 1920s led to a reduction of suitable employment opportunities, and in response, an “appreciable number” of the male population fled interstate for better opportunities.\textsuperscript{359} This drift was only likely to

\textsuperscript{353} See also, ‘Land Settlement – Deterioration and an Uncertain Future’ chapter.


\textsuperscript{356} Ibid., p. 16.


\textsuperscript{358} Ibid., p. 8.

\textsuperscript{359} Ibid. Robson noted the severity of the prevailing employment conditions, citing examples of public appeals for food and clothing, relief road-works, Hobart and Launceston Councils providing relief work, and the comments of one R. Jackson, who, in 1925 pointed out the retrenchment of 150 men from Maria Island (on the State’s east coast). “He concluded”, Robson notes, “that the only alternative to unemployment for young Tasmanians was emigration or imprisonment for vagrancy.” See, Robson, \textit{A History of Tasmania. Volume II. Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980's}, p. 412.
become more serious, Lockyer contended, “until means are found to provide for
greater abilities for profitable employment.”\textsuperscript{360} The impact this had on the State’s
returned soldiers was obvious – with a dearth of skilled and greater opportunities in
general, many left Tasmania in search of better prospects interstate.\textsuperscript{361}

During the late 1920s, the employment of returned soldiers in Tasmania
remained distinct from normal civilian employment wherever the Repatriation
Department assumed any sort of influence. When the repair and painting of buildings
on soldier land settlement holdings was carried out late in the decade, unemployed
returned soldiers alone were employed in fifteen contracts under the supervision of
the Public Works Department at a cost of £1066 0s. 3d. The President of the Closer
Settlement Board, W.N. Hurst declared that: “Results have been most satisfactory,
and amply justify the expenditure that has been incurred.”\textsuperscript{362} The specific restriction
to unemployed returned soldier labour indicates that some veterans in Tasmania faced
continued difficulties in locating suitable permanent employment many years after
their war service, and that wherever possible, their unemployment status was
expedited by preferential engagement of their labour.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Providing employment for soldiers’ return was not only the most immediate,
but also one of the greatest and most challenging processes administrators could
undertake. Not only, as Martin argues, did Tasmania face major difficulties
repatriating its men due to a small industrial base,\textsuperscript{363} but their variety of experiences
and altered outlook meant that many were not content to be merely returned to a
position comparative to their enlistment. The philosophical issues arising from this
had to be negotiated by the State Boards and Local Committees that administered

\textsuperscript{360} ‘Financial Position of Tasmania: Report of Sir Nicholas Lockyer, Special Representative of the
\textsuperscript{361} See, for instance, case NAA: P107/1 M 1684, and, NAA: P107/4 M,C 7748, who both moved to
Victoria. See also the case, NAA: P107/3 M,R 9091, who was involved in the building of Cadbury’s at
Claremont and when he could not find work in Tasmania, moved to Victoria. These cases were
selected from the small number of sample files I examined. A thorough investigation of the Tasmanian
Repatriation files would undoubtedly uncover many more similar cases of Tasmanian returned soldiers
leaving the State to look for better opportunities interstate.

\textsuperscript{362} Department of Lands, Surveys, and Closer Settlement: Report for 1927-28, \textit{JPPP}, Vol. XCIX, 1928,
paper No. 30, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{363} Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 115.
repatriation policy and interacted with soldiers on a personal level. Within this context, an assertive (and occasionally aggressive) RSSILA asserted the rights of its members to claim those privileges that had been promised. The process was occasionally strained, particularly over the issue of employment preference and exclusivity it engendered, but mostly, the Tasmanian public acknowledged the service rendered by the men, and did not begrudge the necessity of accommodating their wishes, except when unemployment brought financial disadvantage to all.

The crucial nature of providing for the employment of returned soldiers meant that the issue was always going to feature prominently in the work of repatriation authorities. Over 9,700 Tasmanians returned after the war, and their absorption into the community required an organised administration to facilitate that end. The creation of the Repatriation Department saw a far more focussed mechanism to deal with applications for employment and place returned men than the State War Council could ever have achieved, and, as the numbers of returning Tasmanians increased, the burden grew substantially, causing difficulties to place men in rural areas particularly. The relationships forged between the Department, the State, labour organisations and entrepreneurs substantially aided the re-employment of veterans, and they once again contributed to the industrial output of the State. The creation and growth of the RSSILA undoubtedly played an important role in re-establishing men into employment – both in terms of their persistent calls for preference, the relationships they forged with local employers, and the creation of their own employment bureaus to assist in the process. Writing in 1936, Ernest Scott admitted that “much unemployment of veterans [had] indeed occurred – consequent partly upon war strain and injury, but mainly upon economic and industrial stresses.”

This was especially the case in Tasmania. These stresses had been alleviated “by the activity of the [Returned Soldiers’] league, legacy clubs, and other agencies for finding employment for returned men.” It was by organisation, consistency, and unity in co-ordinating a cogent response to the problem of unemployment that the best results were achieved.

The centrality of satisfactory employment to the successful repatriation of returned soldiers should not be understated, as their employment status often dictated who they were, as well as their sense of self and self esteem – the inability to find long term employment eroded self confidence and engendered bitterness among men.

365 Ibid., p. 855.
who had enlisted with promises of sympathetic treatment on their return. As Stephen Garton has argued, like concerns over health, employment policies and a veteran’s ability to find work were central to the restoration of their masculine roles as breadwinners independent of welfare and assistance. He argues that “Work or, more particularly, adequate employment was the key to repatriation. Work reduced the drain of dependency on the nation’s resources...” The role of the RSSILA as a supportive network aided in easing their concerns and fought for veterans’ rights in making the transition. They also helped ensure that returned soldier employment was a prominent issue in the community. Their contribution to alleviating Tasmania’s veteran unemployment rate was crucial in an economy that did not enjoy the relative prosperity of mainland Australian states.

Employment as part of the process of soldiers’ return was debated in parliaments, in the press, in conferences, and on the street, and was something that affected the entire Tasmanian community in some form or another. Returned soldiers became professionals, small businessmen, labourers, miners, farmers, administrators and a myriad of other occupations. Their contribution to the State was arguably more important in their peacetime employment than their war service, as they returned enriched or damaged with the experiences and outlook that their overseas participation provided. If we accept the premise that the finding of adequate employment was the central component of repatriation policy – as it restored not only concerns over gender in a feminised domestic community space, removed the stigma of sustenance and pensions, as well as contributed in a very real sense to the strength of the nation – those unable to obtain such employment experienced a difficult journey. Tasmania’s sustained economic and industrial depression throughout the

367 Dr George Parker, for instance, was a General Practitioner and returned soldier who built a successful practice in Bellerive, on Hobart’s Eastern Shore. See, Alexander, The Eastern Shore, p. 210. Dr Harry Narm Butler was a returned soldier who was the Chief Medical Officer of the Repatriation Department in Tasmania. Other soldiers went into politics.
368 Two returned soldiers, Taylor and Housten, were grocers in Bellerive. Alison Alexander tells us that, “They were returned soldiers who opened a shop together, where they sold everything, and deliveries came through a hole in the pavement and chute to the basement... Taylor and Housten delivered as far as Montagu Bay and built up a good trade. They were famous for their cheese, which came in huge rounds and was cut with a wire.” Ibid., p. 217.
369 A large number of returned soldiers turned to mining, but a few could not cope with the physical requirements of the job owing to their war injuries.
370 See Land Settlement material, Chapters Five and Six.
371 The majority of the employees in the Repatriation Department were returned soldiers.
course of the 1920s added significantly to the problem of negotiating this path, making their long road home, longer still.
Chapter Five

Soldier Land Settlement in Tasmania – Optimism for the Future

The most careful selection of men and of land is necessary if the whole thing is not to end in a fiasco, and everything depends on the organisation.¹

Settling men on the land had long been part of Australia’s great agrarian dream, or, what Ken Fry argues, the “great agrarian myth”,² well before the soldier settlement schemes during and after the First World War. In Tasmania around 1915, the status of the State’s land was ascertained to feed the continuation of this great dream.³ Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees noted that repatriation land settlement policies offered the continuation of an idealised concept “of an Australian yeomanry and closer settlement,”⁴ as returning soldiers would offer an ideal opportunity to open up areas of the land and make it workable. “The notion of extensive soldier settlement,” they continued, “accorded with land use policies designed to encourage smaller

² Ken Fry summarises this idea of a myth, from which he defined the basis of his argument: “[T]he agrarian myth embodied the idea that Australia’s vast land resources could best be utilised by small farmers who would produce a surplus for export to the United Kingdom (UK) and would also provide a market for British manufactured goods.” K. Fry, ‘Soldier Settlement and the Australian Agrarian Myth after the First World War’, Labour History, No. 48, May 1985, p. 29.
⁴ C. Lloyd & J. Rees, The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia, Melbourne, 1994, p. 44. Kent Fedorovich has traced the relationship between the pre-war yeoman ideal and the hardiness of the Australian bush legend, as exemplified by the deeds of the Australian soldier. “The soldier settler,” he argues, “provides continuity between the pre-war concept of the yeoman ideal with the post-war concepts of the agrarian myth and the modern yeoman farmer.” The meshing of these two myths with the hardy Anzac ideal, and its application in a soldier settlement environment, represented a continuity that Fedorovich argues became “a symbol of post-war political stability.” See his, Unfit For Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire Between the Wars, Manchester, 1995, p. 146.
holdings.” In this way, large tracts of the country could be opened up for settlement, and the return of Australian soldiers was the perfect opportunity to continue this process. In 1916, *The Mercury* thought that the existence of unused portions of land around Australia was “scandalous”, and urged the settling of returned men as a way of “turning to account the bounty of Nature...” Quentin Beresford’s article on Tasmanian soldier land settlement has argued that a land settlement scheme was regarded by “political leaders and much of the community” as an “appropriate way to provide for the 300,000 soldiers expected to return by the end of the war. A scheme for land settlement was also favoured as a means to ensure the revival of rural districts and industries hit hard by the war.” Richard Waterhouse contends that soldier settlement was “widely accepted” as a means to establish returned soldiers as farmers “as a reward for their contribution to King and country. It was also a assumed that, because of their war-time experiences, these men were likely to prefer outdoor rather than office life.” Land settlement was a way to expand the entire primary production base of the community, thereby stimulating and expanding the economy, so its importance in pure production terms should not be underestimated. The benefit of this increased production was to have a positive flow-on effect to secondary industries, further stimulating in a broader sense the economy of the community. Certainly, the post-war history of the Huon region saw an attempt to launch a vibrant soldier settler fruit industry after the depression of the war years, as a way to reinvigorate an economically depressed region. Chris Martin argues that the post-war history of the Huon cannot be separated from the impact of the Soldier Land Settlement scheme, as over 40 per cent of soldiers who enlisted from the region took up properties in the area between 1917 and 1922. His work in the Huon and its broader ramifications have been a very useful regional study in the preparation of this thesis.

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5 Lloyd & Rees, *The Last Shilling*, p. 44.
9 Fedorowich also argues that soldier settlement was a “constructive policy that would contribute to the continued economic prosperity and social well-being of both the individual and the state.” See his, *Unfit For Heroes*, p. 145.
Authorities assumed that returning men would enthusiastically embrace the opportunity to take up their own small land holding to carve out a living, and, sensing this opportunity, made overtures in this direction. Lloyd and Rees noted that "Land Settlement was an important factor in AIF recruiting campaigns." Most of the states pledged special concessions for returned soldiers to settle on the land, although interestingly for this study, Tasmania did not do so directly. Thus, on a national scale, soldiers enlisted with the understanding that there would be the option of taking up a piece of land on their return, which would have been attractive to some prospective recruits – an overseas adventure, and a parcel of land on return. In effect, a land settlement scheme was forced on the respective state legislators through its use as a political tool for recruitment, and as a stimulus for a revival of the rural sector, with returned soldiers to provide the impetus.

Soldier Land Settlement was to provide an opportunity for returned soldiers to create for themselves a new life on the land, or the ability to resume a previous rural existence on their own allotments. It was also seen as an alternative employment opportunity in which the vigorous Australian soldier could forge an independent existence as a primary producer. The Tasmanian scheme encountered difficulties as early as 1919, but by the early 1920s, failures and arrears were mounting up to an alarming extent, indicating the existence of fundamental flaws in the project that were only made plain in the practical implementation of the scheme. The trickle of failures soon became a flood, so much so that the Department was unprepared for and overwhelmed by the torrent of failures and the large-scale transfer of properties back to the Crown. To put the Department’s situation into perspective, in the five years from 1917 to 1921 a combined total of 129 failures were recorded, but in the following five years to 1926 (the year of Tasmania’s Royal Commission into soldier settlement), a total of 1,110 failures were recorded. Consequently, returned soldier land settlement in Tasmania will be examined over two chapters; the first will look at

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11 Lloyd & Rees, *The Last Shilling*, p. 45. See also K. Fedorovich, *Unfit For Heroes*, pp. 147, 149, 153.
the period from the establishment of the scheme in Tasmania through to its high point in 1921, and the findings of a Parliamentary Select Committee into its dealings held that year. From that year, retention rates for Tasmanian returned soldiers under the scheme fell sharply, marking 1921 as an appropriate juncture in which to review and assess the story of Tasmanian soldier settlement. The second chapter examines the period from 1922, through Tasmania’s 1926 Royal Commission, and on to Justice Pike’s 1929 Federal Inquiry, evaluating the decline of the scheme.

That the entire scheme is generally conceded to have been a failure has been a constant since Pike’s 1929 Federal Inquiry concluded such. Contrary, however, to common notions of soldier settlement’s synonymity with failure, Stephen Garton argues that the scheme was not in fact the complete catastrophe that historians such as Ken Fry have made it out to be. As Garton admits, our history of soldier settlement in Australia and its failure has come largely from the settlers and families who failed - and whose records are stored in archives throughout the country - so it follows that soldier settlement has come to be seen as such. Yet, Pike concluded that nationally only 29 per cent of soldiers left their properties. Tasmania’s percentage was the highest at a staggering 61 per cent. While State Governments generally should have provided more enduring practical assistance, Garton argues that governmental assistance still “undoubtedly helped many soldier settlers to ride out some of the troughs of farming life that sent others under.” For thousands of returned servicemen, Millen’s ideal of re-establishing the returned man to civilian life on the land met with no prosperity, but for thousands of others to 1939 according to Garton -

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13 Fry opens his article with the line: “The gross failure of the soldier settlement scheme in Australia following World War I resulted in serious financial losses to both State and Commonwealth Governments and disillusion and personal tragedy for most of the participants.” Fry, ‘Soldier Settlement and the Agrarian Myth After the First World War’, p. 29. For Garton’s explanation of his view that soldier settlement need not be termed a “great failure”, see his, The Cost of War: Australians Return, Melbourne, pp. 140-141.

14 Waterhouse took up this theme, noting Garton’s assertion that soldier settlement was “more successful in its aims than selection.” Waterhouse, however, argues that contemporaries “expected soldier settlement to succeed, in the way they had judged pre-war closer settlement to have triumphed, in promoting the spread of small farms.” See, Waterhouse, The Vision Splendid, p. 203. Interestingly, Waterhouse does not even mention Tasmanian soldier settlement in his survey of Commonwealth schemes.

15 ‘Report on Losses Due to Soldier Settlement by Mr Justice Pike’ CPP, 1929, Vol. II, Paper No. 46, p. 1959. A major reason for these dramatic Tasmanian figures is elucidated by Garton, as, “40 per cent had no experience of rural work, being butchers, clerks, hotel keepers, solicitors, and the like before the war. Even more alarming, a similar proportion had suffered some war injury, although not all of these were pensionable.” The Cost of War, p. 126.

16 Ibid., p. 141.
up to 20,000 families nationwide — soldier settlement was a relative success. J.M. Powell has noted the unhelpfulness of utilising such stark terms in assessing the respective dominion schemes. Using expressions like ‘failure’ paints soldier settlement in purely negative terms, whereas some 777 Tasmanian settlers by 1929 were still on the land and may be considered to have been repatriated successfully — if with much assistance and not a little hardship. Terminology such as ‘surviving’ the scheme hints at an experience that almost had to be endured. This language, according to Powell, may not be fair in assessing the scheme’s outcome.

The scheme on a national basis still suffered strong failure rates — both in terms of the number of settlers, and in financial terms. That Tasmania suffered by far the worst failure rates in the country will form part of this investigation. Tasmania’s legislation and administration will also be examined, as will the 1926 Tasmanian Royal Commission into Soldier Land Settlement, and the experience of Tasmanian returned soldiers on the land as participants of this scheme. As J.M. Powell has noted, each Australian state independently formulated its own response to the issue of returned soldier land settlement, and this was usually an extension of existing Settlement legislation. Tasmanian authorities utilised the existing Closer Settlement Act as a basis to undertake the task of soldier settlement. With varying amounts of the best agricultural land already in private hands in each state, there was a diverse response to the problem.

The sheer force of numbers and massive financial losses suffered, as well as the plethora of material from the fallout of the scheme as a result of these failures, marked Tasmanian soldier land settlement as the single largest repatriation programme embarked upon by Tasmanian authorities — in its public profile, in its direct impact on the economy of Tasmania, and in its predominantly negative imprint on Tasmanian returned soldier settlers. This chapter and the next propose to investigate Tasmanian efforts to fulfil its debt of honour to the soldiers, by placing them on the land. Writing in 1935, Ernest Scott regarded returned soldier land settlement as “a difficult mode of repatriation” owing to the myriad of administrative

17 Ibid.
19 Powell notes that: “Each state had already established its own peculiar approaches to the promotion of rural settlement long before the outbreak of war, and when the state legislatures, with assistance from the federal government, resolved to pay the debt to the returning soldiers, it was considered perfectly normal to turn an elaboration of existing land settlement policies in order to provide a special type of ‘repatriation’ opportunity.” See Ibid., p. 103.
and practical problems that faced the soldier. Powell argues that land settlement for returned soldiers “was a primary focus of public interest in the challenge of civil re-establishment.” Additionally, Tasmanian society was predominantly rural in nature relying on the agricultural sector, so soldier land settlement took on even greater significance. The impact of Tasmanian returned soldier land settlement in the economic fortunes of Tasmania during the 1920s, and the magnitude of its failure demand a comprehensive treatment.

**Premiers’ Conference 1916**

The Melbourne Premiers’ Conference of 17-19 February 1916 debated a land settlement report crafted by a sub-committee of the Federal Parliamentary War Committee. This sub-committee consisted of Senator E.D. Millen, Mr A. Poynton, Mr W.A. Watt and Mr J.C. Watson, and their brief was to consider the question of settling returned soldiers on the land. Present at the conference were representatives of the Commonwealth and State Governments, and the Federal Parliamentary War Committee. From this conference, nine recommendations were made toward the formation of a soldier land settlement scheme.

The conference concluded that the Commonwealth and State Governments should cooperate in forming such a scheme, and that land provision rested with the States. Interestingly, even in this early phase of development, dependants of deceased soldiers would be able to apply for land to settle – indicating the expansive and liberal nature of Australia’s commitment to rehabilitation. While the states were

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22 The Commonwealth Government had no jurisdiction over land usage, thus leaving that aspect of the scheme to the States. The relationship between the States and the Commonwealth Government were at times strained during the drawing up of the details of the Soldier Settlement legislation. Issues of funding versus land availability were a large part of the Commonwealth Parliamentary debates in Melbourne during the Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Bill. Ernest Scott notes the main points arrived at by the Federal Parliamentary War Committee in advocating a soldier land settlement scheme: that the Commonwealth and States should co-operate on the issue; that the States provide the land; the Commonwealth loans the monies to make advances to the soldiers; the State Governments should have liberal conditions “with a view of meeting the special case of the soldiers”; training farms should be established; and that private individuals should be encouraged to assist in the process of soldier land settlement. See, Scott, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol. XI*, pp. 842-843. Scott’s broader treatment of soldier land settlement can be found, pp. 841-846.
responsible for finding and providing land for settlement, the Commonwealth agreed to provide funds to the States by way of loans that were to be advanced through agricultural banks and other institutions to the settlers. The advances were to be made against improvements to the land and property, and the money was to be advanced at cost, plus reasonable working charges. In addition, the conference's recommendations urged the State Governments to be liberal but uniform in respect to settler repayments of advances and loans, owing to the special requirements of soldier settlers.

To assist in the undoubtedly massive financial cost of establishing and administering such a scheme, the Melbourne conference, in principle, agreed to establish a repatriation fund to which the public would be invited to subscribe. The Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Fund was to be raised by appeals from the respective Local, State and Federal levels of War Councils and Committees, with all donations being administered by a body of trustees and distributed according to conditions decreed by the Federal Parliamentary War Committee. Ernest Scott argues that despite the intention that the main cost of land settlement would be borne by the Commonwealth, "there was a very general notion that the Federal Government was throwing its own responsibilities upon subscribers to a voluntary fund." Two important aspects of this recommendation should be highlighted: that the repatriation fund was not to be strictly limited to assisting soldier settlers, but, as Lloyd and Rees argue, "such a fund would have other merits, particularly for financial rehabilitation and vocational programs"; and the careful and explicit reference that advances did not amount to ameliorative aid. A fund administered along charity lines may have

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24 Pryor argues that, "The essential difference between land settlement for soldiers and land settlement for civilians was that the soldiers received extra concessions and special assistance from the State. [...] Also the soldier settlers had, as a result of their war experiences, a distinctive outlook on life and a peculiar background of psychological reactions." Pryor, 'The Origins of Australia's Repatriation Policy (1914-1920)', p. 178.


26 Scott, The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol. XI, Australia During the War, p. 830.

27 Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, p. 49.
reduced the self-confidence and pride of returned men, not only within themselves, but also the wider community. Such a perception would also have been contrary to the legend of Anzac – a proud image already being propagated in newspapers and Parliaments throughout the Commonwealth.

Further recommendations from the conference proposed the immediate creation of an agricultural training scheme to prepare potential soldier settlers for life on the land, and a process of grading returned men as to their suitability for land settlement. A central authority created by each State Government was to classify prospective settlers into three main groups: “(a) those who are immediately eligible; (b) those who may prove so after probationary training; and (c) those who are unsuitable.”28 In addition to this, governments were to encourage private efforts to settle returned soldiers on the land. The final recommendation from the conference was a pledge for haste in the work of formally establishing a soldier settlement scheme for Australia’s returning servicemen.

The concept of land settlement was nothing new to the States. Indeed, it may even be useful to view soldier land settlement as a mere continuation of a general trend to open up more of Australia’s land. In his 1932 thesis Pryor noted an acceleration of this traditional land settlement practice in relation to returned soldiers.29 While closer settlement may have had a long tradition in Australia, establishing returned soldiers on the land was a risky enterprise from the start. While undoubtedly many soldiers had rural experience, such was the desire to channel returned men into a life on the land that in Tasmania’s case at least, safeguards in the legislation to prevent unsuitable applicants from being granted land was lax, despite many warnings by the press and the political Opposition. Moreover, other States did not adequately enshrine safeguards in their respective legislation to diminish the possibility of wide-scale failures on the land. With the attraction of land on their return for new AIF recruits, the land settlement scheme appealed to soldiers who did not have previous experience on the land, and that, allied with insufficient education on the difficulties of a rural existence and an undiscerning application process, combined to produce inevitable problems. The soldiers’ intentions may have differed markedly from the intentions of those who established the scheme. The creators may have considered it as a way of increasing primary economic production or a way of

shifting the demographic from an increasingly urban conglomeration to rural settlement. Others might simply have identified soldier land settlement as the best way to reward the soldiers for their war service.\(^{30}\) There was the likelihood of fundamental philosophical differences as to why the scheme may have appealed to soldiers. The opportunity to obtain a financial asset at what they deemed was a bargain price would be attractive, while others saw it as a reward for war service or an opportunity to begin a new life. Pryor feared that in approving the applications of unsuitable soldier-farmers, the scheme attracted

men who were deluded into believing that the country life was easy and that farming methods were soon picked up and they included men who, though not especially attracted by the life, considered that land settlement was a sure way to re-establishment in civilian life.\(^{31}\)

In the desire to provide post war opportunities for returned soldiers from a grateful nation, it is arguable that insufficient care was taken in the drafting of safeguards to prevent settlement failures, and therefore the consequent financial losses and human tragedies that inevitably resulted.

The need to establish a scheme for returning wounded and discharged soldiers was becoming more urgent as the Melbourne Conference attested, and the longer authorities waited, the more acute the problem was to become. On 7 January 1916, *The Mercury* reported that the Tasmanian State War Council had been thinking earnestly about the question of land settlement for soldiers, and they handed over the responsibility to a special Land Settlement Committee for consideration.\(^{32}\) On a flying international visit in April 1916, British author Sir Rider Haggard also urged the Tasmanian State Government to consider soldier land settlement and employment schemes (with a view for British subjects to settle) – a theme that he was passionate

\(^{30}\) Martin argues that the *Huon Times* newspaper regarded soldier settlement in this light rather “than as a serious business transaction, and therefore believed that such land should promise an easy reward for those services.” See his, ‘War and after War’, p. 33.

\(^{31}\) Pryor, *The Origins of Australia’s Repatriation Policy (1914-1920)*, p. 181. One must also realise that Pryor’s work on Australian repatriation policy was produced at a time when the scheme was still in operation and returned soldiers prevalent in the community. He was writing only three years after Pike handed down his Inquiry findings, and within a decade of the throes of Tasmania’s land settlement scheme. As such, we must maintain a considered approach in view of his proximity to the events of which he was writing.

about, and a message that he spread throughout the rest of the Commonwealth. He got an assurance from Premier John Earle to settle up to 300 British servicemen on the land in Tasmania after the war.

Contemporary Debates and Warnings

Following Earle’s State election defeat in April 1916, Walter Lee’s Nationalists formed Government, and in November of that year, introduced a bill to establish a soldier settlement scheme in Tasmania. In his speech to the Legislative Council on 1 August 1916, the Governor of Tasmania, William Ellison-Macartney, noted the importance of the impending bill to Councillors and of repatriating the large numbers of men soon returning to the State more generally:

This may be regarded as the most important work devolving on the parliament. Measures will be submitted...providing for the settlement, under the most advantageous terms, of such of our own soldiers, as well as ex-service men from other parts of the Empire, as may desire to settle on the land. Proposals will be made to co-operate with the Commonwealth Government in giving financial assistance to these settlers under liberal conditions...

The “most advantageous terms” and “liberal conditions” alluded to by the Governor can probably best be explained as an attempt by legislators to provide a scheme with the most appeal to soldiers, and the most political appeal to the community to show that the volunteers of the AIF would be offered all possible opportunities on their

33 In his diaries of this period, Haggard recorded his time in Tasmania and of how he obtained assurances from the Premier John Earle for British soldier settlers. He writes, with some satisfaction, on 7 April 1916, of Earle’s “formal undertaking to provide land for and to look after a minimum of 300 soldiers (and their families) on behalf of Tasmania. This is most satisfactory, as I have accomplished what Sir W. Ellison-Macartney [Governor of Tasmania] declared to be impossible in the present conditions - political and otherwise - of this state. It has been a struggle but I have won.” D.S. Higgins (ed.), The Private Diaries of Sir H Rider Haggard 1914-1925, London, 1980, pp. 57-8. See also, L. Robson, A History of Tasmania. Vol. I. Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980’s, Melbourne, 1991, p. 410; M. Roe, Australia, Britain and Migration, 1915-1940: A Study of Desperate Hopes, Oakleigh, Victoria, 1995, p. 10. For Haggard’s general experiences in Australia, see, P. Pierce, ‘Rider Haggard in Australia’, Meanjin, Vol. 36, No. 2, July 1977, pp. 200-208; Fedorowich, Unfit For Heroes, pp. 149-151; Powell, An Historical Geography of Modern Australia, pp. 93-94.

34 Fedorowich notes that Tasmania, along with Western Australia and Queensland, were the only States the Colonial Office felt were able to absorb “substantial” numbers of British ex-servicemen “because of a genuine desire on the part of those States to encourage their settlement.” See his, Unfit For Heroes, p. 152. Overall, Australia settled between one and two thousand British ex-servicemen, Ibid., pp. 177, 191.

35 Governor’s Speech to the Legislative Council, 1 August, 1916. The Mercury, 2 August, 1916, p. 6.
return. In line with the spirit embodied in all political speeches on the issue of repatriation, the Governor finished with a rhetorical flourish: “The aid of Parliament is asked in order that everything possible may be done for the brave men who have risked their lives in the Empire’s cause.”36 In response, one Legislative Councillor, William Williams, conceded that the issue of what to do with returned soldiers would constitute a great problem, but he did not think “they would get them on the land so easily, as was imagined”, and that, “there would be great difficulties attached to it.”37 The Mercury offered cautious support for the impending scheme provided that sound judgement be exercised in its execution. Its main concern was that the scheme be effected with the intention that returned men could make the best of their lives, and that the right mix of suitable men and suitable land be necessary for this to occur. If not, the risk of failure was present, “even if they are paid to stay there.”38 The newspaper pledged to pay “close and critical attention” to each succeeding step.39

Elsewhere, members of local government bodies, notably the Glenorchy Council, were also discussing moves to enact their own soldier land settlement policies. On the same day as Governor Ellison-Macartney delivered his speech on State efforts, Councillor W. O’Neal of the Glenorchy Council suggested immediate and direct action for securing land for Tasmanian soldiers, as he was unaware of any State movement in this direction, despite much talk of doing so. O’Neal argued that municipal bodies should act on behalf of their respective municipalities rather than as a State body (presumably as he had seen no evidence of them doing so), arguing that, as the soldiers had gone away to fight for the people, so the “people should make provision for them on their return.”40 O’Neal saw an opportunity for the Glenorchy Council to be the first in the State to purchase land for soldiers in this way, hoping that they would be able to say on their return: “Glenorchy municipality has taken steps to look after us, where others have failed”41—perhaps an opportunity to gain glory from returned soldiers. O’Neal’s motion to purchase land for returned soldiers was defeated after the Warden noted that the State Government was already working on such a scheme. However, the important point to note from this meeting was that

36 Ibid.
37 W. M. Williams to the Legislative Council, 1 August, 1916. Ibid.
39 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
land settlement for soldiers was an issue that even local government was considering and debating, suggesting that the issue was of concern to legislators of all tiers of government. It is also interesting for the fact that there was an alternative approach mooted for organising soldier settlement rather than a centralised approach administered by a central body. O’Neal arguably reacted to the fact that returned soldiers had begun to trickle back to Tasmania before any scheme was in place, and responded to the point he made of the difficulty for soldiers already returned to find work in Tasmania. His move may be viewed in the context of a desire to provide an alternative avenue of employment for returned soldiers experiencing difficulties in doing so.

In State Parliament, Premier Walter Lee addressed the House of Assembly directly about Tasmania’s soldier land settlement policy on 2 August, outlining the general approach to be taken by the government in implementing the scheme. After politically point-scoring off his predecessor Earle on the issue, Lee spoke broadly of a sum of £100,000 to purchase properties for the settlement of returned men, and of his consultation with the Minister of Lands and the Closer Settlement Board about implementing a workable scheme. He hoped to amend the existing Closer Settlement Act so that, in relation to returned soldiers at least, he could appoint a Commissioner to supervise their settlement. Lee proposed to run the scheme along “business lines”, so it would be unlikely to become a “drag on the State, though there were likely to be a certain number of failures.”

Opinion and debate over the details of any intended soldier land settlement bill began to appear in the print media. R.W. Watchorn thought about the matter with a great deal of care as shown in a letter written to The Mercury on 3 August 1916. Watchorn’s letter was striking in its competent grasp of the basic requirements to make such an endeavour work and its cognisance that extreme care should be taken

42. Ibid.
43. Martin argues that many returned soldiers themselves took this view: “Many of these men, homeless and unemployed, regarded the government’s offer of resettlement as an immediate solution to their difficulties. This was especially true in the case of orchard properties: soldiers were desperate to purchase before the beginning of the 1919 apple season, hoping that their first crop would provide them with immediate financial security.” See his, ‘The Great War’s Aftermath in the Huon’, p. 46.
44. Lee noted that through his correspondence with the secretary of the State War Council, the previous Earle Government had done nothing on land settlement since the February Conference in Melbourne – a point he was keen to make. Lee to the House of Assembly, Wednesday 2 August, 1916. The Mercury, 3 August, 1916, p. 7.
45. Ibid.
46. Nothing can be found of who R.W. Watchorn was.
with it. In a scheme where any soldier who showed an inclination to settle on land was provided with the means to do so regardless of his ability, Watchorn made the point that there would be varying degrees of competency among the intended settlers, necessitating some form of training program with which to train those immediately unsuitable for settling on the land. The use of the Government’s State Farm (at Deloraine) would provide applicants with an agricultural grounding, but the plan depended to a large degree on the maturity and outlook of the settlers themselves:

~ There will be some men who have formerly held the position of clerks, or have led an indoor life, who may wish to settle on the land. They would be possibly quite contented to be instructed, and not settle on the land until they found that they had sufficient knowledge of farming to fit them to be responsible holders of land.

Opinions urging caution did not take into account the need for the political expediency or popularity of quick action on soldier land settlement. The Government felt pressured into providing land settlement for returned soldiers due to the increasing numbers of men now returning from overseas service. It needed to have the scheme in place to present to these men as well as the flood of servicemen returning at the war’s end. It was unlikely that returned soldiers would have found it particularly palatable to be enrolled in and pass State-run competency tests on agriculture and farming in order to settle on the land – after all, such an idea ran against the general grain of beneficent attitudes and policies toward returned soldiers. Beresford has claimed that, “The measure was so hastily and inadequately framed that failure on a large scale was inevitable.” While this is true, it does not appreciate the position the Government was facing in trying to frame a scheme. The desire was to encourage

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47 He wrote: “[S]ome of the returned soldiers who make application for land may or may not be fitted for such an undertaking. I don’t mean from a physical point of view, but from the point of view that they may not have the practical knowledge which is necessary for one to make a success of such an undertaking.” ‘Settling Returned Soldiers on the Land’, Letter to the Editor, R.W. Watchorn. *The Mercury*, 10 August, 1916, p. 8.

48 Ibid. The Governor stated that the State Farm was to be utilised for the practical agricultural instruction of returned men. See, ‘The State Parliament: The Opening Ceremony: The Governor’s Speech: Business of the Session’, *The Mercury*, 1 August 1917, p. 6. A 1915 Report by the Lands and Surveys Department to the State War Council also suggested using the State farm for training returned soldiers likely to be placed as soldier settlers. See, Martin, ‘War and After War’, pp. 22-23. In addition, some 3,000 acres of Crown land near Dover in the Huon region was also considered by the Government, raising an outcry in the local community there, *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25, 30-34.


settlement both for the soldiers' and the State's economic and social benefit, not to place impediments to this. While the ultimate lack of legislative restraints for unsuitable settlers was unforgivably lacking, thus causing sizeable financial and incalculable personal cost, it is not to exculpate the Lee Government for their actions on the framing of regulations for land settlement, but at least appreciate the context behind the legislation.\textsuperscript{51}

In the second week of August, the secretary of the Repatriation Fund Committee of the State War Council, Frank Lindsay Gunn, approached Attorney-General William Propsting for assistance with carrying out legal work involved with advances to returned soldiers in anticipation of both the legislation and the utilisation of the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Fund for the settling of returned soldiers on the land.\textsuperscript{52} The approach was made to facilitate the assistance of legal work in connection with the advances, and the same approach had also been made to the law societies. Propsting agreed that the Crown Law Office would assist with the preparation of the documents necessary for the advances, after consultation with the Southern Tasmanian Law Society. The process of establishing a Tasmanian soldier land settlement scheme was beginning.

Later in August 1916, former Colonial Premier and Federal Parliamentarian Henry Dobson voiced his concerns in \textit{The Mercury} over the direction of repatriation in Tasmania generally as part of his letter querying various aspects of returned soldier policy. While Dobson enquired as to the state of land settlement, he focussed on the process of administration rather than Watchorn's applicants: "While it is most desirable to use and develop our Crown Lands, it is a costly and risky undertaking. No land should, I think, be used for settlement unless an experienced farmer in the locality certifies as to its suitability."\textsuperscript{53} Dobson's suggestions constituted sage advice, but he also had ideas on the financial aspect of the scheme, proposing the purchase of

\textsuperscript{51} Justice Pike, reporting in his 1929 Commonwealth Inquiry into losses from soldier land settlement, noted the extraordinary circumstances leading in to the creation of land settlement schemes: "As is well known to everyone, those times were entirely abnormal, and many losses which have occurred would no doubt not have occurred had the times and circumstances been normal. On the return of the soldiers from abroad, there was a wave of patriotism which insisted that they should receive the best of treatment, and when directed upon the question of land settlement it meant that the whole undertaking had to be carried out under rush conditions. Every soldier who wanted land, it was claimed, should be satisfied at once, and so far as the States were concerned they were inadequately staffed and were not in a position to meet this extreme demand unless and until they had in the first instance extended the whole of their staffs." See, 'Report on Losses Due to Soldier Settlement by Mr Justice Pike', p. 18.

\textsuperscript{52} 'Repatriation of Soldiers', \textit{The Mercury}, 12 August, 1916, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
properties of various costs, and that these properties comprise a cottage, shed, stable, area for fruit or orchard and areas for ploughing. Dobson's suggestion certainly would have ensured that prospective settlers did not start with nothing, but had a secure base with which to begin. Dobson suggested that each land agent supply a list of "small properties", but whether the properties he envisaged were big enough to make a living from was the crucial point, as this was one of the reasons cited by Mr Justice Pike's 1929 Commonwealth Report into settlement failures. Using his own blueprint for settlement, Dobson argued that "A man used to the land could, with reasonable financial aid, make a living on such blocks and pay interest on the purchase money after the first year." This of course, was what the Lee Government was hoping would happen. Importantly, the community was engaging in the whole land settlement discourse, and were keen to voice its concerns, suggestions and support where they felt it appropriate. It is not clear how much authorities listened to the messages expressed through the Tasmanian press, although Dobson's intent in this correspondence appeared to request a general survey of the state of repatriation - a role not unlike the opposition members in parliament.

Dobson publicly shared his own thoughts on the numbers of anticipated Tasmanian settlers by citing J.C. Watson's figures for possible settlement. Using 24 per cent as the accepted national figure, Dobson estimated a little over 2000 soldiers for settlement (he proved remarkably close as 1,976 Tasmanian soldiers were settled under the scheme), but he also wondered how ex-Premier Earle's promise to Sir Rider Haggard would further impact on the state's capacity to settle both her own and

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54 Dobson’s figures aroused some discussion, with The Mercury's editorial of the same day also engaging his estimations, although a letter from Frederick Burbury [The Mercury, 24 August, 1916, p. 2] questioned just how much would be needed for the settlement scheme. He implied that the figures used by Dobson and the editorial would be too conservative.


56 Ibid.

57 "The Defence Department issued cards to the soldiers asking if they had worked on the land, if they wished to return to rural work, and if they possessed any capital. Men who had worked in non-rural sectors were asked if they would prefer to 'go into the country' when they returned. [...] [T]he analysis suggested that just under 25 per cent of the AIF wanted to settle on the land, with about 67 per cent of these having some credentials in rural production." Lloyd & Rees, The Last Shilling, pp. 47-8. The issuing of cards and calculation of likely percentages for early estimations of the numbers of returned soldiers considering land settlement constituted Dobson's estimations for Tasmania. In the 1921-22 Returned Soldiers' and Closer Settlement Department Annual Report, Secretary J.L. McGough noted that approximately 20 per cent. of returned soldiers in Tasmania had taken up land settlement. See, Returned Soldiers' and Closer Settlement Department: Report for 1921-22, JPMP, Vol. LXXXVII, 1922, Paper No. 28, p. 3.

58 Dobson estimated that eventually, of that figure of 2000, only 1000 soldiers would eventually settle, and at a cost of £200 each, £200,000 pounds would be needed. 'Returned Soldiers', Letter to the Editor, Henry Dobson. The Mercury, 21 August, 1916, p. 2. This figure proved far too conservative.
British troops. Dobson reiterated the importance of closer settlement schemes as a means to stimulate regional and rural areas, displaying again the belief that land settlement (in this guise as soldier land settlement) was the future for Australia’s continued economic and agricultural growth: “Nothing is more important than to develop our primary industries and increase production, and so the expenditure of large sums in land settlement may pay us indirectly, even if many of our soldiers do not make a success of farming and orcharding.” Some failure was anticipated, but what is striking is the absolute optimism that any losses would be more than outweighed by the gains.

On the same day as Dobson’s letter was published, The Mercury’s editorial was on the issue of ‘Settling the Returnees’, and the problems it might pose. The paper, like Watchorn and Dobson, applauded the decision to engage in land settlement for returned soldiers, but cautioned that a successful outcome would be predicated on a “well thought out” scheme and “careful consideration”, as there were “plenty of pitfalls to be avoided, as every farmer and orchardist of experience knows.” Furthermore, the editors urged sober and rational consideration of the entire repatriation and land settlement issue lest Tasmania follow mainland Australia’s faults:

We should be the last to damp the enthusiasm of anybody in any direction where so vast a problem has to be solved, but it is evident that if the extravagance entered into upon in some mainland quarters is to proceed there will be no lack of grave complications to be faced later.

Clearly, ample warnings on the potential dangers of a soldier land settlement scheme circulated in Tasmania before the Lee Government introduced their scheme to Parliament, although they were all tempered with the enticing dream of a successful

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59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 ‘Settling the Returnees’, Editorial. Ibid., p. 4.
62 Ibid.
63 Martin too argues that there was sufficient enough warning that the Government should have tread more cautiously: “Throughout 1916 and 1917 parliamentarians of all persuasions, and in both Houses of Parliament, had repeatedly warned of the catastrophe to come. Even the Board had displayed a decided nervousness towards the government’s plans for resettlement. But the early warnings of men such as David Dicker, J.T.H. Whitsitt and the Board’s own Philip Perry went largely unheeded by government.” Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 116. I would argue though that in this statement, Martin does not give adequate credence to the sheer optimism and support the bill received from members of Parliament and the general community.
outcome and the benefits that could bring to Tasmania. The warnings were all rather vague, but one could argue that such detail should be the Government's responsibility in any case — not heeding these warnings and approaching the scheme in a more "rational and businesslike way"\textsuperscript{64} was arguably the first catastrophe. Yet it is conceivable too that land settlement offered the Government and the community a positive project on which to focus, in the face of dreadful news from Europe. It is understandable then that a desire to concentrate on the positive outcomes of any such scheme were far more attractive than considering its failure. The implementation of a land settlement scheme was a major aspect of the entire repatriation programme, both in its administrative and in its financial demands, so the urgent desire to establish a scheme — any scheme — was the most important requirement. Consequently, responsible considerations to ensure the fundamental safeguarding and soundness of the scheme in a financial sense were less important in this war-time context than they would otherwise have been.

\textbf{Parliamentary Passage}

The State Government’s Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Bill was introduced to the Parliament on Wednesday 20 September 1916, where it was brought in by the Minister for Lands and Works, John Blyth Hayes.\textsuperscript{65} Under the bill, the administrative framework of the Closer Settlement Board was utilised and altered to provide special powers to the President to purchase land for returned soldiers, with monies raised to be paid into the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Fund. This money would then be used “in administration, buying lands, surveys, subdivision, clearing, draining, fencing, or improving such land, the making of roads, erection of buildings (no buildings to cost more than £250 for each allotment, later increased to £300), and the making of advances to soldier settlers.”\textsuperscript{66} Other major features of the bill were the waiving of rents for the first year and of taxes and rates for four years; no requirement for a

\textsuperscript{65}Although Martin’s MA thesis has also provided a treatment of the Bill’s Parliamentary passage, it is such an important aspect of this part of Tasmania’s repatriation scheme that the author has updated the contemporary reporting into a more complete narrative, as a necessary context to the story of Tasmanian Soldier Land Settlement on a statewide basis. Readers may still find it useful however to consult Martin’s treatment of the process, pp. 35-38, 48-52.  
deposit; and Board assistance in clearing and improving the properties before and during the soldier’s occupancy of the land. The monies for the scheme were to be advanced by the Commonwealth Government to the State, so that the primary financial obligation rested with the Federal authorities, while the responsibility for providing land fell to the State. The good intentions of the legislation were succinctly stated by The Mercury’s report: “In every possible way the bill guards the soldier settler from hardship, and holds out a helping hand wherever it is needed.”67 In connection with the introduction of the bill, the Statement on Tasmania’s Finances by the Treasurer proposed to ask Parliament for a sum of £150,000 to be expended in connection with the scheme.68

The Tasmanian legislation drew heavily from the Closer Settlement Act, 1913, and was generally liberal to returned soldiers. The major points of the Act concerned not what it promised, but more what it did not protect against. Most probably as a result of Lee’s keenness to move the bill through as quickly as possible, the Act did not contain the safeguards required. Lee’s bill was passed largely through the patriotic atmosphere in the Tasmanian community. Beresford has argued that “A large section of the community was more concerned that a scheme be established than they were about its method of operation.”69 The administration of the Act was fairly straightforward.70 The Minister for Lands assumed responsibility for the Act, and the existing Chairman of the Closer Settlement Board became President of the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act, with assistance from the existing Board where required. Between August 1919 and August 1922, however, the work was such that a separate Minister was entrusted as the Minister for Soldier Settlement. The initial figure of £150,000 set aside in the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Fund for the working of the Act was rather small and later comprehensively enlarged, but in late 1916, the eventual scope of the Government’s investment was yet to be revealed.

With the introduction of the bill and the Government’s intentions toward soldier settlement clearer, the Minister for the Lands Department issued a Statement in late September that work toward the acquisition, purchasing and preparation of suitable land was being undertaken, and that a large area of Crown Land between

67 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
Trowutta and Arthur River was already being considered for such purposes. Further, a separate fund was being established to purchase “suitable estates” and Ministers believed that only land of good quality with railway and water access was worth considering for purchase under the terms of the Act. The estate acquired at Campania in 1920, for instance, matched the specification noted in Hayes’ statement of 1916, being close to the Coal River and with access to the Campania railway station and stock saleyards.

The parliamentary debates on the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Bill revealed a general consensus in favour of returned soldier land settlement, with only a few dissenting voices discernible from reports. In introducing the bill, Hayes engaged in the sort of patriotic pronouncements fashionable with parliamentarians nationwide at the time, declaring that the bill should receive all the support of members as “nothing they could manage to provide should be deemed too good for those who returned after fighting for us.” This speech produced the predictable cheers. Hayes also referred to the returning soldiers taking up the option of land settlement as “returning heroes”, adding that they would get “all possible preferential treatment” and “would receive concessions.” Herbert Payne echoed sentiments expressed nationwide by arguing that parliamentarians could not do too much towards assisting their brave men when they returned after fighting for them. Payne expressed the desire that in committee, the bill should not be considered along party lines. The danger in this patriotic atmosphere was that crucial safeguards and cautious elements may have been overlooked in the legislation in a desire to provide all possible benefits to returned soldiers to ensure their success, and their favour. There was the possibility of alienating existing or new civilian settlers through the extremely liberal and deliberately discriminatory legislation. Pryor argues that in terms of land

72 Ibid.
76 Payne to the House of Assembly. Ibid.
management after 1917, “soldier settlement became the only real concern of the Tasmanian authorities”, so Closer Settlement concerns were subjugated to the overwhelming administrative and financial demands of the returned soldier scheme.

During the House of Assembly debates, former Minister of Lands and Works Labor’s James Belton generally supported the bill, but warned that settlement on bush country would require the Government to find soldiers for anything up to four years, as the land could not be made productive in less, which would inevitably inflate costs dramatically. The first, although by no means final, figure quoted by Hayes was £150,000, which Ernest Blyth, a farmer in the Nationalist camp, argued would only be a “drop in the bucket to expend under the bill”, clearly aware of the enormous financial outlay required for such an ambitious scheme. The £150,000 figure was only ever intended by the Government to be a first instalment. Belton added that unsuitable land like uncleared bush should be avoided for returned soldiers at all costs, but it might be opened up for immigrants instead. A much safer avenue for returned soldiers, according to Belton, was in dairying.

The notion of profitability in dairying as a rewarding Tasmanian agricultural vocation was reaffirmed in a letter from the President of the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Board in Hobart to J.S.R Bryant, Director of Soldiers’ Settlements in Sydney, upon a request for information on the Tasmanian scheme. The President advised that Tasmania

is suitable for mixed farming for small farmers, in which class Returned Soldiers, as a body, may be included. Unless a man is expert in any of the branches of farming to which you refer [Fruit growing, poultry-farming, bee-keeping, vegetable growing, horticulture, and pig-raising], it would be quite impossible for him to make a living in Tasmania from any of them. The safest and most profitable undertaking that can be followed by a small farmer in this State is dairying.79

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79 AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from President of Returned Soldiers’ Land Settlement Board Hobart to Director of Soldiers’ Settlements Sydney, 17 July 1917. The various States exchanged information on their respective schemes for the benefit of ex-soldiers desirous of moving interstate to take up land. Extant in the AOT is a request from the Western Australian Board for information on Tasmania’s scheme. See, AOT, AB 1/1: Letter from Secretary Returned Soldiers’ Land Board, W.A. to Secretary for Lands Tasmania, 18 September 1917.
This information poses interesting questions as regards to the qualifications the Tasmanian Returned Soldiers' Settlement Department expected of soldier settlers. If they were aware of the difficulties for success for more specialised farming avenues, the fact that they let men on the land who did not possess the requisite expertise amounted to gross negligence, contributing to the low success rate for the Tasmanian scheme.

Belton noted the long term implications of soldier land settlement, as it required not only perseverance but large amounts of funding. Labor's William Shoobridge was somewhat keener on the scheme, provided that irrigation, his pet issue, was a primary objective, and his contribution to the issue was plainly optimistic, claiming that Tasmania could provide an “object lesson in closer settlement for the world to wonder at.” Unfortunately, the lesson the Tasmanian experience provided was not a positive one, and Shoobridge's comments stand in stark irony to the succession of failures that Tasmanian settlers experienced as early as 1919.

Somewhat cooler toward the Government's bill were members Walter Woods, representing Labor, and Ernest Blyth, representing rural interests, who both complained that the bill, as read, would not succeed. Woods felt that the bill facing members was only the fulfilment of a promise rather than a workable proposition, and saw a political dimension to this scheme rather than an altruistic motive – he argued that the scheme should be for the benefit of the soldiers, with the benefit for the State registering second. As L.J. Pryor has cynically noted, soldiers were also voters. Woods wanted co-operative measures in the bill to lessen waste labour and cheapen the cost of producing foodstuffs. Co-operation would theoretically lead to greater economy and less waste, and Woods saw it as a vital element to the success of the scheme. To not at least allow for co-operation in the bill (as Woods argued it did not), would “be condemning returned soldiers to a life of misery by sending them into

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80 Irrigation and power schemes were topics William Shoobridge took a special interest in, and are referred to time and again in his personal papers. On returned soldier land settlement, Shoobridge noted that, “We have in [irrigation and hydro-electricity] all the elements for the successful settlement in every variety of primary and secondary industries, not only of all our returned soldiers on the most favourable conditions, but also for many thousands of other disbanded soldiers who would be only too willing to come; for in addition to the resources named we have the finest climate for working and maturing in the world.” University of Tasmania Special and Rare Materials Collection: S3/26 Soldier Settlement, Repatriation and Soldiers' Land Settlement, 1919, p. 4.


the backblocks, or by placing them on the land under such conditions as would break their hearts in a few years." Premier Lee responded that many of the soldiers would be placed in estates (although this was not to become practiced policy until the mid-1920’s), so the capacity for co-operative farming was there, although it was difficult to force them to engage in this method of agriculture. Despite his harsh sentiments, Woods supported the bill, but claimed that it did not go far enough.

Blyth criticised the inadequate funding arrangements and the autocratic powers vested in the President of the Closer Settlement Board, but his real problem with the bill was the issue of preference. After Sir Rider Haggard’s visit to Hobart in April 1916, and the subsequent promises he received from then-Premier Earle, provision for up to 300 British soldiers to settle in Tasmania under a land settlement scheme were agreed. Blyth felt strongly against offering the same treatment to British soldiers, or indeed soldiers from other States. It was obvious that the promise to Haggard regarding the British settlement had to be fulfilled, which Premier Lee duly noted. Blyth felt that any Tasmanian soldier who returned from the Front should be given, free, “a piece of the land he had been fighting for”, but whether this was just political rhetoric is difficult to know. Premier Lee concluded debate by responding to some suggestions and criticisms made by members, and affirmed that returned soldiers should only be placed on the best land. He declared that the Tasmanian bill “had been framed in a more generous way than bills with the same object put forward in the other States.”

In his own assessment of the States’ respective land settlement schemes, Pryor declared that Tasmania was in fact generous in her legislation, but had perhaps gone too far and “tried to do too much”, thus falling into the trap of extravagance that The Mercury claimed was operating in interstate schemes.

The Premier’s predominant concern in the next day’s discussion was the need to rush through the legislation as fast as possible. This desire inevitably led to a lack of mature consideration on some of the crucial points. Lee argued that he wanted the

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83 Woods to the House of Assembly. Report of the ‘Returned Soldiers’ Land Settlement Bill’, House of Assembly, Tuesday 26 September, 1916. The Mercury, 27 September, 1916, p. 7. While lack of co-operative settlements may arguably have not been as decisive in precipitating failure as Woods anticipated, he was unquestionably correct in a large percentage of the failures.

84 Blyth to the House of Assembly. Ibid.

85 Lee to the House of Assembly. Ibid.

86 Ibid.

moved through by that evening if possible, wondering what the returned soldiers would think if the bill continued to be held up by members voicing suggestions that might delay its passage.\textsuperscript{88} Former Premier John Earle condemned the bill, declaring that he thought it “absolutely useless for the purpose for which it was desired.”\textsuperscript{89} Earle felt that “there was no provision under the bill as to the capabilities of the returned soldiers to go on the land, and they must remember that no calling provided more failures than agriculture.”\textsuperscript{90} His attendance at the 1916 Premiers’ Conference and their focus on agricultural competency as a recommendation for settlement most probably played a key role in his position on the issue. Further complaints at using Crown Land for settlement purposes were aired,\textsuperscript{91} but Lee, inclined to smooth over dissent to push the bill through, reassured Parliament that “It was no part of the policy of the Government to do other than ample and complete justice to soldiers.”\textsuperscript{92} There is no reason to doubt the integrity of this declaration, but the fact that he was desperate to keep debate moving almost contradicts his statement. Others felt strongly about certain issues contained in the bill, but as a general piece of legislation supported its passage, owing in a large part to Lee’s insistence that it be moved quickly for the benefit of soldiers already returned and returning.

Despite earlier believing the scheme to be useless, Earle accepted the inevitable, and presented his ideas on how the scheme should operate. The Government, claimed Earle, must “look upon such settlement otherwise than a commercial speculation, and what the Government did for them must be as a mark of their appreciation.”\textsuperscript{93} Earle’s idea was an interesting one, and stressed the obligation Tasmania owed to their soldiers rather than a sound business and financial basis from which such a scheme might otherwise have been run. The straddling of these two streams of thought on soldier land settlement produced confusion. The government was unlikely to press for too harsh restrictions and obligations on returned soldiers, but grant them the ability to settle as some form of gift in exchange for their sacrifice

\textsuperscript{89} Earle to the House of Assembly. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Becker was particularly vocal in rejecting the settlement of returned soldiers on Crown Lands. He argued that “Some of the bush lands would take not one, but three lifetimes to clear, and if we had nothing better than that to offer men who had been ready to make what was called ‘the supreme sacrifice’ it would be better to let someone else take on the job.” Becker to the House of Assembly. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Lee to the House of Assembly. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93} Earle to the House of Assembly. Ibid.
and service (clearly outside of Edward Millen’s principles on repatriation). Yet they were bound to demand some form of qualification and rational business footing before settling them, due to the large amounts of public money being spent. As Pryor has argued, the lack of sufficient parliamentary debate and examination was irresponsible, and the inability to insist on either one of these features produced the context to failure. In an attempt to moderate the severity of the conditions soldiers would most likely face, Earle suggested that the Government should let the soldier have the property free until it was productive, so as to reduce the immediate financial burden during the crucial phase of establishing himself. Even if the land was given free, Earle suggested that conditions may be such that the “returned soldiers might wish that they had never accepted it.” His liberal approach was inclined toward making the transition to agricultural producer as easy as possible, understanding that to do otherwise might risk the success of the operation. Earle “contended that they must not put a returned soldier on the land as an ordinary selector...”, which implied a positive discrimination in favour of returned soldiers. The entire scheme was geared toward providing special conditions for returned soldiers as land settlers, whose special treatment incurred some disquiet from more permanent settlers. The issue of funding was finally settled when it was agreed that the £150,000 figure was only to be a first instalment, and left in the bill. Wage issues surrounding the Closer Settlement Board President were also settled. Following amendments, on Thursday 28 September, 1916, the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Bill passed the House of Assembly.

The Legislative Council displayed the same hope and expectations about land settlement as the House of Assembly – being regarded as an eminently agreeable and suitable method of discharging their duties to returning soldiers. Despite expressing sentiments supporting the scheme, Ellis Dean had reservations about the aptitude of prospective settlers. Dean pre-empted Tasmania’s 1926 Royal Commission by a

96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 The wage of £500 per annum to the President of the Board was enshrined in the 1916 Act, with half of his salary from the Closer Settlements Fund, and the other half payable from the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Fund. For more, see ‘Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act, 1916’, Acts of Parliament, Act No. 20, Part 1, Section 4, Number 1, p. 123.
decade when he expressed the fear that the “dull monotony of the farmer’s life would not commend itself to a returned soldier.” The Council’s progress on the Bill did not move as quickly as Lee would have hoped. Administrative details consumed the debate, and, despite the Premier’s anxiety to move the Bill through quickly, the Legislative Council adjourned until the end of October.

The legislation passed back and forth between the two legislatures during November in an effort to find a settlement that was agreeable. The Legislative Council examined key clauses when they sat again at the end of October, and again a general optimism drove forward propositions to the Houses. MLC for Meander, John Hope, suggested that small acquisitions of land should be made as purchases of large estates would be too costly. Hope did not envisage a large number of applications as the buying of large estates for subdivision was the preferred option of Closer and Returned Soldier Land Settlement Board Presidents. The Attorney General acknowledged the risks involved in the scheme, but defended the bill by declaring that the “greatest caution would be exercised.”

The Council was split on what percentage of the original £150,000 should be spent on acquisition of private properties as opposed to Crown Lands. A letter from the Closer Settlement Board President, Philip Perry, was read to the Council suggesting that £100,000 of that money be spent on buying suitable private property from the start. Members supporting this action contended that soldier settlers would be capable of making a living immediately. The Mercury provided a good summary of the 1 November Legislative Council debate, clearly identifying the disagreement within the Chamber between those who advocated purchasing properties that could be settled immediately, and those who were keen to see areas of Crown land opened up. Martin has argued that the desire for soldiers developing Crown Lands came from the Legislative Councillors, many of whom were large landowners. They saw the bill’s intention compulsorily to acquire properties as threatening, and they faced accusations from the House of Assembly that their prime motivation for arguing for caution on

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100 The Mercury, 12 October, 1916, p. 7.
101 Issues concerning the granting of power to the President rather than the Board, and concerns over the relatively small figure of £150,000 were debated.
103 This will be covered below.
104 William Propsting to the Legislative Council, 31 October 1916. The Mercury, 1 November 1916, p. 7. In reply, fellow MLC James Murdoch (Snr) had a more pessimistic outlook, for while hoping for success, he “feared that many soldiers would not succeed.”
private property purchase was self-interest.\textsuperscript{105} The House of Assembly won their disagreement over amendments with the Legislative Council following a conference between the two Houses. It was resolved in December, three months after the legislation was first introduced.

**Problems and Amendments**

A major flaw in the State Government's Bill was the lack of insistence on soldier settlers to possess the skills necessary for agricultural endeavour. Beresford argued that the "Lee government made no provision, unlike other States, for the preliminary training of soldier settlers."\textsuperscript{106} Martin confirms that the "mere fact of military service in itself" entitled a man to a property, adding that no man who applied from the Huon region had his application rejected.\textsuperscript{107} The application process required only that the applicant reveal any experience "in the business for which he propose[d] to use the land, or in any other class of farming or cultivating the land",\textsuperscript{108} without requiring that he demonstrate any particular aptitude or ability. The President was required to issue a qualification certificate "as to whether [a] discharged soldier has sufficient experience in, or aptitude for, the business or undertaking for which he proposes to use the land."\textsuperscript{109} However, the issuing of such certificates, and therefore land, was obviously not strict enough to remove those less inclined to a rural life. A large element of the failure of the Tasmanian scheme may then be placed as early as the application process. The Act was clearly not rigorous enough to sort the suitable settlers from the unsuitable (a relatively simple process that would have saved the Government enormous sums of money and the soldiers time, money and heartbreak), and was undiscerning and non-discriminatory in its appointment of soldier settler.

\textsuperscript{105} Martin, 'War and after War', pp. 48-52.
\textsuperscript{106} Beresford, 'The World War One Soldier Settlement Scheme in Tasmania', p. 92.
\textsuperscript{107} Martin, 'The Great War's Aftermath in the Huon', p. 46.
\textsuperscript{109} Part 1, Section 11, Number 2. 'Returned Soldiers' Settlement Act, 1916', p. 128. Martin gives a good rundown of the process in his, 'War and after War', pp. 118-119.
applicants. The patriotic war-time atmosphere undoubtedly played a part in the all-inclusive policy of the Lee Government’s Act.

It was not long before The Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act 1916 saw alteration and revision, and 1917 saw the first amendments. They explored the hire-purchase system of advances for returned soldiers as well as tightening up some of the qualification rules. The 1918 amendments incorporated some administrative changes by insisting that one-third of Board members be returned soldiers, and some financial increases, as the expanding cost of the scheme was now being realised. For the financial year ending 1918, £164,672 had been expended in the two years since the scheme had been in operation, surpassing the early budget estimates of £150,000 in the initial Act. The 1918 amendments increased the loan for soldier settlement from £150,000 to £350,000, with advances for the erection of buildings similarly increasing from £300 to £400. The 1919 amendments were introduced when the majority of Tasmanian soldiers returned at war’s end, which explain the revisions contained within. The loan to the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Fund was increased further to £1,350,000, justifying the claims made during the parliamentary debates by various members that the original amount was ridiculously small. For the first time, the amending Act incorporated provisions for training inexperienced applicants, and to “prove whether or not they possess aptitude for farming, by letting them into possession of farm allotments, provisionally, as tenants…” This policy, in practice, was never pursued vigorously enough. To place this amendment in context, the State, in line with mainland counterparts, had not been adequately prepared for the returning

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110 R.H. Hooper, a returned soldier settler and author of The King Island Story, wrote of how the initial applicants of land for lots on King Island counted among them “a jockey, school teachers, shop assistants and a clerk.” See, his, The King Island Story, Sydney, 1973, p. 146.
113 ‘Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Amendment Act, 1918’, p. 371.
114 This point was foremost in the consideration of the Surveyor-General in his Report on the Department of Lands and Surveys, when he noted: “Now that peace has been proclaimed there will be an influx of returned soldiers for which assistance must be provided, and in addition the State will be required to co-operate with other parts of the Commonwealth in finding land to accommodate a number of soldiers from the United Kingdom, who have not hitherto visited Australia.” Report of the Surveyor-General on the Department of Lands and Surveys for 1918-19, JPPP 1919-20, Vol. LXXXI, Paper No. 34, p. 5.
116 Ibid., p. 849.
soldiers and their demands for immediate attention. As Fedorowich has noted, "many states were not only forced to spend more money to meet increased veteran demand, but also to request additional advances from the Commonwealth." Both of these elements inform the legislative progression of the Tasmanian scheme, in response to this extra demand. A circular to State Premiers in February 1919 tabled soldier settlement quotas for each State, proportional to their enlistments. Tasmania’s quota was 743 soldiers, but as the final scheme was to bear out, Tasmanian authorities settled and assisted 2½ times this number by 1929. The 1919 legislative revisions also provided for expert tuition and guidance by farmers to assist the education of prospective returned soldier settlers who had insufficient experience. However, it is arguable that these measures were rather too late for Tasmania as so many soldiers were already on the land with holdings obtained under the initial Act by obtaining qualification certificates allowing them to procure property without the need to demonstrate competency levels. As such, many soldiers already possessed holdings without the requisite experience for successful settlement. Both issues, as reasons for the failure of the scheme, were to be explored later in Tasmania’s 1926 Royal Commission.

In 1920, the loan amount was increased to £2,350,000 – an increase of £2,200,000 in four years, and, as Fedorowich has noted, exhausted the monies envisaged to last three to four years in only two. The amount to be advanced for the erection of buildings was increased to £450, allowing more scope for building on the property, but, for every extra pound advanced and spent, the repayments also increased. The year 1921 saw further amendments to the Act, increasing the loan a

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117 Fedorowich, *Unfit For Heroes*, p. 160. In 1920, Prime Minister Hughes (in correspondence) admonished Tasmanian Premier Lee for exceeding the State’s authority on soldier settlement expenditure. Whether this was “deliberate” as Fedorowich states (p. 162) is debateable, as, in the face of returned soldier demand to be repatriated on the land, it would have been immensely difficult for any sympathetic government to decline their request. See, AOT: PD 1/176/5/20. Correspondence from the Prime Minister’s Department to Premier Lee, 20 February 1920.
118 The table from which these figures are drawn have been reproduced in, Fedorowich, *Unfit For Heroes*, p. 161.
further £500,000\textsuperscript{123} and importantly, introduced eligibility restrictions to applications made within two years and eighty days from the end of the war.\textsuperscript{124} Such an amendment removed the possibility of soldiers applying many years after the war’s conclusion, when they may already have been satisfactorily repatriated into the community, for the land settlement scheme was established to provide a means of employment to returned soldiers, in principle operating in much the same way as other repatriation employment programs. The total monies expended in resuming land for soldier settlement up to the end of the 1920-1921 financial year was approximately £1,953,000,\textsuperscript{125} indicating the extent to which the scheme had expanded.

The 1923 amendment placed the predominant focus on the recovery of forfeited or repossessed holdings and property.\textsuperscript{126} The necessity for this measure was driven by the enormous failure rates then besetting Tasmania’s scheme, with an explosion in the number of failures described as a “holocaust” in the Royal Commission findings.\textsuperscript{127} The amendment became law in early April 1923, with the impetus coming from the sharp increase in forfeitures and repossessions suffered during 1922, and which were subsequently and successively repeated through to the year of the Royal Commission in 1926. From 90 forfeitures of holdings in 1921, the number swelled to 205 by 30 June 1922.\textsuperscript{128} The figures of failure for the year ending 30 June 1923 added a further 285 settlers to the already prohibitively high figures.\textsuperscript{129} It must have been apparent to anyone with any relationship to the scheme – Ministers, President, Board, Inspectors – that something terribly wrong had occurred in Tasmania, despite the scheme being in operation for only six years. This was further reinforced by the implementation of the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Fund Reimbursement Act, 1923, in which a figure of £248,142 had been sustained in losses from the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Fund as a consequence of the immense number of failures.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., p. 1150.
\textsuperscript{125} Figure compiled from table of figures, ‘Expenditure Incurred in Resuming Land for Soldier Settlement’, The Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act: Report of Royal Commission, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{126} ‘Returned Soldiers’ Amendment Act, 1923’, Acts of Parliament, 1922-1923, Act No. 54, p. 334. The year 1923 also marked a notable and tragic shift in the direction of the revisions due to the failures.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
The proliferation of amending legislation to supplement the original 1916 Act reveals two main points: that the initial legislation contained fundamental flaws needing rectification; and that the government, through its continuing amendments displayed a strong commitment to the scheme, but such a commitment was, after 1922, out of a desire to restrict the losses it was incurring rather than making concessions more liberal. William Propsting, Attorney-General in 1916, declared that the legislation “must to some extent be experimental, and it would probably be necessary to subsequently alter the terms and details of the measure.”\(^{130}\) It is doubtful that he anticipated the extent to which the legislation would have to be amended, nor to the circumstances to which these amendments were drafted. By the time provisions stipulating the training of applicants were incorporated in 1919 (and never implemented with the vigour it required), the damage had been done, for a large number of unsuitable applicants had already obtained land. Similarly, by increasing the figure of the advances made to returned soldiers, the Government was trying to provide the means for the soldiers to increase their assets and stand a better chance of success through improved facilities, but only succeeded in increasing the financial burden on them through increased rates and repayments due to the increased value of their property.

From 1922, the first large wave of failures had struck, so the Government responded by proceeding to introduce amendments to allow for the smooth administrative transferral of forfeited and failed holdings back to the Board. While there was nothing fundamentally wrong with this move, the point is that at every stage Tasmanian Governments found themselves in the position of responding to crises rather than pre-empting problems – introducing legislation that was reactive, not proactive. They could realistically have done no other in the circumstances, due to the fundamental problems inherent in the Act in 1916. The problems were intrinsic from the very beginning, and may be explained to a small degree by the context in which it was framed. The patriotic war-time atmosphere sharpened the style of government Walter Lee led in 1916, and explains why the bill was not given as mature consideration as it should otherwise have received. Certainly, Beresford argues that Lee did not possess the sober restraint or mature consideration\(^{131}\) required


for such an important matter. It may also account in some part for the disregarding of warnings, cautions and advice proffered by opposition members and some members of the public about the problems in the bill. The successive legal band-aid solutions, and the inability of successive Ministers to do anything meaningful, or draw attention to the plight of the ailing system only served to distract from, but ultimately aggravate, the fundamental short-comings and short-sightedness of the Tasmanian Returned Soldiers’ Land Settlement scheme.

Land and Progress

When Walter Lee’s Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act came into force at the beginning of 1917,132 the Closer Settlement Board (which was in charge of civilian land settlement schemes) immediately set to work securing properties for potential soldier settlers to occupy. President of the Closer Settlement and subsequent Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Board, Philip J. Perry, noted in his Reports for 1917 that no further properties were to be purchased under the Closer Settlement Act, but that all future purchases would be considered for the settlement of returned soldiers.133 He noted that “A large number of offers of properties, varying widely in area, [had] been received”,134 likely owing to the fact that the Government was entering the market to purchase a great many new properties for returned soldiers. The temptation to sell to the Government at inflated prices was obviously too much for some, with the 1926 Royal Commission noting that many soldier settlers were “pushed on to farms by public enthusiasm or by the urgings of those whose motives were less idealistic…”135 The realisation that potential sellers had to take out the majority or whole of the purchase-money in local inscribed stock at 4 ½ per cent in lieu of cash acted, according to Perry’s 1917 Report, “as a deterrent, and several

134 ‘Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act: Report for 1917’, p. 1. One example of an offer of a property was made by a discharged pay officer at Anglesea Barracks, who offered his property at Oyster Cove for purchase by the Board. Secretary McGough thanked him for the offer, but needed to know further particulars. One of the considerations the Board had to be mindful of was purchasing land in localities where there was demand from returned soldiers. See, AOT: AB 111: Letter from Corporal H.G. Cole for offer for sale of property at Oyster Cove for returned soldiers’ settlement, 25 October 1917; and, AOT: AB 111: Letter from Secretary of Closer Settlements Board to Cpl H.G. Cole, 27 October 1917.  
Negotiations for the purchase of Ringarooma, Dysart, Kingston and Sandy Bay were undertaken at this early stage of the scheme, with the price of the properties varying with quality and location.

According to the Closer Settlements Board Report for 1917, 7313 acres of land had been purchased for soldier settlers at a cost of £43,981, averaging approximately £6 per acre. However, closer scrutiny reveals a marked difference in price per property—an important disparity that the settlers had to bear when the Board decided rents for those properties. At Mauriceton estate in Dysart for example, 3200 acres of land were purchased at approximately £1 8s per acre, while T.A. Horsley’s lot, also at Dysart, was sold 3 months earlier for £6 per acre. The richer farming districts of the north-east in Ringarooma and Scottsdale sold for the high price of between £14 6s. and £20 per acre. The suburban properties around Hobart cost the Board substantial sums of money, as evidenced in the purchase of properties at Cascades (market garden), and an estate at Sandy Bay. The market garden cost a breathtaking £325 for 2 acres, while the Sandy Bay estate cost £1,500 for 24 acres; a cost of £162 10s. and £62 10s. per acre respectively. The problems that these prices introduced for the scheme in Tasmania were two-fold: as Quentin Beresford has noted, “Rent for land that was being leased and interest rates for that which was being purchased were...determined by the cost the government paid for the land.” For land for which the Board paid exceptionally high prices, the soldier settler would bear the costs in higher rents, although this was expected to be offset by the better quality of land.

Beresford pointed out that the acquisition of established farms meant that soldier settlers could work the land immediately, but that the Government’s program of purchasing private properties precipitated an inflation of property prices which was to prove devastating. Martin revealed a regular practice in the Huon region—that many soldiers purchased properties from family members. As he argues, “the

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137 These figures are approximations based on the purchase records provided in the Closer Settlements Board Report for 1917, p. 3.
139 Ibid.
140 Martin, ‘War and after War’, pp. XI, 118. Martin cites several cases from archival material of families intimately involved in the transactions of properties in the Huon region, including instances of brothers purchasing properties from their ex-soldier siblings, and parents living with, and making offers for, their ex-servicemen son’s property. See, pp. 169-171.
advantages were obvious: the family would receive a good price and working capital, and the hoped for upturn in the fruit industry eventually would take care of repayments.\textsuperscript{141} In effect, these instances effected a double-edged sword for these settlers; their families would receive handsome compensation from the Government’s entry onto the market and the soldier had some knowledge of the property, but the higher price paid proved financially disastrous when fruit-growers could not emerge from the industry’s continued economic depression. Martin also argues that “Properties were regularly purchased in the expectation that the settler would be able to find employment elsewhere which would provide the necessary income to keep the settler and his family and repay his debt.”\textsuperscript{142} Tasmanian authorities, against all good judgement, acceded in purchasing properties that were incapable of retaining a soldier and his family, usually after “being pressed by the would-be settler.”\textsuperscript{143} This is but another example of the Board’s accommodating actions being detrimental to the ultimate success of the scheme. If they desired thriving settlements, every day a soldier spent not working on his property was likely to be prejudicial to this outcome.

Crown Land was also set aside for the tenancy of soldier settlers, and the 1917 Report notes that reservations of Crown Land were made on the east coast of King Island amounting to 3000 acres,\textsuperscript{144} in expectation of the return of approximately 138 of the 164 soldiers who left there to heed the Empire’s call.\textsuperscript{145} Eleven orchard allotments on Crown Land had been reserved for soldier settlers at Beaconsfield\textsuperscript{146} – the government’s desire to provide good fruit-bearing properties for its soldiers was borne out in the fact that the blocks had been planted, and were “receiving careful attention under the supervision of the Fruit Expert (Mr. J.M. Ward).”\textsuperscript{147} This care and expense appears contrary to Beresford’s assertion of the Government’s reckless decision not to insist that soldier settlers be adequately trained before working their holdings. However, in a large proportion of cases, the Government was merely

\textsuperscript{141} Martin, ‘The Great War’s Aftermath in the Huon’, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid. See also Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{144} ‘Closer Settlements Board: Report for 1917’, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{145} Twenty-six soldiers did not return. These figures are taken from Reynolds, ‘The Noble Failure: King Island Soldier Settlement, 1918-1930’, p. v. “There are several conflicting figures over how many soldiers enlisted and how many died, this problem arisen due to soldiers registering in Victoria as well as Tasmania. Due to inaccessibility to files, these figures are taken from a memorial plaque and monument on King Island.” p. vi.
\textsuperscript{146} The two major orchard regions in Tasmania were in the Huon south of Hobart, and along the Tamar River in the north. Beaconsfield was situated on the western shore of the Tamar River, in the State’s north.
\textsuperscript{147} ‘Closer Settlements Board: Report for 1917’, p. 2.
throwing away its money and effort if they placed upon land like the planted Beaconsfield orchards, men who did not possess adequate skills.\textsuperscript{148} Ironically, Philip Perry’s report ended with the following: “every possible precaution is taken to safeguard the interests of the State.”\textsuperscript{149}

Up to 1917, the Tasmanian State Government’s policy concerning land for returned soldiers was predominantly the re-purchasing of freehold properties, although the 1917 Surveyor-General’s Report for the Department of Lands and Surveys noted that such a policy could not be economically sustained when the number of returned soldiers seeking land to settle numbered in the thousands rather than the hundreds.\textsuperscript{150} This willingness to comply with soldiers’ wishes was a major point that Pryor identified in his 1932 thesis as a contributing factor to the savage increase in costs for the Tasmanian scheme. Certainly this method was easier for the soldiers to occupy and produce, but the high costs associated with the purchase of small freehold properties tended, as Pryor has argued, to “inflate individual land values and raise the average financial burden of each settler.”\textsuperscript{151} The acquisition of large estates as a defined policy direction was not yet pursued (and not pursued vigorously enough when it was implemented), although as early as the financial year 1917-18, a large estate at Deloraine was purchased for £25,573 for subdivision into 17 allotments.\textsuperscript{152} Until 1918, by the Board’s own admission, the purchase of ready-made farms for soldiers in districts they were already acquainted with was “evidence that the wishes of the applicants have been respected.”\textsuperscript{153} The decision to embark upon a process of purchasing smaller farms was questioned as early as December 1917 by Perry in a memo to the Minister:

The acquisition of this class of property is, in my opinion, a risky proceeding from a business point of view as in the event of their falling back on the hands of the Government they would be hard to

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{150} Department of Lands and Surveys: Report for 1917, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{151} Pryor, ‘The Origins of Australia’s Repatriation Policy, 1914-1920’, p. 254. Martin also deals with this issue in chapter Six of his thesis. He identifies the process of allowing unselected men (ie. their ability not adequately assessed) a “near uncontrolled freedom to purchase properties throughout the state led to a rapid inflation in the price of land and the purchase of many properties of dubious quality.” See his, ‘War and after War’, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{152} Soldiers’ Settlement Board: Report for 1917-18, Schedule A, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., p. 1.
look after and maintain, and probably there would be a difficulty in getting them taken up again. Further, the benefits accruing to the State from settlement of this kind are practically nil, as it means that one man is merely replaced by another. I consider that when suitable Lots are available in repurchased estates the practice of buying single farms should be discontinued.154

Perry was clearly aware of the danger of pursuing a policy that was virtually dictated by the wishes of the soldiers, and foresaw the risks involved should the smaller farms fall back onto the Crown. The response from the Minister offered little guidance:

The Gov. have fully considered this matter & while agreeing that the subdivision of large estates is better, yet it cannot alter the policy at the present time. At the same time in the reasons you state, great care must be taken in the purchase of single farms, to prevent them coming back to the Gov.155

The Acting-President, G.C. Rudge, extolled the virtues of such a policy by justifying it in terms of the satisfaction of the settler, which demonstrated an obvious willingness on behalf of the Board to accommodate the wishes of the soldiers. Pryor, however, identified such a policy as “expensive” and “a sign of weakness.” 156 In his evidence to the 1926 Royal Commission, then-President of the Board W.N. Hurst summed up this early period and the pressures that the Department were under, with some telling conclusions of the policy of soldier satisfaction as the overriding aim:

The Department was besieged by Returned Soldiers who were most insistent that properties should be purchased in their interests and in order to facilitate settlement the Minister took the risk of defective titles and placed the Soldier on the land almost in every case before notification was received from the Crown Law Department that title was correct.157

154 AOT: AB 111: Memorandum from President of Board Philip Perry to the Minister for Lands J.B. Hayes, 27 November 1917. The issue of replacing one farmer for another, as Perry noted, had a broader impact on the Tasmanian demographic according to Ruth Farmer. She argues that “The inflow of ex-servicemen effected more than a substitution of one settler for another: it wrought changes in the composition of the farm population with respect to age and farming experience that to a considerable degree contributed to high rates of out-migration.” R.S. Farmer, ‘The Geography of Migration in Tasmania 1921-1961’, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1968, p. 124.
155 Hayes’ reply was scrawled on the back of Perry’s letter.
As way of justifying his predecessors' actions, Hurst added that to await surveys and legal formalities would have placed the Department in an “impossible position” of having to settle hundreds of soldiers “who were eager to settle down to civilian conditions without any undue delay.”158 The decision to move forward with the scheme without being in any real state of legal or financial preparedness was, in hindsight, a reckless if unavoidable decision, particularly when the end of the first year rent-free period saw a “considerable exodus”159 of soldier settlers take place, of which the Department had to manage and restrict losses.

At this early phase of the scheme, the Board was treading a difficult path at every juncture despite the fact that Rudge (who took over as President in 1918), and his predecessor Perry, had declared that every precaution was being taken to safeguard the State’s interests. The trend toward purchasing smaller established farms resulted in a higher total cost to be borne by the soldier before the costs of advances for stock and seed had been calculated, but the predominant psychology of the wisdom of this policy was that, if the soldiers were placed on land under the conditions of their own choosing, they would have a stronger incentive to remain long term. In addition, the general approach to returned soldiers was sympathetic in tone160 and there was an eagerness to facilitate their wishes due to the esteem in which their war service was held. This is certainly determined from contemporary newspapers. Despite the warning Rudge gave in his 1917-18 Report that any losses accrued in respect of advances were to be borne by the State,161 the decision to embark on the small established farm purchase policy dictated by the returned soldiers themselves proved unsatisfactory in the long term when coupled with other attempts by the Government to encourage soldiers on to the land. For the meantime at least, by 1918, Rudge was cautiously optimistic that the path the Board was following was the correct one, despite acknowledging that some failures had already been registered, and losses recorded.162

158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
160 President W.N. Hurst’s evidence to the 1926 Royal Commission acknowledged this treatment by stating: “The policy throughout [the scheme] has been one of marked sympathetic treatment, and every successive Minister since 1917 has followed this course.” Ibid., p. 5.
162 Ibid.
Problems in making a living

Accommodating soldiers’ wishes did not spare the Board from criticism, or make it any easier to achieve success on the land. The regulations governing settlement were a major impediment for some. One disgruntled returned soldier writing from Wynyard attacked the Department for its poor communications in his enquiry for a block on Yambacooma Estate on King Island. Upon understanding the terms of settlement and amount of advances, he argued the impossibility of making a success of the holding: “I understood...that no farm would be rented to a R.S. [returned soldier] unless it was capable of returning him a fair living.” To make a “fair living” on the block he was interested in would have proved “impossible” in his opinion, and his cognisance of the difficulties probably saved him from a costly and disastrous experience, but he nonetheless was angry too at the Department’s apparent inability to understand the difficulty in making a living under their terms.

A group of soldiers from Lade’s Estate, Scottsdale in May 1917 also proclaimed the extreme difficulty in earning a living from their holdings. That they realised their problem so early in the scheme suggests that the original Lee legislation was faulty, but that they had also apparently misunderstood the situation after believing that the amount for advances was higher than it proved. After costings by them using one of the Lots as an example, they found the remaining working capital an “impossible proposition for farming”, adding rhetorically: “Does any practical man think it can be done?” They added their own suggestions as to how the scheme should operate. Indicating the importance of this claim by a group of returned soldiers, the Minister John Blyth Hayes himself replied, noting of their complaints that, “All the legislation passed in Australia in regard to the settlement of returned soldiers on the land is on the same lines”, and rejected their claims for more liberal assistance on the basis of fiscal economy by stressing the importance of budgetary restraint due to financial liabilities to the taxpayer. The irony was that the current process was perhaps the most uneconomical method that could have been devised.

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163 AOT: AB III: Letter from B.G. Newlands [?] to Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Department, 30 May 1920.
164 The signatories on the letter (7 soldiers) claimed they had been told they could get £350 more for stock and implements than they actually received.
166 AOT: AB I/I: Letter from Minister of Lands and Works to Returned Soldiers at “Lades Estate” Scottsdale, 6 June 1917.
Two soldiers decided to take the issue further and described the extreme difficulty of the situation confronting them, claiming that if they had known of the true conditions of settlement, “they certainly would never have taken up their blocks.”\(^{167}\) The restrictions on what they could purchase with their advances led them to exclaim that, “anyone starting without money of their own they are stranded from the very start”,\(^ {168}\) a point reiterated in the Royal Commission’s own findings. Unfortunately, the lack of one’s own capital to support their efforts, combined with the reliance on advances from the Department, conspired to prejudice successful settlement.

As the work of the Soldiers’ Settlement Department expanded with more and more returning soldiers expressing a desire for land, the existing arrangement of utilising municipal advisory committees for assistance with the Department’s work was scaled back with the appointment of Department representatives to identify, negotiate and supervise the soldier settlement scheme. Such work decreased in the mid-1920s as the numbers of soldier settlers on the land fell and the requirement to purchase land also eased. A Select Committee Report into Returned Soldiers’ Settlement in September 1921 found that the work of Advisory Boards in assisting the Department in determining the suitability and value of land was in some cases unsatisfactory. Some Boards offered sound advice, while “in other districts the values placed on properties were above those of the Government, and too often a compromise was made between the exalted local valuation and that of the Department.”\(^{169}\) As a consequence, some properties were purchased at a price above their productive value, or in the case of some purchases in the Huon, against the advice of the Board’s own evaluator there, Grace W.F. Calvert.\(^ {170}\) During 1919-20, the Department trialled a locally-based inspection process whereby local men inspected the properties on the Department’s behalf. Inspections were carried out half-yearly, with reports assessing progress, improvements effected, condition of

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\(^{167}\) AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from A.W. Loone on behalf of Gordon Thorpe and Charles Butler, Lade’s Estate, Scottsdale, to the Minister for Lands and Works, 2 June 1917.

\(^{168}\) Ibid.


\(^{170}\) Martin, ‘The Great War’s Aftermath in the Huon’, p. 47. A soldier settler at Dromedary wrote to The Mercury of his anger that the Warden and two councillors from Brighton Council were also the local valuers in the area. His disgust was that they recommended the property he was dwelling on be bought by the Closer Settlement Board for him, without inspecting the house—a house that councillors admit was “not fit to house a pig.” The valuation was clearly not in the interests of the soldier or the Board, but most probably for local residents. See, ‘Soldier Settlement at Dromedary’, letter to the editor from W.F. Patman, The Mercury, 16 February 1921, p. 3.
stock, and any problems or special issues. Additional inspections were carried out when required. During 1920-21, the system of inspection was altered, dividing the State into 44 divisions, with 37 officials overseeing the inspection and purchasing requirements on behalf of the Department. This added to the overall expense of administering the scheme, but allowed the Department clearer information on the settlers, and in turn gave more guidance and assistance for the settlers.

The signing of the Armistice saw a marked increase in expenditure and activity for the Board as more properties were purchased to cope with the increase in applicants. From 234 applications for assistance in 1917-18, of which 130 were granted, the number grew to 584 applications in 1918-19, of which 351 were assisted. Some £252,700 was expended on the purchase of estates in the 1918-19 financial year alone, signifying an enormous expansion of costs. While the policy of purchases of small ready-made farms was continued primarily due to their attractiveness to soldier settlers, Rudge complained that the Board had difficulty in acquiring larger estates for subdivision due to a “disinclination on the part of the owners to dispose of their estates”, and where offers were made to the Board, the prices demanded exceeded their value.

Another concern noted in the Surveyor-General’s Report on the Lands and Surveys Department was the continuing preference for smaller ready-made farms. The newly-signed peace would exercise greater demands than had hitherto been exacted on the Department, and, coupled with the assurance given to Sir Rider Haggard for the settlement of up to 300 British soldiers, the Surveyor-General noted that such additional demand “will strain our resources to the utmost limit.” As such, the purchasing of improved farms would, according to the Surveyor-General’s report, be unlikely to satisfy such an increase in demand, and “the time may come when the States will be forced to face the problem of preparing Crown Lands for the

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174 ibid.
175 The increase in activity saw the Department move from its existing site in the Public Buildings, Davey Street Hobart, to The Deanery in Macquarie Street Hobart.
occupation of soldiers.” 178 The notion of settling returned soldiers on uncleared Crown Land did not appeal to the Surveyor-General, who intimated that such a programme would be problematic. By mid-1919, however, Rudge reported with some satisfaction that settlers engaged in dairying in the north-east and north-west of the State were progressing particularly well, although settlers engaged in fruit growing were having mixed success due to issues of access to mainland markets. 179 General settlement progress saw Rudge estimate up to 85% of settlers making satisfactory to fair progress, with approximately 15% little or no progress. 180 These latter “doubtful permanent land settlers” were attributed by Rudge to “either incapacity or little desire for work”; 181 the idea that ex-soldiers had been selected under the scheme who were unable or unwilling to persevere with a rural vocation must have concerned both the Board and the Minister in charge. They would have been well aware of the problem facing them, but the 1926 Royal Commission found that, despite acknowledging inadequacies with the scheme, nothing tangible was ever done to rectify the problems. 182 The Royal Commission argued that this was an impotence some settlers recognised. 183 These issues will be dealt with in more detail later.

The other issue arising from the 1918-19 Report were incidences of soldier settlers illegally disposing of stock still owned, under the terms of the scheme, by the Crown. Property purchased by advances to the soldier remained the Crown’s property until such time as the property had been fully paid for by the settler, and removing, selling, trading or eating of such property (sheep and cattle) until that time

178 Ibid.
179 Rudge’s 1918-19 Report conceded: “Lack of shipping facilities was responsible for settlers being deprived of the mainland markets and higher prices for produce. Men on orchard properties especially suffered through this cause. Some have excellent crops, and those who were fortunate enough to ship fruit had excellent returns.” ‘Soldiers’ Settlement Board: Report for 1918-19’, p. 2. These accounts highlight the fact that issues outside of the Board’s control – in this case, access to shipping – could also impact on the success or otherwise of soldiers settled under the scheme. Martin’s study of the Huon found that “every season from 1917 to 1925 proved financially disastrous” for small fruit growers, who “found themselves continually bedevilled by the vagaries of the weather; the rapidly escalating costs involved in fruit production; sever post-war shipping restrictions; the devastating consequences of an ever-deteriorating English economy and its restrictive fruit quotas; and financially crippling returns growers received for their fruit.” This was in addition to the ill-advised programme of small and extremely costly property purchases. See his, ‘The Great War’s Aftermath in the Huon’, p. 43.
181 Ibid.
183 Ibid., p. 14 and p. 17.
without permission in many cases saw the Department investigate and take action against the settler. The illegal disposal of such property was the centre of the Department's investigation in 1922 against soldier settler T.C. Adair from New Norfolk, who sold a mare to his neighbour without the Department's permission. The purchaser, Charles Jones, was not a returned soldier, and believed that Adair owned the mare, declaring he had no knowledge that Adair was a soldier settler. As so many cases of Departmental correspondence reveal, much of the stock bought by advances was written off when it could not be traced or proved not worth pursuing for prosecution. The Adair case, however, was one that the Department intended prosecuting.

The illegal disposal of stock was, after non-payment of arrears, the most troublesome aspect of the relationship between the soldier settler and the Tasmanian Returned Soldier Settler authorities. The recovery of the Department's stock and implements posed the Board great difficulty - in proving that such a disposal had taken place, deciding what action to take if at all, and, when legal action was decided upon, in making an effective case. A case against three soldier settlers in October 1922 had to be dropped after it was decided there was no case for the Crown. Losses of stock and implements were costly to the Crown. A memo from the Advance and Correspondence Clerk, Noel Lamidey, to the Secretary of the Department revealed this activity:

[T]he practice of disposing of the Board's Stock, etc., is becoming a very serious one, and with such fine examples as are at present before us, I am sure a very bad precedent will be pointed, which some of the Lessees will take full advantage of. With the abolition of the old inspection system and the appointment of six Permanent Officers, it becomes more apparent that the dishonest Settlers have ample opportunity for disposing of the Board's Stock, etc., and the chances of ultimately recovering the same are very meagre.

184 AOT: AB 5/1: Declaration by Charles James Jones on the purchase of a horse from T.C. Adair, 20 December 1922. Rudge's 1920 Report also noted that, "In some instances stock has been disposed of without the consent of the Board through ignorance of the conditions of agreement." 'Soldiers' Settlement Board: Report for 1918-19', p. 2.

185 The illegal disposal of Departmental stock was the focus of correspondence between the Advance and Correspondence Clerk Noel Lamidey, and the Secretary to the Board, J.L. McGough. Three soldier settlers, L. Bosworth, N. Ellis, and F.J. Beckett had cases against them dropped after consultation with Crown Law Officers. AOT: AB 1/1: Memorandum from Advance and Correspondence Clerk, Noel W. Lamidey to The Secretary, Returned Soldiers' and Closer Settlement Department, 16 October 1922, on the Illegal disposal of Stock – Hire-Purchase Agreements, p. 1.

186 Ibid., pp. 1-2.
Lamidey clearly feared the notion of soldiers abusing the Department, and expressed the same fear to the President in a Sandfly case involving the illegal sale of a cow to one of the soldier’s neighbours. The police were involved, and the local Departmental Inspector was instructed to remove the cow and sell it to recover the Crown’s money. Lamidey was especially vigorous in his work, and keen to dispel the image of a Department impotent to act where illegal disposal had taken place. Despite queries to involve the police where missing stock was discovered, the general intention was not to pursue legal action against soldier settlers.

The expected rush on properties and assistance under the soldier settlement scheme came during 1919-20 when the bulk of the men had been demobilised, with 1000 men placed on farms, and another 124 granted free selections of Crown Land. A massive 790 properties were acquired at a cost of £1,215,185 – nearly £1 million more than the previous financial year. Overall, 1252 people were granted assistance under the scheme to 30 June 1920. The increase in work for the Department saw an increase in employees and those contracted on the Department’s behalf. A Clerk of Works, James Duncan was employed to arrange work for the erection of dwellings on land leased by soldier settlers, after the Secretary to the Department J.L. McGough noted some complaints owing to delays in erecting buildings, due to the massive increase in work. The Surveyor-General’s Report for 1919-20 also noted the increased workload arising from the expansion in the Soldier Settlement Board’s activities, with the majority of the Lands and Surveys Department district surveyors

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187 "[I]f there is any question of [the neighbour] Mrs Crane being permitted to retain the Cow, there is the possibility of the Department being brought into ridicule, as it is quite evident that this lady, who lives next door to [soldier settler] Freeman, must have known that the Cow in question was the property of the Crown. Furthermore, the seizure of Crown property is the only way to prohibit and hold in check the possibility of wholesale disposal of Crown property, and unless this action is taken the Board has no security over anything they hire to the Settlers." AOT: AB 1/1: Memorandum from Advance and Correspondence Clerk, Noel W. Lamidey to The President, Returned Soldiers’ and Closer Settlement Department, 1 November 1922, on the Illegal disposal of Stock.

188 See, AOT: AB 1/1: Memorandum from Advance and Correspondence Clerk, Noel W. Lamidey to The Secretary, Returned Soldiers’ and Closer Settlement Department, 23 January 1923, on Ex-Lessees Accounts. In 1923, Lamidey attempted to clear up the accounts of 112 lessees who had had their leases cancelled, and all of them involved missing stock that could not be traced by the Inspector. Lamidey inquired with the President as to whether to involve the police in each case as to the soldiers’ intentions to replace or reimburse the Department for the loss.


190 Ibid.
employed on soldier settlement surveys for the year.\textsuperscript{191} The Government began accepting war gratuity bonds as payment from the soldiers, so the recovery of costs associated with the scheme was made easier for both the soldier and the Department.\textsuperscript{192}

President Rudge again justified the continuation of the policy of purchasing small farms. He noted the difficulty in purchasing suitable large estates for the soldiers as high returns were being made for farm produce and wool, so the resumption of smaller holdings was continued. The soldiers themselves, according to Rudge, preferred "adequately equipped" single farms, despite acknowledging that "the subdivision of larger estates is in the best interests of the State..."\textsuperscript{193} Interestingly though, the Board continued to purchase properties that were not in the State's best financial interests (despite every annual Board Report stating that progress was made in so far as the State's interests were being safeguarded), and that such a policy was acknowledged by the President as precipitating an inflation of land prices driven by the Government's aggressive land purchase policy. When land purchase prices rose, the soldier occupying that land had to bear the extra cost (unless the land value was written down), placing an additional burden on his capacity to pay. Rudge was gambling, and he knew it, when he stated that for the year 1919-20, the 790 properties purchased were at prices such "as provided a good security for the State, and ensured the success of the settler, provided he were willing to work."\textsuperscript{194} Perhaps fearing the outcome of further purchases and settlements on smaller properties as a result of the Government-driven price boom, Rudge strongly recommended no further single farms be purchased by the Board, despite widespread support for this policy by Councils in the Huon region, and its vocal advocacy by the \textit{Huon Times}.\textsuperscript{195}


\textsuperscript{192} One such surrender of War Gratuity Bonds as payment is on file, where G.E. Woods from Ulverstone stated that, "I am advising the Minister for Gratuity to [use my Gratuity payment for farm repayment] as it will be more convenient I think. At least you will be sure of repayment." AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from G.E. Woods, Ulverstone, to the Minister for Repatriation, 22 June 1922. Material relating to this issue in correspondence between the State and the Commonwealth is also found in, AOT: AB 47/2: pp. 70-73.

\textsuperscript{193} 'Returned Soldiers' and Closer Settlement Department: Report for 1919-20', p. 3.

\textsuperscript{194} \textit{Ibid}. [my emphasis.]

\textsuperscript{195} Martin, 'War and after War', p. 61. The paper claimed that by placing a man where he wanted to be on a smaller farm and not on a subdivided estate far from friends and family - he was more likely to be happier and have assistance in making his property a success. Government Fruit Expert, J.M. Ward, also stated that in the Derwent Valley, he had recommended purchase of a fruit property for a returned
By 1919, the soldier land settlement scheme in Tasmania was already going awry as the letters and general correspondence of the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Board show. Many soldiers were struggling to succeed whether through lack of enthusiasm or a grim realisation of the difficulties involved. Unable to work their holdings into a profitable plot, many soldiers simply walked off their properties, unable to pay their rents, pay for stock, seed or implements, and, with the double blow of an unsympathetic market slump and poor seasons, many soldiers had their hearts and their backs broken under the strain of an unprofitable holding. Such a case occurred early in the scheme in 1919, where, after realising he could not make a success of his holding, returned soldier A. Manson walked off the land. Manson held a property at Summerleas Road near Kingston, some 10km south of Hobart, and revealed in a letter to the Board:

I beg to surrender my lease of the property...on the Summerleas Road leased by me under ‘The Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act, 1916’. I have been on the property 1 year and five months and find that I am unable to make a living on the place. It will not be possible for me to meet my obligations so far as rent and interest are concerned, but as against this there is a crop of fruit on the place which I am quite prepared the Board should take over as settlement.

Manson’s soldier settlement experience was all over by March 1919 despite only taking up the lease on 13 September 1917 on an area of 46 ¾ acres. By the time Manson surrendered his holding, many in the AIF had still not even returned to Australia.
Settlement appeared slightly more successful in the north of the state than the south, with the Minister for Lands, Alexander Hean, declaring to the House of Assembly on 30 September 1920 that, reports "are of an encouraging character, and augur well for the ultimate success of the land settlement scheme", adding that, "the figures for this State compare most favourably with those of the mainland States."199 For soldiers possessing limited expertise in farming, in 1920, Campania estate was used to teach eight ex-soldiers, under the tutelage of a practical agriculturist. Hean explained to the House that blocks were sowed by the Department for these soldiers on account of a delay in survey and subdivision so as not to prejudice them when settled, by late sowing.200 Incidentally, the promise made to Sir Rider Haggard to settle British ex-servicemen saw six of the eight soldiers settled under Departmental guidance of British stock. By the next year, three of the soldiers had already left the estate, despite the Department’s assistance.201 Plans for an Ephinora Settlement Scheme for Campania Estate were shelved out of a lack of interest and lack of suitable allotments for such a settlement,202 so British ex-soldiers were settled throughout the State instead, with 35 taking up land in Tasmania to September 1920.203

200 ibid., p. 5.
201 ’Returned Soldiers’ and Closer Settlement Department: Report for 1920-21’, p. 3.
202 Ruth Farmer tied the Ephinora program to a belief by the Agent General in London that land settlement and immigration were “key factors in the permanent progress of the State”, but that, the plan had been “killed by the Government's inability to find an acceptable area for a community farm; even the 35 members of the scheme who had arrived by 30 September 1920 had been individually allocated land in different parts of Tasmania.” See Farmer, ‘The Geography of Migration in Tasmania 1921-1961’, p. 65. Robson notes the existence of an Ephinora programme, “of which the state government claimed never to have heard but which was perhaps connected with Rider Haggard.” British settlers were See, Robson, A History of Tasmania. Volume II, p. 410.

Interestingly, a soldier who served with the Otago Infantry Battalion in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force inquired as to his eligibility for assistance from the Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Fund to enable him to obtain land under the Tasmanian Act, having a “very good object in view...” The reply from the Secretary of the Board, J.L. McGough stated that he was ineligible, and so could not put his plan to the test. See, AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from John H. Hardy to Secretary State War Council, 17 November 1917; AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from Secretary Closer Settlement Board to John. H. Hardy, 22 November 1917. The scheme in Tasmania was open to Tasmanian soldiers, interstate soldiers and British soldiers, but closed to other members of Commonwealth forces. In response to the 1921 Select Committee Report, then-Minister for Lands Alex Hean remarked that he knew of “50 or 60 soldiers who had come from Victoria to go on the land in Tasmania, because the conditions were more favourable...” See, Alex Hean to the House of Assembly, 26 January 1922, The Mercury, 27 January 1922, p. 7. In regards to numbers of British ex-servicemen who were settled under the Tasmanian Returned Soldier Land Settlement scheme, the expert on this aspect of British emigration in the Empire, Kent Fedorowich, could not arrive at any figures. See, Unfit for Heroes, p. 189, n. 133.
Martin reports that an English ex-serviceman, W.E. Cowper, applied for a property in the Tasmania in 1923. After rejections for properties in the Launceston area, he travelled south and was advised by Huon RSL President T.A. Frankcomb to abandon plans to buy an orchard property, as “good paying orchards were few and far between, and were rarely, if ever, for sale.” Further, prospective British ex-servicemen interested in settling under Tasmania’s Soldier Land Settlement Scheme were, Hean announced, to “satisfy the [Soldiers’ Settlement] Board that he is in possession of at least £100 capital before he can be deemed eligible as an applicant for land under ‘The Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act’.” Clearly, lessons learnt in dealing with Tasmanian soldiers on the land had been implemented for future applications from British ex-soldiers, as lack of personal capital was hindering the success of some soldier settlers.

By the end of the financial year to 1920, some 20 failures had been registered – explained in most cases by Rudge’s annual Report as due to “want of knowledge, thrift, and perseverance.” Rudge’s 1919-20 Report painted a picture of soldier settlers generally suffering no more than other farmers, but this was perhaps more wishful thinking than reality. As Beresford has noted, “Many of the soldier settlers were engaged in mixed farming, relying principally on crops. From the time the scheme was operational, these men were faced with the declining viability of this area of the State’s rural industry.” Their farming direction placed them in a more vulnerable position from the start, and, coupled with a relative lack of experience and expertise as against more established farmers, their outlook was not generally promising. The lack of their own capital compounded the issue. Prospects for some settlers looked particularly good – the Yambacooma Estate on King Island and

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204 Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 128.
207 ‘Returned Soldiers’ and Closer Settlement Department: Report for 1919-20’, p. 3.
209 Despite the good quality land on offer, by late June 1919, returned men and the public were expressing their “considerable dissatisfaction and indignation” at the delay in valuations of Yambacooma Estate by the Board, as returned soldiers were understandably keen to take up holdings at the earliest possible convenience. See, The Mercury, 27 June 1919, p. 4. Unfortunately, Roger Kellaway identified Yambacooma Estate as the only “significant advance in rural settlement” to the period post-Depression. This is testament to the quality of the land, and the organization of the farms there. See his, ‘Geographical Change in Tasmanian Agriculture during the Great Depression’, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1989, p. 360; see also Farmer, ‘The Geography of Migration in Tasmania 1921-1961’, 1968, p. 102. Yambacooma Estate was the largest single transaction carried out by the Closer Settlement Board since 1906. It was 8,000 acres in size, and was
some northern districts offered good opportunities for dairying — but conversely, there was evidence that settler selection methods were failing the scheme. Of the failures, Rudge deemed “that a number consider that farming does not call for any special exertion, and this class represents the greater part of the defaulters.” For such instances, the original legislation did not adequately enshrine a vigorous enough selection process. The 1926 Royal Commission found that this process was the “worst outstanding fault in the carrying out of the scheme.”

The Tasmanian legislation desired to settle men close to infrastructure and roads to better facilitate the movement of their produce. Attempts to place soldier settler properties near infrastructure did not always work out in practice however. For instance, G.H. Watts wrote to his local MHA for Darwin Joshua Whitsitt in May 1920 complaining of the lack of a reasonable road to his property near Moorleah on the north-west coast in order that he be able to make a living from his holding. After 4 ½ years military service he maintained, “It seems very hard for a man...not to have even a bridle track to his block which also serves 4 or 5 others.” While the complaint was forwarded to the Minister for Public Works, no funds were available to construct the road Watts needed. Indeed, a major problem facing Tasmanian returned soldiers was the lack of adequate infrastructure to access and remove produce from their properties. Poor roads added to the difficulty in transport and added time and cost to shipping. There were also problems of constructing liveable dwellings for the soldier and his family, while ensuring the property was being worked, as not all properties had such buildings. Reynolds noted that some King Island settlers purchased transportable houses and hauled them to their properties over appalling roads by bullock wagons, while Garton noted the case of Tasmanian E.J.H. Joseph who could not afford building materials and so lived with his family in a tent “for a few years”, surviving on rabbit. The large percentage of pre-established Tasmanian subdivisions into 51 lots. For a more detailed treatment on Yambacooma Estate soldier settlement, see, Reynolds, ‘The Noble Failure: King Island Soldier Settlement, 1918-1930’, pp. 27-28.

210 Returned Soldiers’ and Closer Settlement Department: Report for 1919-20’, p. 3.
213 Reynolds notes that King Island settlers were blighted by the lack of poor road networks on the island. “Large amounts of money that had been allocated for soldier settlement road development”, she argues, “was later earmarked for general road development leaving some settlers’ roads near impassable.” See her, ‘The Noble Failure: King Island Soldier Settlement, 1918-1930’, p. 31-47.
214 Ibid., p. 33.
215 Garton, The Cost of War, p. 128.
properties purchased for returned soldiers would have reduced the incidences of inadequate accommodation as Joseph encountered, although it was a more pertinent issues for settlers who took up subdivided blocks.

The Surveyors’ Annual Reports from 1919-20 described a year in which labour shortages resulted in high costs, with “prevailing high prices of produce and stock of all kinds”216 conspiring to make the transition from soldier to settler that much more difficult. For those on largely uncleared blocks, the task in clearing the block economically would have been difficult, while new farmers on smaller single farms still had to face the higher costs for stock and seed to get started. These problems were compounded by poor roads preventing easy cartage of produce as in the case of the Fingal and Mersey districts,217 lack of available shipping for orchardists state-wide,218 lack of railways for transport as in the case of the District of Central Wellington,219 and, as the surveyor for King Island noted, the construction of a jetty on the northern end of King Island which, in his estimation, would save soldier settlers at Yambacooma and Boggy Creek estates “from 15 to 20 miles cartage.”220 Conversely, encouraging reports for soldier settlements emerged from District Surveyor Reports in 1919-20, with soldiers involved in dairying enjoying a good season, and returned men in the district of Pembroke, Forestier and Tasman Peninsulas securing “some of the best farms in the district...”221 The surveyor for the district, J.H. Hinsby, noted that returned soldiers were eschewing the trend of grazing in the district and opting to farm more generally. They were also, he continued, in the majority of cases “doing a good deal of solid work on their holdings, and land is being cultivated that has laid idle for years, and, given a fairly wet season, should give good

217 The District Surveyor for Fingal, Thomas Clark, noted in his 1919-20 Report that, “All the main roads in the district are in need of attention. The traffic these are called upon to carry is being yearly increased.” The Surveyor for the District of Mersey, Joseph Wilks, felt that the expansion in land selections required good roads to service these areas, with specific attention to construct a road from Mole Creek up the Mersey River having “astonishing results, as it would open up land practically all the way...” Ibid., pp. 12-13. With Clark surveying 1760 acres and Wilks surveying 4116 acres of land for soldier settlement for that financial year alone, the need for effective and efficient infrastructure was crucial for the efficient cartage of produce for civilian and soldier farmers.
218 Surveyors’ District reports from both Devon and Pembroke, Forestier and Tasman Peninsula mention a want of available shipping affecting orchardists’ returns. See, Ibid., pp. 11, 14.
219 Ibid., p. 15.
220 Ibid. See also, Reynolds. The Noble Failure: King Island Soldier Settlement, 1918-1930’, p. 46.
returns." F.E. Windsor, District Surveyor for Central Wellington, reported positively that soldier settlers were busy, and “given fair seasons, are bound to make good.” While not all doom and gloom for Tasmanian soldier settlers to mid-1920, the catastrophic failure of the Tasmanian scheme was yet to fully hit.

The financial year ending 1921 saw a reduction in the number of property purchases, and instead the major financial expenditure was directed to the purchase of stock and implements required for the successful running of the scheme. Despite this, 414 soldiers were still placed on farms, while the total number granted assistance under the scheme for the year was 586. A further 306 properties had been purchased at a cost of £355,642 – a major reduction from the £1.2 million spent the previous year. The policy of purchasing single farms added to the increasing financial outlay of the scheme, with Rudge admitting continued difficulty in obtaining larger estates for subdivision. He felt this was offset by the fact that the soldiers preferred smaller farms, declaring that their war service justified the continuation of a policy that accorded most closely with their wishes. Unfortunately, the scheme was haemorrhaging money as a consequence of this decision, and it was plainly obvious that the interests of the State, and hence the taxpayer, were not receiving the due care that they deserved. Of even more alarm was the fact that over 90 men had left their farms during the course of the year. While Rudge explained some of these losses as due to troubles for fruit growers and mixed farmers, he stated with some regret that, “in numerous cases it is noticed farms have been handed back apparently for the reason that the free period had expired.”

The accommodation of soldiers’ interests by the purchasing of smaller ready-made farms would have paid off if those soldiers had remained on their properties, but the double blow of higher purchase prices and the need to manage a property cast back upon the Board negated any potential positive outcome from the policy. The District Surveyor’s Report from Pembroke, Tasman and Forestier Peninsulas noted that “the soldiers are doing well in some

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222 Hinsby did note however, that free selections of Crown Land being selected by returned soldiers, distinct from land purchased by the Board, was “almost worthless”, and that in his opinion, there was no land left in the district worth selection. Ibid.
223 Ibid., p. 15.
225 Ibid., p. 3.
226 Ibid., pp. 3-4.
instances”, but added with concern that “in others [they] are neglecting their holdings, and I am afraid, when they have to meet their interest, will turn it in.”

Such a failure rate indicates a lack of discretion when applications for the scheme were assessed, despite the assurances given by the Secretary and President of the Board. District Surveyors’ Reports indicated mixed fortunes for soldier settlers, as some on the State’s North-West coast and King Island were generally progressing well, while others were not. The District of Central Wellington in the usually fertile far north-west coast, however, saw settlement progress retarded by low prices for crops, with soldier settlers especially suffering a “disastrous” season. The district surveyor, F.E. Windsor, noted that “some of the soldier settlement lots seem to...have been purchased at too high a rate; and will have to be reduced in price, and payments extended over longer periods before the holders can possibly hope to become owners.” These difficulties were arguably compounded by the Department’s policy of single purchases, transferring the onus of extra debt onto the soldier in addition to the difficulty of earning a living from his holding.

1921 Select Committee Report into Tasmanian Soldier Settlement

As political pressure increased on Lee to manage more responsibly the affairs of the Soldier Settlement Scheme, at the insistence of James Newton, a Select Committee under was established to inquire into the state of the scheme. Newton was a Bass MHA, President of the Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Fathers’ Association, and a leading spokesman for the responsible and fair administration of the soldier settlement scheme – both for the soldiers, and for the State. Lee’s slowness at dealing directly and openly with the mounting problems of soldier settlement, and the ferment over how to manage a system that was not serving the settlers or the State, led to the Committee’s creation. On 8 September 1921, this Select Committee was

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228 Ibid., p. 16. It is likely the soldiers suffered more than their neighbours due to their comparative dearth of experience.
229 Ibid., p. 17.
230 For the role of the Fathers’ Association, and Newton’s role, see the Politics chapter.
231 Martin reports that a censure motion against Lee was brought, but brushed aside by the Government’s numbers. See his, ‘War and after War’, p. 141.
appointed by the House of Assembly to inquire and report on the system and settlement of the soldiers under the scheme in Tasmania; the advisability of utilising Crown Lands for bush runs for soldier settlers; and on improvements to properties held by soldier settlers.232 There was a definite need for a Committee to report into the scheme at this time – many soldiers had either left the land, or were unhappy at the situations they found themselves under. The Board was struggling to administer a scheme that had been hastily and injudiciously created. The financial demands placed on the State’s Treasury (outside of the monies forwarded by the Commonwealth) were beginning to alarm.

One eloquent soldier settler was prompted by the debate to share his experiences on the land. His £1,700 orchard property was well cared for, but the £150 worth of implements he purchased was not enough to purchase fodder, seed, dray and manures the property still required. Commonwealth bungling over shipping of fruit to the United Kingdom and a glutted Sydney fruit market meant that returns barely covered the costs of the cases. He was due to pay £100 in interest on the property, and his quandary was that he was still without the funds properly to maintain and manure his orchard as it badly required.233 The soldier’s anxiety was obvious, and his frustration equally so, for he reported that:

If I spend the £100 which I have saved from last season’s returns in paying my interest, I must go without manure, spraying pump, dray, and numerous other items which I simply cannot do without, whilst if I buy them I cannot meet my interest, and will get bumped off the property.234

His case required flexibility, and proposals in Parliament to reduce payments for a settler’s second year were no comfort to this settler, as he feared abuses of power and favouritism if such a plan was endorsed.235 Certainly, the orchardist settler claimed that conditions needed to be reviewed in order that he and other earnest colleagues

233 References throughout the Board’s reports, and from the State’s fruit expert and Board Inspectors reiterate that orchard properties must have constant care and work to remain in a profitable state. Letting them fall into disrepair meant substantial expense or grubbing out in order to make the property worthwhile again.
234 ‘Returned Soldiers Closer Settlement Act’, letter to the editor from Soldier Settler, The Mercury, 23 September 1921, p. 3.
235 Ibid.
have a chance to make good: "Eighteen months is not enough time for a man ‘off
scratch’ to get on his feet, and why should not a law be made extending the time for
payments? The public want to give us a fair deal, why then should Parliament demur
at doing so?"\textsuperscript{236}

Premier Lee did not support the appointment of a Select Committee to
investigate soldier settlement. He claimed in late October 1921 that it would only
"increase the cost to the State."\textsuperscript{237} Lee was facing difficult questions related to the
blow-out in the State's budget. Clearly on the defensive, he produced a range of
garbled responses to questions on the soldier settlement scheme, as the scheme, along
with Hydro-Electricity, were the two main causes of this blow-out. Labor Opposition
leader Joseph Lyons claimed there was no check on spending in the Soldier
Settlement Department and that lands had been purchased at top values, to which Lee
could only retort that land had to be purchased quickly.\textsuperscript{238} This was immediately
seized upon by the Opposition. Lyons next claimed that the Nationalist Government
had "not interfered with the big landowners, but had allowed the returned soldiers to
be imposed upon."\textsuperscript{239} In discussion over spending and the soldier-settled Maitland
estate, the Premier admitted that in spending large sums of money, "there was going
to be a certain amount of leakage and wastage, which would not perhaps be found in a
case of private control."\textsuperscript{240} Lee continued that "Some of the men who had gone on
the property would never succeed if put on the best property in the country. They had
no adaptability for farming."\textsuperscript{241} This merely increased the pressure on Lee, in what
was turning into a torrid parliamentary session for him. Franklin Labor MHA Ben
Watkins asked the suitability of applicants for the scheme; Lee, on the defensive
throughout, had been run to ground on the issue. "The position", Lee argued, "often
was that a man came back from the war and said he had been a farmer all his life; he
was a married man, and wanted to go on the land. He had to be given an opportunity.
The Soldier Settlement Board made every investigation possible."\textsuperscript{242} The very nature
of Lee's defence made abundantly clear why a Select Committee had been established

\textsuperscript{236} \textit{Ibid.} This ex-digger was so concerned at receiving an opportunity to succeed that he even suggested
that soldier settlers form themselves into an association "to protect themselves from the 'forgetfulness'
of those with the power to assist, but I hope with not the 'desire to crush'.''

\textsuperscript{237} "No-Confidence Motion', \textit{The Mercury}, 27 October 1921, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{238} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{239} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{240} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{241} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{242} \textit{Ibid.}
in the first place. The Premier clearly had little control over the direction of the Department, and perhaps even less about how to change its course.

When the Report of the Select Committee\(^\text{243}\) was handed down in December, it identified many problems in the running of the scheme, and suggested remedies. The Committee’s assessments pre-dated the Royal Commission’s findings by five years, drawing similar conclusions as to the state of the settlement scheme, and the ability of the soldiers to make a living. The recommendations made by the Committee could not, however, save the 197 soldiers who had forfeited their leases by the time of the report’s completion.

The Report’s findings were based on a sample of 67 soldier settlers, 6 Departmental Officers, and Inspectors and other witnesses, properties were inspected to ascertain “whether the system of settlement and supervision was such that would enable settlers to meet their obligations to the Soldier’s Settlement Department and provide a living for themselves and families.”\(^\text{244}\) Their findings suggested that soldier settlers faced great difficulties in doing so under the present scheme. The Committee acknowledged that the work of the Board was fraught with difficulties: that the physical and mental capacity of the men had been marked by war; that there was no previous experience in this type of undertaking; and that the Board’s entry into the land market as purchasers precipitated a price rise in values which, “even taking into consideration the high value of land products then obtaining, gave settlers who were physically fit only a medium chance of making good.”\(^\text{245}\)

In addition to the criticisms of the assistance provided by some Advisory Boards, noted earlier, the Committee blamed land values on the inability of some soldier settlers to meet their liabilities with the Department – whether through the cost of the land being too high in comparison with the value of its product, repayments on advances needed to run the property more than could be realised from the product of the land, or land that had to be cleared before use imposing a financial debt the soldier

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\(^{243}\) A summary of the report was published in *The Mercury*, 15 December 1921, p. 10.

\(^{244}\) *Returned Soldiers’ Settlement: Report of Select Committee*, p. 2.

\(^{245}\) *Ibid.* Concerns over the physical and psychological state of returned soldiers settling on the land were widespread, with George Taylor arguing through his *Soldier* weekly that many veterans lacked the physical and nervous strength to succeed on farms. See, M. Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought, 1890-1960*, St Lucia, 1984, p. 198. Taylor, Roe argues, had a profound interest in repatriation matters and was intensely interested in the social advancement of returned servicemen and civilians though housing programmes like the War Service Homes scheme, and in war memorials. See, pp. 198-199.
could not repay before the land was ready for cultivation.\textsuperscript{246} The size of some allotments meant that on farms frequently used in previous seasons, there was no opportunity to allow the land to lay fallow. The Committee recommended that, where a property was known to have been purchased at too high a value, the capital value of the holding be re-appraised and interest rate reduced to 4 per cent.\textsuperscript{247} Where holdings on large estates were too small, subdivision should be undertaken to allow the settler the best possible chance of success,\textsuperscript{248} or what Justice Pike termed in his 1929 Commonwealth Inquiry – the incorporation of Home Maintenance Areas to allow a reasonable chance of earning a comfortable living.

The orchard properties of which the Board was so proud were criticised due largely to the age of the trees or other unsuitabilities. One Departmental Inspector claimed that old orchards, which were at their best a quarter of a century ago (like nine out of ten in his district), should be “grubbed out.”\textsuperscript{249} The Committee’s opinion was that the general practice of orchard purchases was unsatisfactory, despite the advice of the Government fruit expert J.M. Ward, and noted most dammingly: “Evidence has proved conclusively that many agricultural and orcharding properties purchased by the Department are unsuitable and too costly, and cannot be expected to afford a living to the soldier or to return interest to the Department.”\textsuperscript{250} These findings compounded difficulties soldiers had in shipping and selling their produce.

Buildings on properties at the time of purchase were deemed in some cases to have added to a soldier’s liability without adding productive value to their holding, supplementing his difficulty in repaying debts to the Department. Crucially, however, the system of supervision – modified over several years – was, at the time of the report, deemed insufficient in advising the Department of the true condition of the settlers and the scheme more generally. Of the sample surveyed, 90 per cent of respondents (including Departmental Inspectors) felt the system of half yearly inspections was “totally inadequate.”\textsuperscript{251} The final recommendation on the system of supervision suggested that it be abolished and permanent supervisors be appointed for more frequent visitations, more constructive advice be given and a greater reciprocal

\textsuperscript{246} 'Returned Soldiers' Settlement: Report of Select Committee', p. 3.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid., p. 3. The important point to note about this was that this was the opinion of one of the Department's own inspectors.
\textsuperscript{250} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{251} Ibid., p. 4.
interchange of information between the Department and the settler undertaken. The supervisors should be empowered to suggest the cancellation on a soldier's lease where inadequate or neglectful treatment of their holding was recognised. By the time of the next Departmental Report, for the year 1921-22, the supervision system was in the process of modification, with Rudge deciding to appoint permanent inspectors.

When discussing the settlers themselves, the Committee found that of its sample, "20 per cent. of the settlers are unsuitable for the land, 15 per cent. through lack of knowledge and physical disabilities, and 5 per cent. non-triers." No further elaboration was made as to these conclusions, but such findings did not reflect well on the selection process, and did not factor in the additional difficulties for such settlers of the land and other conditions itself. The issue of bush runs for settlers was investigated, and the consensus of the Committee was that, where able, bush runs be available for settlers to run their stock and give their farms a rest during winter. The Committee, however, had only highlighted the north-eastern districts around Ringarooma and Scottsdale as suitable for this program, with further investigation needed as to the suitability of other districts.

The Select Committee made nine final recommendations as to the future action of the soldier settlement scheme. The first five concerned the financing of the scheme and of the soldiers' repayments to the Department, suggesting for instance that capital valuations and advances be reduced to 4 per cent interest fixed for five years, and that advances for buildings be added to the capital value of the property.

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252 Ibid., p. 5.
253 'Returned Soldiers' and Closer Settlement Department: Report for 1921-22', JPPP, Vol. LXXXVII, 1922, Paper No. 28, p. 5. An interesting case regarding the appointment of inspectors was raised in a letter to The Mercury by a returned soldier from Collinsvale. This settler had been asked on numerous occasions to sign a petition to replace the incumbent inspector (R.H. Stanfield) with a returned soldier inspector, but had refused to do so as "I consider there is no justification for it. The position is one which should only be filled by an independent, impartial man, and that the inspector in question has certainly proved to be." This settler regarded a qualified and experienced inspector imperative, irrespective of whether he was a returned soldier or not. See, 'Inspection of Soldier Settlements', letter to the editor from Returned Soldier Settler, The Mercury, 24 September 1921, p. 6.
254 'Returned Soldiers' Settlement: Report of Select Committee', p. 4.
255 Ibid. This matter was investigated and reported on in 1923, when the Surveyor-General and the Chairman of the Closer Settlement Department discussed the purchase of 2 large blocks of land owned by W. von Bibra in the Scottsdale District. Nine applicants desired to obtain land for grazing runs, although extreme caution was urged before any action be taken, due to the additional cost it would impose on the settlers. See, 'The Report of the Surveyor-General on the Department of Lands and Surveys for the Year 1922-23', JPPP, Vol. LXXXIX, 1923-24, Paper No. 37, Appendix A, p. 11.
and interest be paid accordingly.\footnote{256} Other recommendations were that the system of supervision be improved (which Hurst was in the process of undertaking), re-subdivision of holdings on estates that were too small, the acquisition of bush runs where appropriate, and that the repayment obligations of the settlers be eased so “that permanent and reproductive improvements be set-off against instalments to the extent of from 50 to 75 per cent. of their value.”\footnote{257} The overall assessment of the Committee was that there were grave problems with the process of property purchases – most notably the size and price of allotments – and of the system of inspection designed to keep abreast of problems and issues arising through the scheme, both of which had impacted negatively on settlers. What should be made clear is that not all soldier settlers faced these difficulties, but the investigation and reporting of soldier settler difficulties produced a context to the worrying rates of increased failure recorded in the Board’s annual reports. Perhaps of even more concern for the future of the scheme was the fact that the Committee estimated that, “under existing conditions, over 50 per cent. [of the settlers] cannot meet their liabilities.”\footnote{258} Newton’s Select Committee report was a broadside at the Lee Government’s management of soldier settlement in Tasmania. Enormous financial losses were on the horizon that the State could scarcely afford. By the compilation of the Report’s findings, £11,747 had been written off due to soldiers leaving their properties, and the Department was £41,442 in arrears from settler non-payments.\footnote{259}

The media response to the Report was varied. \textit{The Mercury} took a belligerent tone, questioning the qualifications of the MP’s who had undertaken the investigation. “We do not consider”, the editorial claimed, “that the members composing the Committee are capable of dealing with so big and comprehensive a question.”\footnote{260} The soldier settlers who were interviewed for the report were, “Probably...men who volunteered to give evidence, and therefore were men were who had not been successful in their ventures.”\footnote{261}

Chris Martin argues that \textit{The Mercury} saw the situation in essentially dichotomous terms: “those soldiers who wouldn’t make a go of

\footnote{256} ‘Returned Soldiers’ Settlement: Report of Select Committee’, p. 4. Such a finding would have pleased the orchard settler who needed the flexibility to defer or pay reduced rates in order to purchase the fodder, seed, dray and manure his orchard required.\footnote{257} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 5.\footnote{258} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 4.\footnote{259} \textit{Ibid.}\footnote{260} ‘Soldier Settlement’ editorial, \textit{The Mercury}, 14 December 1921, p. 4.\footnote{261} \textit{Ibid.}
it couldn't be saved and those who would be successful needed no help." Soldiers who did not fall into these cases were those who were victims of extraneous factors. Overall, the report was considered overly pessimistic, and the conservative newspaper did not feel that the report would or should be the last word on the state of the scheme. A northern Tasmanian newspaper, *The Examiner*, was far more measured in its response. Instead of attacking the report, it expressed concern at the state of the scheme as revealed by the report. "If the committee is correct in its conclusions", the *Examiner* editorial commented, "a very serious state of affairs has been disclosed." Inflation had been expected – indeed, "the very fact of the Government buying sends up values" – but the global extent to which soldiers were in arrears with little prospect of recovery without assistance deeply concerned the editorial. Nearly £2.5 million had been spent, with requests for another £500,000 to be made, £11,000 had been written off in losses and over £40,000 was in arrears. The accommodation of soldier demands for property precipitated this situation, as "the soldier could realise his dream of going on to a particular farm only by paying more than the market value, and thus consented to carry a millstone around his neck." Deeply concerned, the paper reasoned a percentage of failures to occur, but by late 1921, they could not "help but being nervous on the score of the percentage of successes. This report is most disquieting."

Parliament did not debate the report until the New Year, allowing the Minister, members and the public alike to digest its dismal findings. Tasmanian soldier land settlement from 1916 to the end of 1921 had seen a scheme created in the context of a patriotic war-time environment, when soldiers and the public agitated for a means to settle soldiers on the land. The exigencies of returning soldiers, political opportunism and a genuinely profound sense of duty and philanthropic drive pressed Lee's Government into introducing a bill that should have contained firmer safeguards against the range of problems that had necessitated a Select Committee investigation. Now, with the scheme losing substantial amounts of money, and with failures and arrears mounting, Lee was under pressure to find a remedy to a land settlement dream.

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262 Martin, 'War and after War', p. 143.
263 Cases like soldiers who have had bad seasons, or losses due "to special causes." See, 'Soldier Settlement' editorial, *The Mercury*, 14 December 1921, p. 4.
265 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
267 Ibid.
going awry. As The Examiner's editorial noted, "maybe Ministers will be glad of the holidays to worry out this soldier problem."268
Chapter Six

Soldier Land Settlement in Tasmania – Harsh Outcomes

We have never been anything other than sympathetic to the soldiers, nor have we forgotten the promises which were made to them when they were going to the war.¹

At the end of 1921, a Select Committee had reported pessimistically on the future of the Tasmanian scheme unless important changes were made – all to better give the settlers a reasonable chance of success. A process of experimentation was undertaken to find a balance within the scheme and its administration that was workable for the settlers, eventually resulting in the creation of a system of six inspection areas with permanent Inspectors² that brought positive feedback, but could not stem the tide of failures. The returned soldiers’ land settlement authorities in Tasmania had established practically all of its soldiers by August 1922 whereas neither New South Wales nor Victoria had completed their programmes.³ Consequently, the bulk of the difficulties for their schemes were still to come, but from 1922, Tasmania’s experience with soldier settlement was to face a rapid deterioration in retention rates that necessitated the calling of a Royal Commission in 1926. Tasmanian authorities could do little but salvage as much of the remains of the scheme as possible, while the settlers could do little but work hard, and hope for good seasons, equitable markets and assistance from the Returned Soldiers’ and Closer Settlement Department. Sometimes, however, even that was not enough. The Tasmanian scheme to 1929 experienced the lowest success rates in the country, and this chapter traces the developments of this downward trend, culminating in Chief Justice Pike’s 1929 Commonwealth Inquiry and the Tasmanian responses to it.

² Parliamentary debate on this issue can be found in, The Mercury, 2 February 1922, p. 4.
³ See correspondence from Departmental Accountant Ira Fielding to Minister for Lands, 9 August 1927, p. 1, contained in Royal Commission file, Archives Office Tasmania (hereafter AOT), RC 37/1.
The ‘Progress’ Continues

The year 1921 ended with the release of Newton’s Select Committee report, and its damning conclusions as to the progress of the scheme in Tasmania. Politicians and the public had the Christmas holiday break to digest its contents, and it gave the Minister a chance to formulate a reply. That reply came when Parliament reconvened in January, and it was not long before the Minister for Lands launched an attack on the Committee’s findings, in line with that of the Hobart newspaper The Mercury a few weeks earlier. When the Report was debated in Parliament, Hurst and Newton found very little support. Hurst, as a returned soldier himself, was deeply concerned at the conditions his fellow ex-servicemen were forced to endure. The repayments and valuations, he argued, were their prime grievance. Minister for Lands, Alex Hean, rejected the findings of the Report, and claimed that everything was already being done for returned soldiers, that they were being treated very sympathetically, and that “up to the present no returned soldier had been able to say that he had been harshly treated.”

The sample of 67 soldier settlers was also deemed to be hardly representative. His views were supported by another returned soldier MHA, Robert Snowden, who cast doubt on the “popular cry” that returned soldiers were going to fail. According to Snowden, the failures that had been recorded were due to “bad markets and poor seasons...” Clearly, overpriced holdings and unsustainable repayments had little to do with these problems. To add to the general air of hostility, the Government’s Fruit Expert J.M. Ward expressed anger at the way the report used his evidence concerning the Government’s purchase of orchards. Ward considered the references “misleading and damaging to him”, and he fired off a letter to the Minister for Works, J.B. Hayes, demanding an explanation. The letter was subsequently read out in Parliament, causing a lengthy debate. The Select Committee’s report, Ward declared, had portrayed his advice as being in error, and that orchard purchases he recommended were worthless. Ward testified “that one was forced to take circumstances into consideration in almost every instance, and if any

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4 Alex Hean to the House of Assembly, 26 January 1922, The Mercury, 27 January 1922, p. 7.
5 Robert Snowden to the House of Assembly, Ibid.
mistake was made, it was through being too sympathetic towards the returned soldier, for which, personally, I will not ask to be excused.”

He denied providing any misleading or improper advice regarding the purchase of orchard properties, but detailed an occasion where he felt improper political influence was exercised by Newton. This brought forth a demand for a public apology from Ward. As in most serious attempts at restructuring soldier land settlement in Tasmania, the issue descended into a political stoush.

*The Mercury* was more forthright and savage in its condemnation of the Select Committee and its findings than anything stated in Parliament. “The proposal to give relief on a large scale to soldier settlers”, its editorial pronounced, “whether or not they deserve it, and whether or not they need it, is quite preposterous.”

It argued that the non-triers should not be carried any further so as to place an even greater burden on the taxpayer, but to those who were doing satisfactorily, the Committee’s extra call for assistance was “really humiliating them.”

*The Mercury* discredited the Select Committee by claiming variously that the Committee was a pitch for votes in the upcoming June election; that Newton was embroiled in allegations of political interference for his own gain; that Hurst as a soldier settler and MHA was attempting to gain advantage for himself under the proposed changes; that Committee member Mr Dixon was ill and repudiated responsibility for the findings; and that another Committee member Mr Pollard “was not very proud of his share in it.”

*The Mercury* felt that no member of the House “really takes the report seriously, and the agitation is mainly an electioneering device.” This perceptive opinion was, as in all of the conservative Hobart newspaper’s copy on returned soldiers, for their benefit.

Subtle changes in language to describe eligibility for advances are evident in the Departmental Report for 1921-22, with monies earmarked for advances for stock, implements and seed amounting to £101,708 “utilised towards settlement of deserving cases of men who are already on the land.” This firmer accent signified a realisation in the Department and the Board that things were not progressing as they anticipated.

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7 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
The year 1922 saw the failure rate reach triple figures for the first time with 205 soldiers unable to continue, making a combined total of 347 up to 30 June 1922. Secretary J.L. McGough’s Report, published alongside the President’s Annual Report, indicated the change in mood. Approximately one-third of the soldier settlers were not meeting their obligations up to 1921-22 in McGough’s opinion, and he felt it “inequitable that this should be allowed to continue.” He believed that “firm measures” should be taken with defaulters, although the exact course of action was not elucidated. In contrast, he portrayed the Department in a somewhat softer light, indicating that the administration was “most sympathetic” to reasonable requests for extension of payments of arrears. Perhaps as a consequence, only 41 per cent of arrears due for the year were paid.

President Rudge was more circumspect in assessing the year’s operations, and, perhaps feeling the attack from the Select Committee’s Report, attempted to defend wherever possible the Board’s supervision practices. While not explicitly acknowledging faults in the Department’s capabilities, he said that permanent inspectors were employed so as to remedy any existing weaknesses. Rudge clearly valued the contribution of the superseded system, and defended the Inspectors’ work. While the older supervisory system had, according to Rudge, saved many settlers from vacating their properties and provided “judicious encouragement” to continue, it could be criticised for being open to far too much variation due to the large numbers of people employed to supervise. As such, there was greater potential for inconsistent treatment and advice to settlers.

Orcharding settlers reported losses by 1922 despite their best efforts at caring for their crops. The Assistant Fruit Expert found that the difficulty with the markets prevented satisfactory gains. Huon soldier settlers had particular difficulty in negotiating costs for shipping their fruit to interstate and overseas markets, and a

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13 Ibid. *The Examiner* outlined the “crisis in agricultural industry” in an editorial, ‘The Farmer and His Troubles’, 31 January 1922, p. 4. This crisis could not have come at a worse time for the State’s soldier settlers.


15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Rudge claimed that in many cases, “their [Inspectors’] prompt action in notifying the Department of transgressions of the regulations and conditions of leasehold, have saved the Department heavy loss of goods and chattels and subsequent proceedings against the lessee.” Ibid., p. 5.

19 Ibid.
deputation from the Huon RSL met Prime Minister Hughes when he visited Hobart in December 1922 to discuss the issue. Others were weighed down by repayments on advances. Rudge consistently claimed that the soldiers were doing their best, for which, on the majority there can be little doubt, but the difficulties involved in farm life, coupled with crippling conditions, were handicapping efforts.

By the 1922-23 Departmental Report, the previous local Inspection system had been dispensed with. The State had been redivided into six areas, with six Inspectors [See Table 6.1]. There was a degree of optimism in the new Inspector's Reports that there would be some successes, and that all had not been lost. The inspection regime altered from the rigid two inspections per year to a minimum of one inspection per property annually, or more frequently when the Department or settler desired. The Board Secretary, J.L. McGough praised the new method of inspection, declaring it is to be “an excellent one, being both advantageous to the Department, and of benefit to the individual settler.” The inspection system as recommended by the 1921 Select Committee Report was now in operation, but, as the cancellation figures for the year show, it was too late for some tenants to turn their fortunes around.

Table 6.1: Inspectors and Areas, as at 30 June 1923.

Area No. 1 – J.W. Pegus: Burnie region
Area No. 2 – N.W. Lade: Sulphur Creek region
Area No. 3 – L. Dadson: Karoola region
Area No. 4 – E.J. Jennings: Huonville region
Area No. 5 – J.H. Woolley: Kellevie region
Area No. 6 – R.H. Stanfield: Claremont region


McGough's report outlined the revised role of the Inspectors. With so much change taking place in the inspection system in the previous 24 months, this was undoubtedly an attempt publicly to clear up the boundaries of responsibility for the inspectors. Their rights as well as their responsibilities to the Department and the settler were stated, with some interesting points raised. In effect, the inspector acted as a policeman for the Department, with the right, "at all reasonable times"\(^{22}\) to enter any holding held under lease through the Department to inspect the condition of the holding, and any stock or implements advanced to the settler. The Inspector also had to warn the Department of neglect, illegal trafficking or death of the Board's stock, as well as make provision for the care of Board's property when a lessee vacated his holding. As agents for the Department, Inspectors supervised the sale, purchase and transfer of the Board's property. The Inspector was the first point of communication between the Board and the settler - "To at all times treat complaints sympathetically, and forward them to the Department for attention."\(^{23}\) This relationship was reciprocal too, for the Inspector had to offer advice, assistance and encouragement. McGough added that Inspectors should "have the interests of the Department at heart, but at the same time to temper this interest with moderation and tact where a delinquent lessee is concerned."\(^{24}\) Inspectors occupied a difficult space between the requirements of the Department and the needs of the settler. Their difficulties were no doubt compounded by the misery they had to preside over after 1921. The Inspectors were thus the Department's face in the field, and as such, were at the veritable coalface of the Tasmanian soldier settlement catastrophe.

The year saw the allotment of new applicants fall sharply, as 31 March 1922 was the last date that returned soldiers could apply for new properties. Such a decision at least stemmed the potential for further losses from new settlers, but the failures of existing settlers continued. Up to 30 June 1923, a further 285 soldiers had their leases cancelled\(^{25}\) - a figure which was to become the high mark for annual failures under the Tasmanian scheme. Cumulative failures to that same point had reached 626, an astonishing figure in comparison to the 1,935 soldiers placed on farms - almost one in three soldiers failing in only six years of the scheme's operation. In addition, McGough reported that some difficulty had been experienced

\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 4.  
\(^{23}\) Ibid.  
\(^{24}\) Ibid.  
\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 2.
by the Department in removing failed lessees from the properties. In such cases, he reported that legal action had been resorted to.\textsuperscript{26} The use of the Police Department in distraining reaped some reward, with 44.86 per cent. of monies collected for 1923, up from 40.67 per cent. in 1922, but despite this £66,978 had to be written off.\textsuperscript{27} Of settlers that remained, the option of transferring properties was granted, as was the transfer of advances of implements and stock. The remainder was then offered for sale to the public. Interestingly, the Secretary to the Board queried fire damage to soldier properties, noting that the Government offered rewards for information about arson. He then added that £5383 worth of fire damage had been sustained to buildings held by returned soldiers in the previous two years, while total fire destruction to Closer Settlement buildings in the same period amounted to "only" £60.\textsuperscript{28}

Rudge's report concentrated on the efforts being undertaken to limit the losses to the State. Inspectors had been directed to only advance money for stock and implements when they were essential to the working of the holding, adding that "greater care is now exercised in this regard than previously."\textsuperscript{29} The selling off of properties by the Board to the public was criticised in some quarters by claims that civilians were paying less for those properties than returned soldiers, as their leases were administered under the \textit{Tenants Act} rather than the \textit{Soldier Settlement Act}.\textsuperscript{30} Rudge admitted this was true in some cases, but pointed out that the reduction in values of the properties, and the consequent realisation of lower prices, was a result of the poor condition they were left in by the former lessees. This was a constant theme in Rudge's report - that the State was suffering heavy financial losses due to the poor condition of the stock and implements surrendered back to the Board. On resale, they could not realise anything like their former value. While acknowledging that some successes and excellent progress had been achieved, the bulk of the report was an exercise in damage limitation, generally pointing the finger of blame for failure toward the soldiers and away from the Department. In some respects this was

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., pp. 2-3, 5. McGough reported that more stringent measures were taken to recover monies owed to the Department. "From a Departmental point of view, this matter is of the utmost importance, and advantage was taken of Ministerial authority to proceed with the unthankful duty of distraining in cases where little or no attempt had been made by the lessees to meet their obligations." p. 5.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 7.

\textsuperscript{30} Martin, 'The Great War's Aftermath in the Huon', p. 49.
understandable, for as President of the Board, Rudge was responsible for the administration of the scheme. Widespread and devastating failures reflected poorly on his abilities, and a justification to Parliament and the Minister for the immense financial losses had to be provided. Rudge registered his surprise at the ease with which some soldiers yielded to adversity: "It is surprising how many quickly become discouraged when faced with adverse markets and seasons, instead of tenaciously endeavouring to surmount the obstacles and win through to success." Rudge’s crusade in damage limitation continued, inferring that long-term losses would be curtailed: "The process of elimination is proceeding at present, and will continue until eventually only the bona fide settler will remain."

The reports of the new Inspectors were generally positive in their outlook toward both the settlers and the prospects for their settlements. They appeared to enjoy the new system and reported that the soldiers were generally supportive. The new inspection process could be viewed more as supervision than strictly inspection, with many soldiers reportedly encouraged by the extra support they felt they were now getting from the Department. The reports make plain that the remaining industrious settlers resented the efforts of those not wholly committed to success: "The genuine, honest settler has not time for the wriggler or non-trier; he is right down on him, and many have told me that the 'waster' is to blame for a good many of their hardships." There existed an undercurrent amongst soldier settlers that some clearly were not serious enough in their efforts. The difficulties with the markets meant that settlers engaged in fruit-growing suffered tremendously, as the Report of E.J. Jennings attested. As his area (No. 4) encompassed the municipalities south of Hobart – the Channel, Huon and Bruny regions – and the predominant crop was fruit, Jennings recorded a great many failures due to the poor fruit markets “having a depressing influence on the settlers in general.” The difficulties in the fruit-growing industry contributed heavily to the record 285 failures that year. Despite these hardships, Jennings reported the old spirit of camaraderie alive among the soldiers, 

31 'Returned Soldiers’ and Closer Settlements Department: Report for 1922-23', p. 8. Reynolds viewed this statement as "preposterous and contemptible" as settlers were often placed "in hopeless situations and were left no choice but to leave their land." M.J. Reynolds, 'The Noble Failure: King Island Soldier Settlement, 1918-1930', Unpublished Centre for Education Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1982, p. 60.
32 Ibid. Appendix B: Reports of Inspectors, Report of Inspector N.W. Lade, Area No. 2, p. 15. These sentiments were echoed in Inspector J.W. Pegus' report from Area No. 1.
33 Ibid. Report of Inspector E.J. Jennings, Area No. 4, p. 16.
and displayed confidence that they could weather the difficult times with support from each other and the Department. Dairying and wool-growing reported a good season, allowing those soldiers particularly on the North and North-West coasts to prosper. Legal action against negligent lessees to recover costs was also reported,\(^{35}\) with some positive results to the Department, but that would have conversely compounded the agony for the soldier. Nonetheless, such action was seen as a deterrent to others. All Inspectors recommended swift action in selling vacated blocks, for while they stood unoccupied and without work they further declined in value, thus losing money to the Crown. Perhaps most interesting in the reports was their opinions on the public view. Inspectors Lade, Dadson and Jennings all commented on this, with strong public opposition to the scheme not evident:

The outside opinion of soldiers’ settlement and its effect on the community appears to be that there were too many inexperienced and incapable men settled on the land, and this is borne out by the fact that in many cases a really good farmer has left his holding and his place has been taken by men who, however willing, have often not had the experience and were not fully acquainted with local conditions.\(^{36}\)

Inspector Dadson’s report on the community’s opinions reflected the later findings of the Royal Commission – that inexperience and capability were the deciding factors. That such inadequacies were obvious to the public points to the conclusion that they must have been obvious to the Department, but they felt that they did not have the room to manoeuvre to put things to right. Inspector Lade reported that there was an air of expectancy of failure in some communities, noting that vacated properties did not seem to have too marked an effect, “as a majority of people say: ‘Oh, So-and-So has gone; well, I expected it; he would not work,’ or something to that effect.”\(^{37}\) The evidence suggests that there was a realistic outlook among the communities in which these men settled – people who were farmers themselves – that foresaw the potential for failure. As Lade continued: “The place occupied by a settler in the social life of the community is the same as that occupied by any other farmer, namely, he is accepted for what he is worth according to his social attainments.”\(^{38}\) The fact that soldier settlers were once in uniform was, according to Lade, disregarded in the

\(^{35}\) Ibid. Report of Inspector R.H. Stanfield, Area No. 6, p. 17.
\(^{36}\) Ibid. Report of Inspector L. Dadson, Area No. 3, p. 16.
\(^{38}\) Ibid.
community once they took up farming tools, for their status was now as farmers, not soldiers. Despite enjoying the support of a special scheme for their transition from khaki to civilian life, "socially...no settler is regarded with any degree of distinction above his neighbour, and the same impartial treatment is maintained throughout." This policy was employed by the community and the Inspector to the returned soldier settler. Reynolds notes that when prices for butterfat fell on King Island, the local tradespeople "heartily supported" the soldiers, and "carried large losses on their books in the endeavour to keep settlers going and facilitate the continuation of settlement which was important to the island's development." Conversely, Martin has identified that in the Huon during 1921, the particular economic conditions forced on orchardists and the unemployed from the closing of mill industries in the region led many to publicly wonder why specialised and focussed assistance continued for returned soldiers exclusively when so many others in the community also required assistance.

One case, that of Cyril Bowden, illustrates positive discrimination of soldier settlers in the Tasmanian community. Bowden's Collin'svale property produced small fruit, and, despite being in excellent order, was in difficulty with the Department by late 1920. His lease was cancelled because he was not fulfilling his obligations to the Department. Further investigation found that Bowden had entered into two contracts with separate fruit companies to provide them both with his whole

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39 Ibid. Report of Inspector E.J. Jennings, Area No. 4, p. 16.
41 Martin, 'War and after War', pp. 91-92. Many returned soldiers being helped onto properties, periods of grace for payments, and a powerful representative group in the RSSILA led to frustration among the broader community at varying times, but as Martin notes, "despite these seeming advantages, the reality was that the majority of the returned men were suffering too – those on the land perhaps more than most." See, Martin, 'War and after War', p. 92. The special treatment returned soldiers received from the Government was counter-balanced by the special favour returned soldier settlers received in their interactions with the community – at least in the urban areas of the State, but predominantly farming regions may not have extended these same liberties, as Lade and Jennings noted.
42 A small community in the hills behind Glenorchy, north of the greater Hobart Area. Collin'svale was known as Bismarck at the outbreak of the First World War, but owing to the conflict with Germany, the name was deemed unpatriotic and "a continuing source of discomfort and annoyance", as well as prejudicing their export trade, so it was changed. See M. Lake, A Divided Society, Melbourne, 1975, pp. 23-24; A. Alexander, Glenorchy 1804-1964, Hobart, 1986, p. 147.
43 AOT: AB 1/1: Report of Account of Closer Settlement Department on property held by C.H. Bowden, Collin's Vale, c. December 1920. The Departmental Accountant was glowing in his appraisal of Bowden's property, and, urged a reconsideration of proposals to cancel his lease: "I would like to suggest that further consideration be given to the matter of cancelling his lease as he appears to be making an effort to straighten himself. Outside the Department his liabilities are heavy, but if was allowed to continue on the property he should right himself next year provided he keeps straight." His outside liabilities impinged greatly on the course of action Bowden was to take.
crop of fruit. Although owing debts to the Department and to other creditors, Bowden asked Luke Williams of Moonah to sell him two pigs as he had milk going to waste. Williams sold the pigs to Bowden, but did so without immediate payment because he trusted Bowden as a returned soldier, and because he had been told that Bowden had volunteered for the front. Williams was also unaware of Bowden's financial situation. Clearly, the esteem of war service still had currency in the community. The cancellation of Bowden's lease saw Williams' pigs distraint with all of the rest of Bowden's property, so Williams embarked upon a letter writing campaign to retrieve them. As the Government was deemed the primary creditor with interests outweighing all others, Williams did not get satisfaction. He wrote a letter to the Minister directly, stating:

Neither your Government nor Bowden gave me any equivalent for those two pigs and your confiscation of them would savour of a Sordid Trade Repatriation. My connection with Bowden was simply to help a soldier at his request... I feel that the Govt do not wish to confiscate my pigs because I was helping a "Digger" in a practical way in response to his solicitations.

Williams' anger was directed at the way that he had been stung by helping a returned soldier, because he was a returned soldier. Williams felt he deserved better than he had received from the "Sordid Trade Repatriation" and thought he was doing a returned soldier a good thing by helping him, only to find the soldier had proved a bad debtor, and as a consequence had suffered a financial loss. Demanding redress from the Government, Williams used the issue as political blackmail and wrote a second letter to the Minister: "surely your Government do not wish it to be published that

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44 It appears that the very same Luke Williams from Moonah wrote a letter to The Mercury in January 1920. The letter expresses sincere gratitude toward the sacrifices made by returned soldiers, and proposes by way of marking their war contribution a fitting memorial - a memorial of a fresh water scheme to supply Hobart and surrounding suburbs with water from the hydro-electric schemes in the central plateau. Williams maintained a prominent position in the community through membership of the Council of the Fruit, Stockowners and Orchardists' Association. Williams' anger at his treatment at the hands of a returned soldier then must have come as some surprise, and later indignation at his treatment by the department in attempting to recoup costs. See, 'A Permanent Soldiers' memorial, letter to the editor from Luke Williams, The Mercury, 10 January 1920, p. 4.

45 Williams revealed this in a letter to the Minister for Lands, when trying to explain the situation to him. See, AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from Luke Williams to the Minister of Lands, 19 January 1921.

46 AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from Luke Williams to Minister of Lands, 5 March 1921. [Underlined in original]

47 Williams had even sold pigs from the same litter to MLC James Murdoch Snr for more than he charged Bowden. AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from Luke Williams to Minister of Lands, 5 March 1921.
they confiscated two pigs intended to help a soldier in distress. His stress on the relationship between his good deed and the recipient as a soldier was clearly intended as a political threat, and one that would no doubt have gained support in the broader community. The significant aspect of this exchange was that Williams' anger over the issue was not directed at the failed returned soldier settler Bowden, but at the organisation that administered the scheme. His anger at the Government's failure to help him recover his property, and his exploitation of Bowden's status as a returned soldier are the key aspects of this issue. There is also, implicitly, the expectation that war service brought honour, and honour brought trust, so Williams would have felt doubly betrayed by Bowden and the Department's stance. Williams' plight reflected the entire soldier land settlement scheme in Tasmania for it contained all the elements - loss of property provided in good faith to returned soldiers; victims (the Government, the soldiers, and the creditors); and the politicisation of the issue. Williams' threat made Repatriation and the treatment of returned servicemen a political issue, and not only provides one example of how returned soldiers interacted with the community, but the esteem in which they were held.

1923 – Another Select Committee Report, and Economy Board Warnings

In March 1923, another Select Committee was appointed to consider the probable cost of Appeal Boards in connection with returned soldiers' settlement, and a second issue of the probable loss in the event of the abolition of repayments on buildings on returned soldier properties. The revaluation of properties became an issue close to soldier settler's hearts when they felt that they were materially suffering under the burden of inflated rents and interest charges from the price boom that resulted from the Government's entry onto the market. Duncan McRae examined

48 AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from Luke Williams to Minister of Lands, 5 April 1921.
50 Soldier settlers from across the State harboured grievances on this issue. Martin has identified some Huon cases that typify their complaints. See, 'The Great War's Aftermath in the Huon', pp. 48-49. A petition from the King Island community was printed in the King Island News, 29 June 1927, p. 6, demanding an investigation into valuations and settlement conditions generally, to allow them the best opportunity to carry on. Soldier settlement success was crucial to the future of the island, as Reynolds notes that around one-fifth of the island's population was constituted by returned soldiers and their dependents, and they owned approximately one-fifth of the total land value. Reynolds, 'The Noble
the question alongside the committee. The problem with using the Committee's estimated figures for losses was that so many of the figures were calculated from assumptions. The Committees' calculations are useful, however, in delineating that administration costs for the appeal boards alone would impose a hefty financial burden on the State - a situation unlikely to have been popular with the Minister or the Treasury. Any abolition of repayments on buildings would cost the State at least £24,480 over and above present costs. The Committee's final recommendations on the two issues were that: Six District Advisory Appeal Boards should be set up in each of the six Inspection Areas consisting of members nominated from the RSSILA, and the District Inspector, to hear appeals from returned soldiers for revaluations on their properties or remissions of rent. The Advisory Board would inspect the property, and report to the Soldier Settlement Board, who would then make a recommendation to the Minister. Disagreements between the Appeal Board and Soldier Settlement Board would be referred to another Central Appeal Board. The final decision would rest with the Minister.

The issue of financial expenditure and loss was the focus of the Report of an Economy Board, in which the affairs of the Returned Soldiers' Settlement Scheme was evaluated. The Department's deplorable financial losses were highlighted, as was its prominent status as the largest spending Department in the Government. The parlous financial state of the scheme's various accounts prompted a warning from the Economy Board that financial responsibility should be handed back to the Commonwealth Government, considering that the matter of land settlement was essentially national in character. This issue of culpability for soldier settlement was just another chapter in the debate over whose responsibility it really was, bearing in mind that the monies expended on soldier settlement were lent by the Federal Government to be administered by the States. This issue was to be revived again before 1929. The Economy Board also recommended that the administration of the Returned Soldiers' Settlement Scheme be removed from political control and run

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Failure: King Island Soldier Settlement, 1918-1930, pp. 36, 51-52. See also, R.H. Hooper, The King Island Story, Sydney, 1973, p. 86. For Hooper's evaluation of post-WWI soldier settlement on King Island, see pp. 86-87, 92-94, 146-147. Hooper himself was a returned soldier settler on the island.

51 'Returned Soldiers' Settlement: Report of Select Committee', p. 3. In addition to the figure of £24,480, the Committee added a further estimation of £11,000 from the difference charged in interest and administration costs.

52 Ibid., p. 4.

along business lines to halt the rapid financial haemorrhaging. Such a move would have been less generous to the settler in terms of continuing Government financial assistance, but kinder to the Treasury, from whom the Minister for Lands raised further loans to pay for the scheme. In justifying their decision the Economy Board proposed that “If the soldier settler has not been able to make good he should be required now, and if necessary assisted, to seek some other walk in life.” Such a view was damning, and suggested, as the Royal Commission was to later concur, that the State should, if possible, rid itself of the task of financing and managing the whole affair. The great agrarian dream had proved itself a myth, and embarrassingly so for the Department and Minister for Lands, for the secret could no longer be concealed within internal correspondence.

The Returned Soldiers’ Land Settlement Scheme had a new President in 1924, after G.C. Rudge stepped down to fill a place on the Board. W.N. Hurst took the position of President, and his Report for the end of the 1924 financial year painted a gloomy picture of the state of the scheme. Some appalling statistics can be gleaned from the 1923-24 Report. Despite the fact that no more money was spent on purchasing new properties, a further 227 soldiers cancelled their leases, taking the accumulated figure of failures up to 30 June 1924, to 853. The cancellation of leases saw over £87,000 written off in bad debts, with further losses incurred through remissions in rent, special concessions to settlers and monies lost on the capping of repayable interest on rent and advances to 5 per cent. It must be borne in mind, too, that the State did not pass on administration costs to the settler, absorbing the losses itself. Hurst warned the Minister of the probability of further cancellations of leaseholds by returned soldiers, as he had the Department prepare a table outlining the individual settlers’ accounts and debts. Approximately 343 lessees owed the Department £150 or more (with 59 settlers owing over £300 each) prompting Hurst to

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54 Ibid., p. 18.
56 Ibid., p. 3.
57 Premier Lyons, in his financial report for 1924, pointed out the bad budgetary practice of the previous Nationalist government, “which had funded arrears of interest and losses on Returned Soldiers Settlement, instead of properly charging them against consolidated revenue. Such practice was simply compounding the problem and building up trouble in the future.” W.A. Townsley, *Tasmania: From Colony to Statehood, 1803-1945*, Hobart, 1991, p. 322.
estimate from past experience, and his own opinion, that most of those settlers would not succeed, forcing the Crown to take possession of the holdings.  

Table 6.2: Tasmanian Soldier Settler Amounts owing to 30 June 1924:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessees owing</th>
<th>Number of Accounts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than £50</td>
<td>644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£50 to £100</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£100 to £150</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£150 to £200</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£200 to £250</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£250 to £300</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£300 to £400</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£400 to £500</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£500 to £600</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over £700</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the figures in Table 6.2, some 211 lessees owed the Department a minimum of £200 each. Secretary to the Board J.L. McGough was obviously concerned by these startling numbers, and suggested inspection of settlers’ cases to reduce their continuing accumulation of arrears. The outcome of these failures and outstanding debts made an immediate impact on Hurst, who admitted surprise at the scale of the losses. Soldiers continued to apply to the Board for advances for stock and seed, prolonging their dependence on the Department while adding to their financial indebtedness to it. Poor seasons and difficult markets drove their debts upward, as the fruit-growing ex-servicemen in the Huon found to their dismay. The collapse of the English market in 1924 saw returns drop to unsustainable losses, and returns for cases of fruit dropped below the cost to produce them.

59 Ibid., p. 3.
60 Ibid., p. 4.
61 Martin, 'The Great War's Aftermath in the Huon', p. 44. Martin argues that early in 1924, Huon fruit-growers (soldier settlers among them) could receive only 11/6d to 15/6d a case for their best quality fruit, yet by June the average was only 9d a case, sometimes dropping as low as 4d. The growers needed 10/6s "to make any kind of profit" so the "vast majority of growers lost heavily on the season."
The predominant work of the Department from this period onwards involved advancing further monies to settlers, repossessing vacated holdings, and selling and/or redistributing titles, stock and implements. The Board dealt with a large number of appeal cases resulting in remission of rents, suspension of arrears without interest, and reductions in property valuations. Interestingly though, all these measures were reactive, and did not address the fundamental problems the soldiers faced. Suspending arrears, extending payment periods, remission of rents – they all extended the settler’s anguish and financial dependence on the Department. Inspectors faced continuing problems of having to trace missing items whether traded, leased or sold without permission, while settlers had to deal with poor fruit-growing and orcharding seasons. Hurst expressed regret on the Board’s behalf for the calamitous failure rate endured since the scheme’s implementation, “owing to recurring bad seasons and harvests.”62 He explained that “Every effort [had] been made to retain the ‘trier’, but notwithstanding this and the encouragement offered him to stay, there has been a big exodus.”63 Underlying the report was a tacit admission that the machinery of the scheme was responsible for the problems facing the Board. Indeed, Martin feels that “politicians of all persuasions had long been aware of the underlying causes of the continued failure of soldier settlement.”64 It was a poor indictment of the moral and political responsibility incumbent on politicians65 that they felt unable to look toward putting the scheme on a more sound financial footing – a fear of an electoral catastrophe in a similar vein to the personal tragedies that had befallen a large number of soldier settlers.

Hurst took heart from the scheme’s ability to retain 50 per cent. of its settlers to mid-1924, but this statistic sounds slightly hollow in view of his previous comments on the likelihood of further large scale failures. The new supervision system implemented the previous year had continued successfully, and perhaps signalled one of the few bright areas in the Tasmanian experience. Two new inspectors were employed following resignations, with the account of the application and appointment of Mr Edward Inches surviving in State archival material. It is an interesting insight into the application of a Tasmanian inspector.

63 Ibid.
64 Martin, 'War and after War', p. 183.
65 Ibid., p. 181.
Inspector Cyril Edward Vernon Inches was a 31-year-old returned soldier, who had suffered some incapacitation from his four years at the war. Well known and respected in the Huon region, he had the confidence of the Huon-branch of the RSSILA, who wrote their own reference in support of his application for Area inspector. Inches had his own property, his own car (a requirement for Inspectors) and experience in orcharding and building. He was an ideal candidate for the position. Some testimonials stressed his integrity and hard work, and presented him as the epitome of the Anzac ideal:

Mr Inches is a returned soldier, who until recently was carrying on the occupation of an orchardist in this district but owing to the effects of the War has been compelled by his medical advisors to give up same which is seriously interfering with his health owing to the laborious nature of the work. He is most popular with all classes of the community, and would command the greatest respect from Soldier settlers.\(^{66}\)

The Warden of the Huon Municipality acknowledged that “He is industrious and able and his moral character is all that could be desired.”\(^{67}\) Another suggested that Inches was, “with regard to Character...White Right Through.”\(^{68}\) Inches was the natural choice for the Board in the demanding position of Inspector, which attracted a substantial salary to compensate for the demanding nature of the work. Inspectors received an annual income of £260, plus an allowance of 7d. per mile for the use of their motor car. The remuneration was generous but the work was also difficult, often

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\(^{67}\) AOT: AB 6/1: Letter of Recommendation from Warden of Huon Municipality for C.E.V. Inches’ application for Inspector Area No. 4, 23 January 1924.

\(^{68}\) AOT: AB 6/1: Letter of Recommendation from E.J. Freeman for C.E.V. Inches’ application for Inspector Area No. 4, 25 January 1924. The Secretary of the Huon branch of the RSSILA also weighed in to the process by adding: “Owing to the special knowledge Mr Inches has, & the high esteem in which he is held by returned soldiers in this district, he has twice been unanimously selected to represent them on deputations in Melbourne to the Minister of Customs re the fruit growing industry.” AOT: AB 6/1: Letter of recommendation for C.E.V. Inches to the position of Southern District Inspector (Area No. 4) from the Secretary of the Huon sub-branch RSSILA to the Secretary Closer Settlement Board, 29 January 1924.
involving annual travel of over 8000 miles as well as the responsibility of liquidating the Crown’s assets and tracking recalcitrant settlers.\textsuperscript{69}

The Inspectors’ Reports for the financial year to 1924 all proclaimed that exceptionally wet weather had spoilt crops and fruit production, and they anticipated further difficulties for soldier settlers in the following year. Dairying, potatoes, orcharding and chaff were all decimated by the weather, and, coupled with slim production in the previous season, many soldiers were at their breaking point. Inches was only in the job for three months by the time of the reports. As a returned soldier himself, new to the job and having previous orchard experience, his comments make revealing reading, as he acknowledged the serious future for the predominantly fruitgrowing settlers in his area. For fruitgrowers, Inches believed that the season was possibly the worst ever experienced in Tasmania, reducing yields to a quarter of their potential, with poor quality fruit produced. Overseas markets in England were “very low”, adding pressure that experienced orchardists were finding difficult to withstand – “A small matter for wonder is it then that returned soldiers are finding things very difficult.”\textsuperscript{70} Inspector Pegus reported a high vacation rate for farms in his area following the poor weather and low yields – despite the successful supervision system and Board remission adjustment on settlers’ debts. Pegus did, however, argue that the Board’s decision to investigate the settlers’ debts saved many from otherwise failing “through no fault of their own.”\textsuperscript{71} The failures continued in Inspectors Edwards, Dadson and Woolley’s Reports, with all citing the difficult weather and lack of experience and commitment as deciding factors.\textsuperscript{72} Inspector Stanfield offered a grim outlook for the next year’s season, prophesying that the orcharding settlers in particular would “find it very hard to carry on their holdings and produce crops for next season, and certainly in the majority of cases they will be unable to meet their payments.”\textsuperscript{73} In a statement to the House of Assembly in October 1924, the Minister for Lands and Works and Agriculture, James Belton revealed that 44 cases had

\textsuperscript{69} Further particulars of Inspectors’ allowances were as follows: \textit{[A]} maintenance allowance of 5/- per day whilst on duty and away from home and 10/- per day whilst on duty and away from home for the night. With regard to the allowance of 5/-, this can only be allowed when you are away from your home for a full day and have to provide your own meals by reason of such absence from home.” AOT: AB 6/1: Letter from Secretary of the Closer Settlement Board to C.E.V. Inches concerning his first duties as Inspector, 21 February 1924.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., pp. 9-10.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 8.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p. 8.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p. 10.
required legal action to recover costs involving rent; approximately one-third of properties purchased for returned soldiers were then in civilian hands.\textsuperscript{74} Despite the efforts of the Department in allaying as much stress for soldier settlers as they could through improved inspection systems, remissions in rents and special considerations, it was the factors they could not control – the class of settler already in the system, the markets and the weather – that effectively rendered the scheme, by this point, an economic, vocational and agricultural failure in terms of its return for the expenditure outlaid.

The year ending 1925 saw marginal improvements among the settlers, according to the Inspectors' Reports, although the State continued to squander money through the scheme. Only six soldiers were placed on farms for the year, and no new properties were purchased, but the sympathetic treatment of the settlers by the Department saw further concessions granted which placed further strain on the budget. Remissions of rent were granted to 266 settlers, while 253 cases had their arrears suspended, losing the Department over £37,000 in repayments. These liberal concessions demonstrated the Department's earnest efforts to retain the settlers on their holdings, particularly if the State was to realise any returns owing to it in the future, but they exacted a severe toll on the budget. Two Inspectors in their reports stated that there was a real prospect of losing soldier settlers to the mainland states, with Inspector Dadson revealing several good settlers from his Area had already gone.\textsuperscript{75} These fears were well founded. In the Tasmanian Government's economic report, the 'Case for Tasmania' to Sir Nicholas Lockyer in early 1926, they detailed why special financial assistance should be made to the State. One aspect of their case was the loss of population that contributed to a marked degree the economic position Tasmania faced in the mid-1920s. The Report's authors, MHA Albert Ogilvie and MLC Tasman Shields, reported that the "movement of Tasmanian population has become regular and consistent only since the inauguration of Federation, and it has increased so greatly since the war that it has now become the most serious single loss that we suffer."\textsuperscript{76} This catalyst for interstate migration was attributed to the prevailing

\textsuperscript{74} 'Ministerial Statement of the Minister for Lands and Works, 1924', \textit{JPPP}, Vol. XCI, 1924-25, Paper No. 15, p. 5.


\textsuperscript{76} 'Case for Tasmania: Presented to Sir Nicholas Lockyer by the Hon. A.G. Ogilvie, and Hon. Tasman Shields', \textit{JPPP}, Vol. XCIII, 1925-26, Paper No. 52, p. 12. To illustrate their point, they claimed that 38,000 people had left the State since Federation. Further, "During the last four years, since our
economic conditions manifested in high taxes, lack of employment, and poor industrial conditions that saw a decline in the State’s industries.\textsuperscript{77} Soldier settlers fled for better opportunities interstate along with other Tasmanians.

The soldier settlement issue had reached a point by 1925 where it too contributed significantly to Tasmania’s poor economic performance, notwithstanding the Commonwealth’s proposal to write off £262,000 in loan liabilities.\textsuperscript{78} Losses from soldier settlement in the 1924-25 Financial Year stood at £71,682, which was higher than the balance of losses on State Shipping.\textsuperscript{79} Ogilvie and Shields reported that, to 1924, Tasmania had settled a higher percentage of soldiers per head of population than any of the other States, “with correspondingly greater losses.”\textsuperscript{80} The loan expenditure on soldier settlement was £11 17s. per head in Tasmania compared with a national average of £7 2s., attributed to the higher proportion of private land purchased.\textsuperscript{81} The very heavy financial losses experienced by the State had contributed notably to its entire pecuniary condition, and was cited as one part of the chronic fiscal problem that led to Tasmania’s dismal economic, industrial and employment performance throughout the 1920s. Lockyer, in his rejoinder, cited soldier settlement in the top five principal services in which Tasmania’s loan expenditure had been incurred, amounting in 1926 to a hefty £2,581,596.\textsuperscript{82} Of this, the gross loss to June 1925 was £661,430. The Commonwealth contributed £255,749, leaving £405,681 to be found by Tasmanian taxpayers.\textsuperscript{83} It cannot be disputed that the heavy debt incurred by the State’s soldier settlers contributed significantly to

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid. Robson noted that in the aftermath of failed soldier settler holdings, “Many left the island of their birth forever, joining the streams of immigrants to Victoria.” See his, L. Robson, \textit{A History of Tasmania. Volume II. Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980’s}, Melbourne, 1991, p. 409.

\textsuperscript{78} ‘Case for Tasmania: Presented to Sir Nicholas Lockyer by the Hon. A.G. Ogilvie, and Hon. Tasman Shields’, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 7. The balance of Losses for State Shipping was £71,102.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p. 10.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., pp. 10, 16. The Tasmanian Lyons Government acknowledged that losses on soldier settlement were “distinctly part of the cost of the war”, and had no compunction in accepting it as such. Its case was made on the basis of the equitable sharing of these costs, but claimed that the Tasmanian Government was paying an excess of 66 per cent above its fair obligations. By that calculation, Ogilvie and Shields determined that Tasmania paid £55,000 over and above its true liability for that part of the war for the 1923-24 Financial Year alone.


\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p. 3.
Tasmania’s general financial woes, even after the Commonwealth agreed to write off some of the debt. In concluding his report, Lockyer recommended that primary industries were the State’s priority in remaining solvent, but tellingly, the soldier settlement scheme was not included in his remarks suggesting that it was not likely to contribute to that revival. 84 The future of the State was not with soldier settlers, yet fulfilling the promise to them was to remain a millstone around the neck of financial prosperity.

The cancellation of leases had continued, with 202 leases falling back to the Department (and 125 of those soldier settlers), although these numbers represented a reduction from the previous year’s figures. Cumulative cancellations to the end of June 1925 stood at 1055. 85 President Hurst declared that

There are still many cases where settlers owe considerably more than the State has any prospect of recovery, and it is obvious that many of these will not be able to continue. The difficulty the Board is faced with is to know what limit to impose so far as arrears are concerned consistent with the State’s liability to bear the cost of such forbearance. 86

Clearing sales, auctions and other measures to recoup Crown monies from cancelled leases only blunted the impact of the loss, but did not go anywhere near to filling the financial gap between monies expended and monies received from the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Fund. The capping of repayments on rents to 5 per cent. also contributed to the losses, as Hurst revealed that the cost of borrowing of the money was 6 per cent. with the difference borne by the State Government. In addition, only 53 per cent. of the monies to be collected were received, which further compounded previous years’ budget shortfalls. £31,444 was also written off in bad debts. 87

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84 See, *Ibid.*, p. 10. Lockyer noted that: “My investigation leads me to the conclusion that the question of first importance is the further development of the primary industries of the State, the agricultural, horticultural, pastoral, mining, and timber industries; that expert guidance as well as financial assistance is necessary for this purpose, and a scheme to this end, if under proper control and supervision, should lead to substantial progress, with a more contented as well as an increased population.” Whether he was referring explicitly to the lack of these attributes in the supervision of Tasmania’s soldier settlement scheme as a comparison is unknown, although it is tempting to suggest that drawing close attention to proper guidance, control and supervision as the avenue for success, was a notable feature and focus of his remarks.
85 *Department of Lands, Surveys, and Closer Settlement: Report for 1924-25*, p. 3.
To ensure the continuance of the settlers who had remained, the President and Board toured the State with the Inspectors to view first-hand conditions. The direct contact with members of the Board was welcomed by the soldier settlers, who saw it as a sign that the Department was earnest in its concern for their plight. The President was plainly cognisant of the difficulties settlers faced in making repayments, and told the Minister that

The repayments of monies advanced to purchase stock and implements are now, together with repayments of principal on buildings, making demands in some instances a burden too great for the settler to bear. Where circumstances warrant, the Board has recommended postponement of repayments for varying terms, in order that the soldier may be allowed time to develop his holding before being required to meet his full financial obligations.88

The concessions granted to retain the remaining were a strong commitment of the Board’s intentions to make a success of those that had so far proved hardworking and conscientious. It must be remembered that this approach offered the only hope of recovering any of the moneys owed to the Department, and realistically, there was nothing else that could reasonably have been done without restructuring the whole scheme.

The Inspectors89 reported mixed fortunes for the State’s soldier farmers, with some areas reporting promising activity, while others continued in the same catastrophic vein as the previous season. All reported improvements in the standard of settler that were still on their holdings,90 which consequently translated to a lack of legal action taken to recover Crown assets and money. The soldiers had evidently appreciated the keen interest the Board had personally shown in their plight, yet, despite these encouraging signs, the Inspectors found difficulty in directly pronouncing any major success for the scheme. The soldiers’ earnestness in settling down, in making a home, in being part of the community, were all discussed, but in terms of tangible success by 1925, the Inspectors were mute. Inspector Dawes simply stated that soldier settlement had benefited the State through opening up new areas for

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88 Ibid.
89 Inspector C.E.V. Inches only held his position for approximately six months before he tragically passed away. His successor for Area No. 4 was Mr. J.W.R. Cairns. See, Ibid. The Inspectors also received a pay rise for the 1924-25 year.
90 Perhaps as a legacy that the worst had already left.
cultivation, and by increased freightage, but the fact remained that in many cases, experienced farmers had simply vacated their valuable holdings for an inexperienced soldier who had neither the knowledge nor understanding to continue similar success. Inspector Woolley grappled with this issue in his report of the year’s activities, possibly as a result of criticism of the scheme he had encountered in his duties. He rated the general outlook for the “progressive lessee” merely as “hopeful”, but had more to say about the future of the scheme rather than what had been achieved:

Apart altogether from the personal aspect there are brighter prospects ahead for soldier settlement, and considerable benefit will accrue there from, both the State and the community, in this connection. Of course, you have to take into consideration the fact that experienced farmers, who spent their lives on the land, have given up their holdings to make way for the youthful settler. I have often heard it commented that production has decreased considerably, and in consequence thereof the State has suffered, but it should be remembered that, although the men have had to buy experience, it has only been for a time, and for the future, production from settlement farmers should be a distinct asset to the State.

What is distinctly lacking from Woolley’s assessment is reference to palpable and appreciable successes, and, as one of six Inspectors on the ground, the lack of such positive assessments is telling. His focus on the future was perhaps driven by practicality and pragmatism, as people familiar with the nature of agricultural demands (like the Inspectors) recognised that a superseded and successful producer could not simply be supplanted overnight by a returned soldier. The more upbeat President saw far more successes achieved by the scheme. King Island’s Yambacoona Estate, through its predominant devotion to dairying, was a successful enterprise, while Hurst also cited Deloraine and Richmond as areas where State productivity had been increased under soldier settler toil. Overall, however, the gains reported by Hurst were not commensurate with the amount of money expended, and a Royal Commission into Tasmania’s Soldier Land Settlement Scheme was deemed necessary by a concerned Lyons Government to “investigate certain phases of

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92 Ibid., p. 6.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., p. 4.
the activities of the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Department”, announced on 14 June 1926. The dangerous and consistent inaction of successive Nationalist State Governments toward soldier settlement had almost financially crippled Tasmania. As Martin notes, “The Royal Commission promised Lyons the hope…that finally some realistic course of action would be open to the government.” Underlying the decision was the desire not only to investigate how and why the scheme was performing as poorly as it was, but also to break an increasing impasse between the Board and the Minister. Labor’s election promise of a general revaluation of soldiers’ properties (which the first Select Committee and advocated in the first place) was a course of action the Board had resisted at every opportunity. Minister Belton added his own man, Harold Brumby, to the Board and requested he undertake the valuations if the Board would not, then report directly to Belton. Eventually, after bitter correspondence, the Tasmanian Chief Valuer and Commissioner of Taxes, H.E. Downie, undertook the task. The Board was then suspended by Belton in March 1926.

The 1925-26 Annual Report was being prepared as the Royal Commission was finalising its own investigations. This no doubt weighed heavily on the mind of President Hurst, when he was compiling the year’s activities. There is a distinct change in the tone of the report, and probably the impending release of the Royal Commission’s findings prompted him to adopt a more open account, and no longer emphasising the potential for the scheme, but acknowledging the general failure.

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95 ‘Ministerial Statement of the Minister for Lands and Works, 1926’, JPPP, Vol. XCV, 1926, Paper No. 6, p. 5. In his later justification for calling for a Royal Commission, Belton, in his statement to the Commission felt that: “For some time the fact that arrears were heaping up, remissions of rent and the writing off of bad debts were also very considerable, and on the increase, coupled with the fact that I felt there was a weakness somewhere in the departmental administration, occasioned me uneasiness. [...] [R]ealising the very great importance of the operation of the scheme, not only to the Returned Soldiers but to the taxpayers of this State, I recommended the appointment of this Royal Commission to thoroughly investigate the whole matter.” “Statement by Mr Belton. Minister for Lands, Works and Agriculture”, Royal Commission Papers, Undated, p. 20. Despite “recommending” the appointment of the Royal Commission, Belton later stated that it was instigated by Premier Joseph Lyons instead. See The Mercury, 26 October 1926, p. 4.
96 Martin, 'War and after War', p. 182.
97 Martin has outlined the deterioration in the relationship between Belton and the Board, and it is useful to understand this as a backdrop to the continuing inaction on restructuring the scheme, and as a catalyst to use the Royal Commission to force definitive action on revaluations. Clearly, neither Belton nor the Board were prepared to concede ground, as they both felt they were serving the best interests of the soldiers in the circumstances. See, Ibid., pp. 189-191.
While only 5 settlers were placed on farms during the year, 180 leases were cancelled, taking the cumulative cancellation figure to 1237, of which 1067 were ex-servicemen. However, by this stage, the numbers of failures were, in a sense, academic. Hurst had not been able to reverse the consistently high rates of settler failures suffered under his predecessor Rudge, but the most important factor now facing Hurst and the Board was limiting further financial losses to the State by recouping outstanding monies. The loss for the year was £99,433, and, despite the fact that 61 per cent. of monies were repaid (up from the previous year), and the Commonwealth Government rebate had been calculated, Hurst revealed that £58,258 had to be found by the general taxpayer due to settler non-payments. Hurst took a firmer line over the lack of soldier settler financial contributions and the detrimental effect this was having on the State. He despaired at the lack of commitment shown by some still remaining “who trade on the public sentiment”, and the apparent fact that others, despite their best efforts, were in a position such that they could never hope to repay their debt to the Crown:

The time has arrived when soldier settlers must be made to realise that the country cannot afford to carry them any further, or grant more concessions than are provided under existing legislation, and that unless they conform to the conditions as laid down by Parliament, they must give way to others who will endeavour to meet their obligations.

This change in attitude marked a dramatic revision in focus for the scheme. No longer was attention solely on the accommodation of the soldiers’ wishes, but the means to recoup losses owing to the State took up a far more prominent place in the Board’s attentions. With a Royal Commission looming, such a shift in emphasis was understandable as accounts and finances related to the scheme were investigated. It

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98 The Royal Commission of September 1926 stated that 179 leases were cancelled. The previous year’s figures also differed from those given in the Annual Reports, however, the magnitude of the failures is still very much evident despite the discrepancies in figures.
99 ‘Department of Lands, Surveys, and Closer Settlement: Report for 1925-26’, JPPP, Vol. XCV, 1926, Paper No. 28, p. 3. The figure of 1237 cancellations includes, Hurst adds, the 1067 failures by returned soldiers. The cancellation of leases of settlers who were not returned soldiers but took up former properties of soldiers under the auspices of the Returned Soldier Land Settlement Scheme are included in the final figure.
100 Figure submitted to Hon. members of the House of Assembly, 17 November 1926. See: ‘Ministerial Statement of the Minister for Lands and Works, 1926’, p. 4.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
also signified an important realisation from the President down that the benevolent attitude that had guided the scheme since its inception would have to be scaled back in light of the catastrophic condition of the scheme’s finances and its lack of tangible returns.

Hurst found himself under further pressure when he provided evidence to the Royal Commission, invoking the criticism of the RSSILA State President, Colonel Mullen. Hurst had claimed that, “a large number of the settlers were drunkards, and that was the reason why they had gone off their farms.”\textsuperscript{104} Mullen defended them, and situated their plight within a broader cultural context of war experience, return, and trauma:

even if there were a few settlers who drank, it was a case for pity, as the physical and mental condition of some of the soldiers as a result of war service was responsible for the majority of the cases in question. Drinking was no more prevalent among soldier settlers than others.\textsuperscript{105}

Mullen’s emotional defence raised further questions over suitability and eligibility for settlement, and of the ability of the soldiers to seek assistance from repatriation authorities to cope with their problems. He moved his argument back toward Hurst and the department by claiming that the “departmental system had contributed largely to the unemployment problem, as the men who had been turned off or left their farms have very little chance of obtaining permanent employment.”\textsuperscript{106} Whether he referred to the desperate financial position they were left with or something else is not clear.

\textsuperscript{104} ‘Soldier Settlers’, \textit{The Advocate}, 4 August 1926, p. 8. \textit{The Advocate} reported the evidence and hearings of the Royal Commission into Soldier Land Settlement through July and August 1926.

\textsuperscript{105} Remarks attributed to Mullen. \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Ibid.}
Comparing percentages of collections from soldier settlers under the *Returned Soldiers' Settlement Act* and civilian settlers under the *Closer Settlement Act* clearly underlined the problem Hurst faced, and the failure of soldier settlers adequately to fulfil their obligations whether owing to their fault or not. Table 6.3 shows the large discrepancy between collections from returned soldier and closer settlement lessees. Direct comparison is only for instruction as different factors applied to Closer Settlement occupation, but it clearly shows the difficulty returned soldiers endured in repaying their debts in comparison with their civilian counterparts. In addition, bad debts written off under soldier settlement amounted to £173,591 — a figure that could never be recouped. Over £200,000 was still outstanding in repayments by 30 June 1926, up from £14,691 in 1921. Such a number indicates the depth of financial distress into which the scheme and the settlers were plunging, and one of the questions the Royal Commission asked was: why had nothing been done, despite evidence that there was a clear inability on the part of the settlers to repay their debts?

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107 Factors most clearly like property values, and that their rent and interest repayments were consequently lower, allowing a greater percentage of monies to be repaid.
109 *Ibid.* This represented an enormous increase in personal debt per head, despite the falling number of settlers due to cancellations each year. This also takes into account the fact that cancellation of settler leases did not add their debts to the above figures, and that these figures also included the payments owing from non-soldier settlers who had taken up ex-soldier holdings under the auspices of the scheme.
During the mid-1920s, the Board focussed no longer on the settling of new soldiers, but was mostly in the direction of submitting recommendations for remissions in rent and interest. Belton undertook a general revaluation of properties held by settlers to calculate the value on a productive basis. The revaluation process inadvertently contributed to the decline in the financial year 1925-26 of collections as settlers had held out on making their repayments pending the outcome of the revaluations, exacerbating the issue further. The importance of recouping the outstanding monies “constitute[d] a big factor in the finances of the State”, and the problem had grown so large – despite the Commonwealth Government writing off £262,000 in loans to Tasmania in connection with soldier settlement – that Hurst believed that the greatest challenge to the administration was dealing with the large amount of outstanding repayments.

Hurst described the Inspectors’ Reports as of “an interesting character”, but they contained little different from previous years’ reports. Orchardists were still struggling through depressed markets and an early dry season retarded crop growth, resulting in lean returns. While orchardists experienced problems in shipping overseas generally, producers on Flinders Island complained of poor communication with Tasmanian mainland markets. In some areas, stock deaths were reported, before good rains in the second part of the season turned many fortunes around. Bush fires – that perennial Australian summer menace – destroyed buildings and fences, necessitating further work for the settlers. The overall prognosis, however, was that returned soldiers, despite becoming more settled and engaging in agricultural and rural life, continued to struggle to earn enough to live and repay their debt to the Department. It was most likely Inspector Stanfield’s comments that Hurst found of “an interesting character” as he advocated further sustenance to soldier settlers, “who are worthy of being carried, in order that they may work their orchards and produce

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10 Minister for Lands and Works, James Belton, took the line that such work, in terms of “meeting the difficulty was...merely palliative, and did not touch the fringe of the problem.” “Ministerial Statement of the Minister for Lands and Works, 1926”, p. 5.
11 Ibid. Belton felt this was necessary, as did the returned soldiers themselves, who agitated for a revaluation of their properties. Their rates of interest and rent were calculated from the value of the land when the Department bought it at inflated values, and consequently, the soldiers struggled to pay charges on properties that had been artificially inflated. The revaluation would allow them a much better chance to pay their debts to the Department.
12 Department of Lands, Surveys, and Closer Settlement: Report for 1925-26”, p. 4.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., p. 6.
next season's crop..." With the impending release of the Royal Commission’s findings, the public debate that would inevitably follow, and the wrath of a hostile Minister, Hurst was in little mood to advocate further assistance to them when the scheme had met its generous financial commitment to their settlement. A sympathetic administration had so far failed to deliver results that the massive funding had promised.

Martin argues that one of the real reasons behind the instigation of the Royal Commission was to finalise the dispute between Belton and the Board. The submissions to the Royal Commission from both Belton and Hurst were extremely critical of each other, and Belton was keen to move on the issue of revaluations. The Board had resisted such attempts at every juncture due simply to the massive losses that would be encountered. Belton’s distaste for soldier settlement and his willingness to bring some sort of finality to the issue – by reigning it in under more business-like administration – had come to a head since the Labor Party won Government in its own right in 1925. His effective mandate to carry out his promise on revaluations reinforced the icy relationship between the Minister and the Board. Martin argues therefore that the Royal Commission’s role was “to a large extent fixated upon the adjudication of the dispute between Belton and his Board.” While there was certainly intense disagreement and internal politicking between the Minister and Hurst, it is doubtful that the Royal Commission was established even partly out of a desire to arbitrate on disagreements between Minister Belton and the Returned Soldier Settlement Board – particularly in light of the fact that losses due to soldier settlement had contributed so much to the poor state of Tasmania’s finances.

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113 Ibid.
1926 Royal Commission

The 1926 Royal Commission, authored by Justice Herbert Nicholls and returned soldier C.H. Ferguson, publicly catalogued the series of disasters that plagued the scheme from its genesis in 1917 to its catastrophe in 1926. The road to the Commission was similarly born out of clandestine machinations in its administration, and the forceful will of Belton to compel the Board to accept revaluations as the commonsense way to remove the soldiers from an ultimately unworkable proposition. Belton accepted the massive losses revaluation would cost the State, but he reasoned that it would surely be preferable than allowing the continuation of the struggle, with consistent losses each year and little hope of success. So why did the Board resist revaluation as an option, when their current method was only a palliative measure? Martin felt that the Board argued blanket revaluations “denied good business practice and, worse still, encouraged settlers to adopt a light-hearted attitude towards their financial obligations.” They were also concerned about the political interference that revaluations could cause, and the inequity that would result. Certainly Hurst (and former President G.C. Rudge) outlined suspicions in evidence to the Royal Commission. Faced with this sort of political interference – whether out of political expediency, pragmatism, popularity or electoral advantage – the Board adopted, as Martin has argued, “counter practices.” It was the intractability of both sides The Royal Commission was hoped to break.

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118 He added that the Board, “for most of its existence, had served Nationalist Governments, all resolutely opposed to any revaluations had understandably predisposed it to such an attitude.” Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 194.
119 See below, in the treatment of the Royal Commission’s findings.
120 Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 196. This not only involved the blocking wherever possible of moves toward revaluations, but the general running of the scheme. The Board would act on matters of advances to settlers or writing off of stock or goods without recourse to the Minister, to avoid the potential for interference that could prejudice or benefit particular settlers. Belton’s moves, firstly to appoint his own representative to revalue properties and report directly to him, and then to suspend the Board, added immeasurably to the frosty relationship between the Minister and his Board. This outcome ultimately did not help the settler on the land.
The Royal Commission\textsuperscript{121} into Tasmania’s failing soldier land settlement scheme painted a damning picture of soldier land settlement practices. Their report was particularly scathing of the legislation underpinning the scheme, highlighting areas where failure was almost inevitable from the very beginning: "[T]he initial conception of the scheme was such that great losses of money were certain and that of the 2000 men to be put on the land few could hope to succeed."\textsuperscript{122} Yet the soldiers were not exempt from blame. While undoubtedly being placed in a difficult position from the start, many men lacked the capacity for the type of steady consistent work required. The report implied the role soldiers played in the failure of the scheme, and suggested that, in many cases, they played an active role. Hostility between the Department and the soldier settler is ever present in the Commission’s account, which did not accord with the reports of the permanent Inspectors from the previous two to three years. This may be partly explained by the numerous interviews conducted by the Commission, whereby evidence taken from failed settlers was, for obvious reasons, not part of the Annual Reports.

The Commission’s findings outlined the “melancholy”\textsuperscript{123} state of the scheme up to 1926, providing a brief overview of the statistics to date. Worryingly for administrators, by September 1926, “heavy losses [were] still mounting up” from the scheme. Over £2,500,000 had been expended purchasing farms, equipment and stock, erecting buildings and in the costs involved with administration. Of this figure, losses over £700,000 had been accrued, with the Commonwealth losing over half a million pounds from Tasmania alone.\textsuperscript{124} The number of settlers retained were steadily diminishing to the point where Hurst believed that “in a short time, there will be only

\textsuperscript{121} The Royal Commission’s findings were published in full, both in northern and southern Tasmanian newspapers. Quentin Beresford has previously noted the Royal Commission’s findings, but he referred to The Mercury’s reports rather than the original held in the State Archives Office. The Mercury’s account contains the full text of the primary report of the two authors of the Royal Commission, but not additional submissions as found solely in the Archives Office of Tasmania. See The Mercury, 30 September, 1926, p. 7 and p. 9; The Examiner, 30 September 1926, p. 10, The Advocate, 30 September, 1926, p. 11. Martin has also provided a briefer treatment of the Royal Commission’s findings. His own observations have been of some use in the preparation of this larger coverage. See his, ‘War and after War’, pp. 199-207.


\textsuperscript{123} A ‘melancholy story’ was the term used to describe the state of the scheme in Tasmania, by President of the Board Mr Nevin Hurst. See “The Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act”: Report of Royal Commission, Report by Herbert Nicholls and C.H. Ferguson, Judges’ Chambers, September 1926, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., p. 1. The Commissioners found that the Commonwealth’s burden of the loss for Tasmania was £538,000.
remaining, of 850 stated as at the last Board Report. Owing to the overwhelming failures, the Commissioners inquired as to how the present position had arisen; what future recommendations should be made; and how to best deal with the remaining properties on the Government's hands. Their findings were not complimentary toward the guiding framework of the scheme.

The staff and the Board were not criticised in the Commission's findings as they were deemed "competent and conscientious", and the general process of administration and accounts was viewed as satisfactory. The Commission found that the process of purchasing and placing men on the land was most at fault. The Government's entry into the property market inflated prices, but the fact that the Government had to purchase large numbers of properties at short notice meant that there was insufficient time for bargaining for the best price. The returned men, as the Board's annual reports attest, preferred ready-made farms, with the result that the basic property price was higher and consequently forced a greater financial commitment from the settler to the Department. While the land purchased was not considered to have been unsuitable, the qualifications of the settlers posed the biggest problem in ensuring a successful outcome for the scheme. That, coupled with the limited abilities and resources of most of the settlers, and the higher prices paid for the properties combined to prejudice the settler against success: "the prices given for the farms... were too high in proportion to the income which the unskilled settlers with no capital could hope to get out of them, which, of course, is the all important point." The Commission examined key categories that would have expected to have been considered in the application of prospective settlers. According to the Commissioners, the obvious points for consideration in any application were: physical capacity, mental capacity, sobriety, farming skill, business capacity, industry, honesty and private capital. What they found after interviewing Inspectors, administrators and...
the settlers themselves was an almost complete and distinct lack of discernment in the selection of applicants. This lack of discretion the Commission identified as the key problem:

The failure to select men is the worst outstanding fault in the carrying out of the scheme, which in its design had inherent fatal weaknesses. The fundamental idea was that men should be put on farms to make a living out of them. A most obvious, palpable, unavoidable essential to this proposition was that the men should be reasonably fit for the task. No steps of the slightest practicality were taken by anyone to see that this all important condition precedent was performed.\(^{131}\)

In selecting the applicants, the legislation did not adequately ensure that key considerations were adhered to in the selection of applicants for land. Questions 5 – 9 on the application form requested sensible information regarding previous experience and aptitude:

Q. 5: “What was your occupation prior to enlistment?”
Q. 6: “For what business or purpose do you intend to put the land for which you have applied?”
Q. 7: “What experience (if any) have you had in such business?”
Q. 8: “What financial assistance do you consider essential to enable you to make a living on the land applied for?”
Q. 9: “What means do you possess for stocking and cultivating the land applied for?”\(^{132}\)

Despite these questions, there was a lack of verification of the answers provided to them. The soldiers’ medical records were not consulted to ensure their physical suitability for agricultural work, nor were they physically examined: “Physical capacity was practically taken for granted.”\(^{133}\) Their mental capacity and aptitude for farming was similarly not checked. Despite a degree of intelligence and cognitive activity, the mental and emotional demands for such a lifestyle dictated a monotonous, steady and continuous application lacking in a large number of applicants. “Many returned soldiers”, the authors found, “were liable to sudden

\(^{131}\) Ibid., p. 11.
\(^{132}\) These questions taken from application form of R.J.E. Barwick, who applied for 137 acres at Sky Farms, Claremont. See, AOT: AB 1/1: Application Form, The Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act, 1916, by R.J.E. Barwick.
desires for change and to sudden needs to complete rest.” Such requirements were palpably unsuited to the physically and mentally laborious demands of farming, and were sentiments shared “unanimously” by the Inspectors.

In no cases were practical enquiries as to the settler’s private contribution in capital made, which, as the scheme was to bear out, those with an aptitude and experience for farming, business acumen, continuity of application and sufficient private capital to back up their efforts were the settlers that invariably remained by 1926. For the remainder, the lack of formal education or instruction for teaching unskilled men – despite the numerous calls as far back as 1916 – was but one further calamitous decision in the formation of the scheme. The Commission found that, in the period between the genesis of the scheme and its implementation, no training could have reasonably been enacted sufficiently to educate the settlers to allow them to make a success of their holdings, and, alarmingly, no-one warned them of what they were about to embark on. As no sufficient training of men could have been undertaken in the time frame available, the sober selection of applicants became even more critical.

The root problem of the inadequate selection of men was the insistence that testimonials would suffice in their applications. Despite the initial application asking about the applicant’s experience and capital, no deposit or monies were required to take up land under the scheme. Applications for Qualification Certificates (to occupy and work the land) were not subjected to a rigorous enough selection process, and the Commission found that the ease with which testimonials could secure a qualification certificate was central to the selection of unsuitable settlers. The testimonials from “any prominent people” were sufficient for the soldier to acquire a holding, and were accepted as proof of their suitability and fitness as settlers. Several testimonials are held by the State Archives, and an examination of them demonstrate the same concerns the Commission authors had about the process. A testimonial for returned soldier Bertram Nas, in his application for land at Yambacooma Estate on King Island went thus: “The [sic] is two [sic] all it may concern to certefie [sic] that i

134 Ibid., p. 8.
135 Ibid. See also p. 11 of the Royal Commission report, where, of nearly 2000 settlers, President of the Board Nevin Hurst opined that only some 500 would soon remain, and of them, “nearly all” would be “men who had capital of their own.”
136 Ibid., p. 8.
have had the Bearer Mr Bert Nas in my imployment [sic] as a Farm Labourer and found him willing and very trustworthy both before goin [sic] to the war and after comming [sic] back.”

As many testimonials would have been provided by established farmers, the lack of grammatically correct recommendations was not so much the problem, but the reliance on these testimonials as the sole guide to ability, and therefore the granting of qualification certificates, was cited with consternation by the Commission authors as contributing to the problems involved in the selection of applicants. As a consequence of such an undiscerning application process, the outcome was inevitable.

Once the scheme was in operation, the Royal Commission identified further problems contributing to the eventual decline in settler retention rates. The Government’s entry onto the market to purchase stock had a similar effect as its land purchasing policy, with stock increasing in price, adding to the settler’s financial burden. Buildings erected on the holding “were frequently too expensive for the farms to carry them, financially speaking.” One such example with overpriced buildings was returnee Clarence Porter, who was settled on a plot at Orielton Park near Sorell in January 1918. He had Lot 1 in the Estate, but complained to the Board that the 187 acres he was occupying did not provide him with all the resources necessary to make a success of his enterprise. The main issue for Porter was the fact that there were buildings on his property valued at £1000, with an annual rental of £79 3s. 4d., yet he claimed to be using only £400 worth of those buildings. Added to the annual rental of his property, amounting to £98 13s. (on the capital value of his 187 acres of £1973), this constituted a not insignificant amount. His letter to the Board of 3 January 1918 requested the possibility of purchasing Lot 4 at Orielton Park to add to Lot 1. The extra land, Porter argued, would enable him to obtain more firewood and more space to breed his stock. The extra rent of £38 14s. was not a problem. In the

138 AOT: AB 1/1: Letter of Recommendation for returned soldier land settlement by William Pulfer for Bertram Nas, 28 March 1920. These testimonials are instructive of the sort of evidence needed to obtain a lease under the Act, but other testimonials not quoted noted a prospective applicant’s farming experience and personal character. For instance, see, AOT: AB 1/1: Letter of Recommendation for returned soldier land settlement by Bernard Murray for B.C. Newland, 26 December 1919; AOT: AB 1: Letter of Recommendation for returned soldier land settlement by D Bereenbee for B.C. Newland, 19 March 1920; AOT: AB 1/1: Letter of Recommendation for returned soldier land settlement by Henry Bertram for Charles Wiltshire, 30 March 1920; AOT: AB 1/1: Letter of Recommendation for returned soldier land settlement by Thomas Kennedy for Charles Wiltshire, 30 March 1920. They provide examples of the type of format and content required to obtain a holding.


140 Ibid.
correspondence was a handwritten note scrawled by a member of the Board, noting: "Have always recognised that the buildings on this lot are too expensive for the size of the lot, if there is no applicant on the lease Lot 4 I should recommend the sale of same to Porter." Porter received Lot 4, but the issue here was the struggles that returned soldiers faced on the issue of overpriced buildings. In Porter's case, even the acquisition of Lot 4 could not turn his fortunes around. These problems, added to the high prices paid for land and the large number of untrained settlers, produced the foundation for inevitable failures.

The Commission found that the prices paid for land were not exorbitant, but reflected the worth of that land to a successful farmer. With the transition of ownership from a successful and experienced farmer to that of a generally inexperienced soldier, the new settler faced little possibility of making that same land produce a living and repayments to the Department. G.C. Rudge felt that it should have been possible for a settler to succeed under the conditions he had freely entered, but the Royal Commission felt that only "strong, industrious, sober, skilful, and thrifty men" could have made a success of their holdings, while failure was "certain for the careless, unskilful or unbusinesslike and also particularly for those whose health would not permit of strenuous and continuous physical exertion or of steady planning ahead." Again, the Commission identified that the selection of settlers was crucial to the ultimate success of the scheme – both for the State and the settlers' own sakes.

When it became apparent to the administrators and Ministers that the scheme was not running as it was intended, the Commission believed the only kind thing to do was to remove those whose interests would not be best served by remaining on the land. The Minister, Board and Officials "could not make the scheme a real business or political success", and so should have moved quickly and decisively to restrict losses. Once again, however, the Commission's suggestions must be tempered by the fact that such a policy would have been politically unpopular, and may even have

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141 AOT, AB 1/1: Letter from C. Porter to Land Settlement Board, 3 January 1918.
142 "The Returned Soldiers' Settlement Act": Report of Royal Commission, p. 10. Martin found in his study of Huon soldier settlers that the Department persevered where possible when lessees suffered from ill health. Remission of interest and arrears, to assist their plight, eventually only compounded the soldier's position, as it tragically prolonged their financial trauma and increased their debts. The Department's "genuinely philanthropic" attitude toward such cases "could not stem the flow of departures." Martin, 'War and after War', p. 172. For cases of Huon soldiers settlers trying to work properties while suffering ill health, see pp. 169-172.
spelt the end of political careers. Once the scheme had been set in motion, its administration developed a benevolence rather than a strictly business-like transaction — however the arrangement appeared from the outside. As the report noted, “Seeing who the settlers were this was inevitable, and if kept within reasonable bounds and applied so that the benevolence was extended only to the industrious and honest, [this approach was] morally right...” A Minister would have been foolish to have ignored the community’s and Parliament’s desires. The Commission, to a certain extent, acknowledged and accepted this, although believed that what should have been done was to purge from the scheme those who would offer little or no serious prospect of success. Perhaps for this reason the Commission found it difficult to apportion blame to any one group or individual.

The notion of a business-like arrangement with the settlers was, according to the Commission’s report, never a serious likelihood owing to the very nature of Government. Government could not operate under such conditions as a private business could, and was constrained by wider responsibilities to the community. The report concluded that the idea of the State dealing with soldiers as customers was incompatible with the concept of Government and its responsibilities. “These considerations”, the Report found, “made it quite impossible that the problem of receiving our returning soldiers and settling them down at home could ‘be dealt with in a business-like way’ as the popular phrase goes, and as some persons demand.” Any insistence on this course of action by the Minister would have inevitably seen his removal — at any rate, he would not have survived. Any attempts by staff to operate outside of the Minister’s wishes would have incurred his displeasure and perhaps their dismissal, with the Royal Commission finding that Departmental Officers “were not as well supported as they should have been.” As a consequence, a sense of departmental allegiance was fostered among the employees of the Returned Soldiers’ and Closer Settlement Department that concerned one reader of The Mercury enough to write in on the issue of loyalty to the State or to one’s colleagues. The author of the

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144 Ibid., p. 13.
145 Ibid. These sentiments were echoed by President W.N. Hurst, who added that the inability to deal with the soldiers in a business-like way could be attributed to the legislation’s inherent benevolence. ‘Evidence to Royal Commission by W.N. Hurst’, Royal Commission Papers, 1926, p. 7.
146 “The Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act”: Report of Royal Commission, p. 16. Under these circumstances, the calls from some parliamentarians during the legislative debates in 1916 could never have been realistically entertained.
147 Ibid., p. 14.
letter lamented the state of affairs that saw departmental officers “hampered or intimidated from acting in the best interests of the country”\(^{148}\) as a result of the lack of support from the Minister.

The benevolent attitude that governed the scheme remained while no Minister was willing to implement stricter administrative and financial controls.\(^ {149}\) While progress was poor and generally acknowledged as being so within the Department, criticisms from outside of the Department were vehemently refuted.\(^ {150}\) Despite a general acknowledgement within the Department that all was not well with the scheme (which the Annual Reports and numbers of cancellations made plain), the vacillation continued. Suggestions for a stricter administration were mooted by Departmental staff in the early 1920s, but the lack of action in implementing them displayed the sort of Ministerial paralysis endemic among the succession of Ministers in dealing with a problem so politically and financially sensitive. The Permanent Staff’s passive acceptance of this policy was raised by the Commission’s report,\(^ {151}\) but in reality, in the face of Ministerial procrastination, little more could have realistically been expected. As a result, some settlers took a more flexible approach in fulfilling their financial obligations to the Department, worsening the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Fund deficit.

Of the settlers themselves, the Commission found that among them, as among everyone, there were people of all sorts who both exacerbated and relieved the situation.\(^ {152}\) While the majority undoubtedly attempted to fulfil their obligations to


\(^{149}\) The result of the transformation of the administration to a more benevolent outlook is evident in the number of remissions and grants of special assistance that the annual Board Reports demonstrate. As has been noted above, the failure to do so may have led to the fall of political careers, for the Commission wondered whether, “A minister who endeavoured reasonably to enforce the Crown’s rights would not have lost his portfolio and perhaps his seat and have been replaced by someone whose benevolence went the full length of yielding to humbugs as well as to honest unfortunate or hardworking unskilled men who were still bravely struggling to learn and make good.” The Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act: Report of Royal Commission, p. 14.

\(^ {150}\) A good example of a Minister defending the Department from attacks can be found in early December 1921, where statements were made by the Auditor-General attacking the accounting practices of the Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Department in early December 1921. The then-Minister, Alex Hean launched into a counter-attack against Auditor-General Preytman. It was clear, even from official departmental correspondence, that the two men did not like each other. See, Acts of Parliament, Vol. LXXXV, 1921, Paper No. 62; AOT: AB 47/l, pp. 16-17, 39-41, 42-45.

\(^{151}\) The Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act: Report of Royal Commission, pp. 14-15. This issue was explored in some detail, but it was felt that any fair judgement on this would be too difficult to make owing to the different relationship dynamics between a Minister and his permanent staff.

\(^{152}\) A submission to the Royal Commission argued that, “The Department naturally have had their regular rogues, but as you cannot classify a Nation, neither can you classify Soldier Settlers.” See,
the Department with varying degrees of success, for those with less integrity and less commitment, the Department's benevolent attitude presented an opportunity to renege on their obligations. "There are cases of fraud, larceny, dishonesty and many more of mere loose conduct and culpable carelessness", the authors found, that intensified the difficulty for staff in dealing with the failures of honest settlers, again pointing back to the flimsy application process that accepted testimonials for character, efficiency and experience as suitable for aptitude and for farming settlement. Following the failure to implement stricter systematic administrative controls, and when it became clear that there was little that could be done to reverse the catastrophic rates of failure, the Department's communications with the soldiers became even weaker. The Royal Commission found that "the Department hardly ever got beyond the writing of casual letters, usually so weak in tone as to amount almost to invitations to the recipients to bounce the Department." In addition, the Commission found that this weakness was exploited further by some, but stopped short of rating it as a full scale rort:

There cannot be any doubt that it was soon known to all the settlers that administration was feeble and that there was no need to have a good case in order to get passive concessions by which we mean concessions which consisted in a passive failure by the Crown to enforce its rights. This, of course, had the effect of greatly increasing the number of settlers who did not deal fairly with the State. As soon as it was found that carelessness and inaccuracy paid, many men who were conscientious, but who were not of the resolute stamp, began to indulge in careless and crooked conduct.

While by no means representative of the majority, some settlers did take liberties with the Department when they felt they could get away with doing so. Arthur Spencer, who held a property on Lot 4, Eastfield Settlement at Cressy since 1916, owed £301.2.6. in rent and interest to the Department over a year and a half period. He had also run up a debt of approximately £150 to other creditors, and had endured a period in hospital for illness, during which time his debts had continued to grow. The bailiff from Longford was sent in to distraint the goods on behalf of the Department for non-

155 Ibid., p. 17.
payment of arrears, and Spencer reacted with alarm. He did not want to give the place up, and requested the Department let it stand until stock improved a little, but his non-payment for a year and a half had evidently been too much for them to allow any flexibility. He refused to sign any documents from the bailiff’s representative until he had heard from the Minister, but eventually admitted defeat. Upon a sale being called to recover some of the Department’s monies, Spencer would only repay those provided he was compensated for the improvements he had effected – a nine-stable chaff house and implement shed, plus fencing. “[I]f you want me to leave it and are willing to allow something for improvements I will sell out & leave it”, was Spencer’s deal to the Department, as he claimed he had effected £150 worth of development to the property. This, of course, the Board could not and would not agree to, but the issue was finally resolved when a trustee took over the arrangement. After not paying rent or interest on the property for a year and a half, Spencer demanded compensation for work he had done, and his attitude of taking back, or being given credit on, what he had improved about the property suggests that once he had made the decision to hand the property back, it ceased to be his responsibility, so Government should incur the losses while he should be credited with the improvements. From his point of view, this was probably understandable, while the Government would have been seriously concerned at losing money in this way. The whole episode had reached this point because of the settler’s inability or unwillingness to pay his rents, and represents one example of a soldier attempting to push the Department on an issue, almost in a trial of strength.

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156 AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from A.E. Spencer to Minister for Lands, 1 April 1918. Cruelly, this correspondence was written on April Fool’s Day...
157 AOT: AB 1/1: Report from Trooper C Yost to the Bailiff, Longford, 24 April 1918.
158 AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from A.E. Spencer to the Secretary Closer Settlement Board, 4 June 1918.
159 Another case at Eastfield Settlement concerning Lot 3, next to Spencer’s old holding, also revealed a lack of respect from the soldier to the Board. The incumbent lessee, Alfred Page, had made it known in the district that he was intending to cancel his lease, and there was a flurry of activity as three separate applications for his Lot were forwarded to the Department. The Board, however, knew nothing of the intended cancellation, and requested particulars from Page directly. The Board, as legal owners of the property until its purchase, were kept in the dark about the situation and were not aware of any change of lessee until they received letters from potential applicants stating that they had heard that the current tenant wanted to leave. This displayed a lack of consideration and respect for the Department and all that they had done to place Page on the property. The settlers were not fulfilling their obligations to the Board by not maintaining open communication with them, and letting them know of any intention to vacate. See, AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from Albert Chilcott to Closer Settlement Board, 20 January 1919; AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from G.J. Lyon to the Secretary Closer Settlement Board, 21 January 1919; AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from Secretary of Board to Edward Casey, 24 January 1919.
Evidence to the Royal Commission explained that legal action to recover monies from illegally sold stock was an avenue rarely used:

"It has been the consistent policy of all Ministers NOT to criminally prosecute Returned Soldiers who have sold their Stock, as it is remembered that many of them owing to wounds and sickness brought about by active service had not got back their normal civilian state. Many of them had also been permanently maimed in the War and to adopt stringent measures was looked upon with disfavour."  

This lax approach earned the scorn and condemnation of James Belton, who felt that prompt action, as well as a greater utilisation of the police, would have seen more debts collected. The Board’s Annual Reports reveal some attempts at forcible removal from properties by legal means, but the failure of legal action would have served only to encourage those of lesser moral integrity to not fulfil their obligations. In addition, Stephen Garton has noted that with advocacy groups like the RSL publicising the appalling ineptitude of the schemes and their administration, "governments preferred not to be seen as persecuting the men who had sacrificed so much for the nation."  

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160 AOT, RC 37/1, 'The Returned Soldiers' Settlement Act. Report of Royal Commission', 1926, additional eleven page submission presumed to be by President Mr W.N. Hurst, p. 5. While some legal action was undertaken to recover lost stock or property and repayments in rents and from advances, as a general rule it was not recommended to follow up with prosecutions as the likelihood of recovering the monies was slim in comparison with the effort expended. See, "The Returned Soldiers' Settlement Act": Report of Royal Commission, p. 13. Public Service Commissioner R.J. Meagher, in his submission to the Royal Commission, also believed that legal pursuits of settlers who illegally sold stock would prove of little value, as the dependents would inevitably suffer the most. He alluded to their past deeds as soldiers, and asked: "is the loss of stock even if were threefold of any consequence to their lost limbs, wrecked bodies and nerve shattered mind?" See, AOT: RC 37/1, 'Submission of R.J. Meagher, Public Service Commissioner, to the Royal Commission into the Returned Soldiers' Settlement Act', p. 3. In many cases too, it would have been a method of surviving rather than any genuine attempt at making money from the sale.

161 AOT: RC 37/1: 'The Returned Soldiers' Settlement Act. Report of Royal Commission', 1926, additional Statement by Mr Belton, Minister for Lands, Works and Agriculture, p. 9. Not all soldiers were content to leave the Department in a dire position. Philip Cooper, from Dromedary was forced off his land in June 1919 because of ill-health, under the advice of the Medical Officer. Cooper had no intention of exploiting the Department, as he offered to assist the Board in settling any incoming tenant, and expressed his regret at having to request the cancellation of his lease. See, AOT: AB 1/1: Letter from Philip Cooper to the Chairman Closer Settlement Board, 13 June 1919.

162 S. Garton, The Cost of War: Australians Return, Melbourne, 1996, p. 135. Reynolds argues that the King Island Returned Soldiers’ League was particularly vocal in representing the interests of its soldier settlers. They "vigorously campaigned the State Government for assistance, and continuously corresponded with the Returned Soldiers’ and Closer Settlement Board describing difficulties on the land." See her, 'The Noble Failure: King Island Soldier Settlement, 1918-1930', pp. 26, 58. It is likely that in more regional and rural areas specifically that local RSSILA branches did the same for their returned soldier 'constituents'.
As the accumulated failure rate reached "holocaust" proportions (around the years 1922-1924), the Department and all involved reportedly "lost heart." This may be attributed to the Minister and Board's inability to recover the scheme from its mire. The second calamitous failure was inaction by the Department when it was found that any prospect for success was gone: "There is no doubt that large sums might have been collected and should have been collected if the men were to stay on their farms, and that if they were not to stay, they should have gone off sooner and the best possible done with the land in the interests of the State." This would have opened up many difficulties in classing the different settlers as to their suitability to stay and continue receiving assistance from the Department, but the Commission's report also suggested that such a move should have been undertaken in the interests of the settler himself, because, "for their own sakes, [some settlers] should have been let go, or made to go, as soon as it became clear that they were not worth keeping." This is undoubtedly true from a financial proposition, but again, the prospect of political harm resulting from such a policy would have been catastrophic. As to the future of legal action beyond 1926, the Commission would not rule, as it was not in its powers to say.

The lack of action in salvaging the scheme was in some instances blamed on politicisation and undue political interference. The translation of the community's benevolence into the Minister's unofficial policy was not surprising. The Commission noted wryly that it seemed "inevitable" from the start "that the scheme would be administered in such a way that the Minister in charge of it would always be secure against a verdict that he was guilty of unpopular things." This in itself is nothing remarkable considering the esteem and pride in which returned soldiers were held in the community, and, consequently, the Minister's virtual predetermined course of dealing with them. However, the Royal Commission found other more sinister traces of political involvement and interference not within the spirit of the scheme that compromised the efficient and effective administration by the Department. The

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163 "The Returned Soldiers' Settlement Act": Report of Royal Commission, additional submission by unknown author under eleven page section, 1926, p. 6. The section in question refers to the catastrophic failure rate during this period as a 'holocaust', and that the task "was beyond any Department to deal with..."


165 Ibid., p. 15. [Italics my emphasis].

166 Ibid., p. 16.
authors found undue political interference that was outside of the normal running of
the scheme, with former President Rudge complaining of instances where returned
men would contact the Minister and “get extended time against our [the Board’s] recommenda-
tion.” In his own evidence to the 1926 Royal Commission, President Hurst alleged that successive Ministers engaged in preferential treatment for their own electorate to the detriment of both the Board’s work and to soldiers in other districts. He declined to name any particular Minister, but stated that

It is the system and not the individual Minister that brings about such a result, but the fact that a Minister has this power and exercises it, causes a feeling of hostility to arise between the Board and Minister which makes it very difficult for me to keep on harmonious relations with the two conflicting points of view.

The Minister, James Belton, strongly rejected any improper political interference
during his tenure, but nonetheless, Hurst’s damning accusations revealed a deep mistrust between Ministers and the Board, as the conflicting requirements of political expediencies from democratically-elected MP’s clashed with the supposed a-political work of the Board. Recollecting his Public Service career, former Department Chief Clerk, Noel Lamidey, described how he had been promised career advancement if he agreed to write down “instances where either the President or the Secretary had taken action outside of the legal scope of the regulations”, to be used as evidence to the Royal Commission. Political pressure may also have indicated the lobbying power

168 A case in point were the allegations by President W.N. Hurst made against Ministers in his evidence to the Royal Commission. Hurst claimed preferential treatment for soldiers in the Minister’s own electorate: “he must...of necessity know intimately a great number of the Returned Soldiers in his constituency, and as self-preservation is the first law of life the Board has found Ministers reluctant to approve of recommendations which tend to make them unpopular in their own district.” ‘Evidence to Royal Commission by W.N. Hurst’, Royal Commission Papers, 1926, p. 9. In addition, claims were made during the tabling of the 1921 Select Committee Report into Returned Soldier Land Settlement by the Fruit Expert J.M. Ward that MHA and report author James Newton was guilty of endeavouring to “use his political influence to obtain a higher price for a block of land, on which a soldier was to be settled, than the land was worth.” See, ‘Soldier Settlement’, The Mercury, 28 January 1922, p. 6. See also, The Mercury, 27 January 1922, pp. 5-6; The Mercury, 1 February 1922, p. 4; Martin, ‘War and after War’, pp. 145-146.


171 Lamidey clearly felt this to be an attack on the Department’s executive officers by the Attorney-General, who wished to undermine the Minister for Lands, James Belton. It was clear Belton wanted no association with the scheme’s failure, so Lamidey reasons that the request to direct negative or even illegal actions to the Department would reflect poorly on Belton. Lamidey claimed he was so incensed by the request to wrongfully betray his friends and colleagues to the Commission that he was willing to reveal this request to the Commission, but was argued out of doing so by the President and Secretary, who were apparently the two targeted by the Attorney-General. After he pledged not to write
of the RSSILA and the value of returned soldiers' votes, even to the mid-1920s, despite a decline in their membership in Tasmania in this period. At the juncture where the Commission argued that the scheme should have been salvaged through the termination of unsuccessful leases, the policies of successive Ministers appeared to take an opposite line:

At this stage the scheme became affected by minor, detailed and unjustifiable political influence, as contrasted with policy. The general conception of the scheme, which can now be seen to be wholly erroneous, was at any rate full of high aspirations for the good of the country and the soldiers, but, later it became a matter of individual settlers or branch leagues approaching members, who approached Ministers, who took up a blind attitude and let things go.

Such action was extremely harmful to the work of the Department, as it undermined their own efforts to recover outstanding monies by their circumspection to the Minister. The only way there could have been any chance of salvaging the remains of the scheme was through co-operation by the Minister and the Department – acting in accord with each other. As a result, an example was set that the Minister could hold the Department at bay. Ministers acceding to the wishes of pressure and minority appeals undermined the safeguards put in place by having the scheme controlled by a Minister in the first place. The submissions to the Commission highlighted a fair degree of animosity between the Board and the Ministers (James Belton especially), resulting in a general level of mistrust and estrangement between the two.

Minister Belton made remarks that could have been interpreted by the Department as inflammatory, and his Statement to the Commission clearly attempted

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172 G.L. Kristianson, compiled numbers on the financial membership of the RSSILA from 1916 to 1963. The Tasmanian figures between 1920 (when the RSSILA put their membership records into proper order) and 1926 reveal a 51% drop in membership over this time. The drop in membership was possibly much higher if estimated figures from late 1919 are included, due to a mass signing-on of returned soldiers on their demobilisation, but these are estimations. The financial membership of the RSSILA in Tasmania in 1926 according to Kristianson’s figures, showed a financial membership of 1,053 members. See, G.L. Kristianson, The Politics of Patriotism, Canberra, Appendix B, pp. 234-5.

to make plain his inherited problems. He appeared to play politics by pleading degrees of ignorance on some issues that he assumed the President to have under control. The Commission’s recommendation was to press for immediate legislation to protect the Board from detailed interference. Political interference was damaging to genuine efforts at salvaging some sort of acceptable outcome, and the only way there could be any resolution, according to the report, was by removing miniscule parliamentary and ministerial scrutiny and completely overhauling the state of the settlement scheme in Tasmania.¹⁷⁵ These sentiments were expressed in a forceful submission (presumably from someone in the Department) that argued: “Banish political interference altogether and do not let the Department be the cockpit of political endeavour as it has been in the past.”¹⁷⁶ The Royal Commission appeared to take an opportunity to draw the lines of demarcation between political and non-political elements in the administration just as much as it appeared to inquire into the reasons for the overwhelming losses of the scheme. At any rate, there surfaced a need to remove from the administration any undue political interference or manipulation for the alternative was a continuation of the current state of affairs, and the continued impotence of the Board.

Other recommendations included action on one of the soldier’s central grievances of the scheme: the revaluation of their properties to remove “the terrible problem of overvaluation” that blighted the efforts of genuine and industrious settlers.¹⁷⁷ Work in this area was to be undertaken by the Taxes Department after returned soldiers demanded that something be done about this issue, but revaluation was again a cause of political friction between the Minister and the Board.¹⁷⁸ In his

¹⁷⁵ "The Returned Soldiers' Settlement Act": Report of Royal Commission, p. 20. A submission from someone who was presumably a member of the Department attacked the process of examining old files for examples of improper conduct, whether that be by the Minister, Audit Department or any one else, claiming it was “not only useless but shows a narrowness of vision and personal vindictiveness hard to understand when the nature of the scheme is taken into consideration.” ‘Five Page Attachment to the Royal Commission Report entitled ‘Writing Off Losses’, Royal Commission Papers, 1926, p. 4. This respondent clearly suggested that there was a vested interest by some in discrediting or attacking the work of the Department, identifying a clear political purpose by doing so.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 4-5. Martin attributes these words to R.J. Meagher, Public Service Commissioner. See, Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 199.

¹⁷⁷ "The Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act": Report of Royal Commission, pp. 20-21. Included as part of the revaluation process was that a clear understanding of the purchasing and payment of advances for buildings be explained to the settlers, as the situation was that men could buy buildings on land that they did not own. Revaluations were also supported by the inspectors, “if the soldiers are to succeed.” ‘Statement by Mr Belton. Minister for Lands, Works and Agriculture’, Royal Commission Papers, Undated, p. 4.

submission, Hurst provided a brief run down of the issue: the Minister appointed his own representative to revalue all of the soldier-held properties in the State independent of the Board, and to furnish those revaluations and reports directly to the Minister and “not be subject to review by members of the Board.”  

The Board rejected the Minister’s decision because of an inability of one man to adequately and fairly value properties the length and breadth of the State encompassing so many disparate pastoral pursuits. Consequently, Hurst reported that “The decision of the Board not to adopt the Minister’s...suggestion has caused a feeling of estrangement between the Minister and the Board, which has not been called together since.”  

The frosty relationship between Minister Belton and the Board in 1926 served to further mar the scheme’s efficient operation.

The issue of arrears was raised by Inspector Cooper after he visited King Island. The soldiers there engaged in the dairying industry could make a reasonable income that could afford a decent standard of living and repay the interest, but not enough to cover their arrears. On the issue of soldiers’ properties more generally, and what to do with them, the Royal Commission thus made several recommendations:

1. Each case would require a practical, individual and detailed consideration.
2. In weighing prospects for success, questions as to the settler’s character and handling of his farm need to be ascertained.
3. The removal of detailed interference for those administrating the scheme.

The problem of what to do with properties that had been thrown back on to the Board also exercised the minds of the report’s authors. Over 1000 properties were in this category, and the problem was to find a way to minimise the risk of further excessive financial losses. Several suggestions were made, but required further careful consideration. Ultimately, it was an unfortunate consequence of the original policy of selection that Nicholls and Ferguson hoped the State “could get rid of”, but which it could not.

The scheme up to 1926 had been fraught with interference, too benevolent an attitude, and the wasting of money, time and effort. The Royal Commission’s view was that a great and controversial overhaul of the entire scheme would have to be

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179 Ibid.
180 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
183 Ibid., p. 24.
effected in order to recoup any monies owing to the State (effectively the taxpayer), but that any change had to have sufficient force of will to make strong decisions about the fate of the settlers (whether to remove them or continue their leases). Chief Justicé Herbert Nicholls and C.H. Ferguson realised that the transition would not be easy, noting that, “the State has made great losses and must make more.” By severing the current method of working and taking a firmer line, the State “can secure that its losses will only be a small fraction of what they undoubtedly will be if the scheme continues to be exposed to political interference in detail.”

The Aftermath of the Royal Commission and beyond

The Chief Justice and his colleague...have painted what had admittedly to be a sad picture in colours rather too dark and sombre, not to say sordid, so that at first view one might almost think we were all, including some of the bravest soldiers of the War, a community of criminals, defaulters, incapables, corrupt officials, spineless politicians, whitewashing investigators, and general ‘failures’...

On the same day The Mercury published the full text of the report of the Royal Commission, its editorial column published ‘Comment’ that expressed surprise at some of the findings. While there was little in terms of an overall summary of the findings, The Mercury highlighted the Report’s “emphatic” opinion that the scheme was doomed to failure from the start. Using this as a foundation, The Mercury launched a scathing attack on the Royal Commission’s report, highlighting the Department’s officers as somehow complicit in the failure of the scheme through their dishonesty in failing to present the real state of the scheme to the respective Ministers, for fear of dismissal or the invocation of their displeasure. The editors claimed that

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183 Ibid., pp. 24-5.
184 Ibid., p. 25.
185 Editorial: ‘The State and the Soldiers’, The Mercury, 1 October 1926, p. 6. This was part of The Mercury’s response to the findings of the Royal Commission.
186 The Mercury may have had a point to their criticism, as a letter held in the Archives Office of Tasmania from the Deputy Auditor-General to the Premier noted the intransigence of Hurst when questioned during the Royal Commission. With frustration and disgust, the Deputy Auditor-General noted: “I suggested that he [Hurst] should accompany me to your office and make a statement to you, this he did in my presence, but I am of the opinion that Mr Hurst’s statement to you was not entirely truthful. It is to be regretted that the Returned Soldiers Settlement Department has shewn [sic] such lamentable weakness in dealing with the matter involving both the honour of members of its staff and a member of Parliament. [...] It is not my intention to conduct any further special investigation into the work of this Department unless you instruct me to do so.” AOT: AUD 60 – Deputy Auditor-General's
the Royal Commission “exonerated” the Department’s officers and “praised [them] for having carried on administration according to the known desires of Ministers, and without regard to the honest carrying out of their functions.” This particular view was a gross oversimplification of the complexities involved in the scheme’s administration. There were some indulgences to specific Ministers’ desires, but this must be placed within the context of the public’s view of returned soldiers, the esteem in which they were held, and the natural order of hierarchical service. Although not incorporated in the final Report, a submission to the Royal Commission advised that throughout the scheme’s progress, the Ministers in charge “have been fully advised of the losses; there has been no surprise sprung upon them,” implying that The Mercury’s interpretation of the Commission’s report was not in fact correct. The Ministers, if the submission is to be believed, were at all times cognisant of the state of the scheme – financially and socially – and contributed as much to the failure as anybody or anything else. The Mercury at least admitted as much in its first editorial after the handing down of the Commission’s findings, when it relayed the fact that “Ministers, rather than take the chance of offending public opinion, concurred in a system which they knew to involve dishonesty to the public.” The amazement expressed in the Editorial column that this could have played such an important part in the administration of the scheme seems disingenuous. The Mercury itself admitted that “the popular feeling was all for the soldiers” yet could not reconcile that such important considerations like the satisfaction of Ministers’ constituencies could play a role in their handling and running of what was essentially another aspect of the repatriation of returned soldiers. It was just that soldiers and their supporters were voters too.

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file relating to the Royal Commission into Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Board: Letter from Deputy-Auditor-General to the Premier, 12 June 1926.


190 Cynically, one could posit that The Mercury was in fact guilty of exactly the same malefaction as that with which they accused Ministers and Departmental staff. The Ministers were targeted by The Mercury’s editorial team for their perceived dishonesty in not revealing the true nature of the scheme’s progress, and in not taking firm and decisive action against returned soldier settlers, but the lack of criticism of the soldiers (despite the fact that the Royal Commission found soldiers contributed to the problem) could be argued as hypocrisy of the highest order. Indeed, Martin argues that The Mercury’s adoption “of such a high moral stance conveniently ignored its responsibility in having created a political climate that precluded responsible action on the part of either the Board or Government.” Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 184.
The Mercury attacked the Commission’s assertion that the whole business was erroneous in its conception. Coming from a standpoint of benevolence rather than business – the editors were probably correct. It was easy for the Commissioners to slate the scheme after it had failed, but the initial conception according to the paper was to assist the returned men in carving out a new life for themselves on the land as a form of reward for sacrifice. From this outlook, the scheme could never really be judged to have failed as the concept of running the scheme along business lines could not have been accommodated. Any assertions as to failure were therefore errant – the only failure that could be ascertained according to The Mercury’s editors was that the scheme did not fulfil what it set out to achieve. Financial considerations were not an issue to a benevolent scheme which was admitted by the Commission’s authors to have been “intended to be a financial loss” to begin with.191

The newspaper was in no doubt as to its safe opinion on the scheme’s intentions and their notion of what represented a failure – “The really regrettable ‘failure’ is the failure of this important chapter of public work to give the soldiers what the public, every one of them in our opinion, genuinely and sincerely wished them to have – the chance of ‘making good’ on the land.” The Mercury was confident of the force of public sentiment behind its position, but still failed properly to engage the issue of returned soldier complicity in the outcome. The two-faced approach of apportioning blame, while simultaneously preserving and championing the image of the returned soldier indicated The Mercury’s general approach toward soldier land settlement, and produced an intriguing dichotomy of opinion of right versus wrong regarding the treatment of soldiers that seemed to be a hangover from the war years.194

The Advocate from the north-west of the State was rather more circumspect, but still criticised the premise that patriotic fervour had led to the fundamental and

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192 It would not be too cynical to suggest that The Mercury’s position on this matter was guided by popular sentiment, but their argument effectively excused the scheme’s financial failure because of the intention behind its creation.
194 While the administrators, politicians and taxpaying public were undoubtedly sympathetic in their aims for the settlers, to think that monies expended could be written off in the event of a failure with the pretext of benevolent intention as an excuse completely underestimated the intentions for the scheme and its settlers. The Administrators and majority of soldier settlers certainly believed that it was entirely plausible to establish and administer the scheme on liberal and compassionate foundations yet still desire some repayment of the soldiers’ financial obligations in order that it be less of a drain on the taxpayer.
ultimately crippling flaw that the scheme encountered. "Apparently it was all part of
the war fever", The Advocate proclaimed; "Our boys had gone and fought, and fought
the good fight, and nothing was to be denied them."\(^{195}\) Despite the fact that Closer
Settlement schemes had promoted the sound policy of large estate resumptions, The
Advocate expressed surprise that soldier’s wishes in choosing ready-made farms was
not ignored. Mockingly, they considered that, "the men who fought our battles must
be given what they wanted. They should not be compelled to go into the bush and
clear as if they were ordinary pioneers. Who could resist the appeal?"\(^{196}\) These
comments were not accurate, or necessarily fair. "Ordinary pioneers” did not have to
make repayments after the first year on interest and advances for stock. The
pioneering language also belies a point of view according closely within the yeoman
ideal espoused in the nineteenth century, that was not especially useful or applicable
to Tasmania’s soldier land settlement programme. In addition, they ended with the
rather offhand observation: "It might be asked what was the use of the Commission?
We do not know. The Commission should have sat years ago, but then no one would
have listened to the advice."\(^{197}\) Overall, The Advocate had very little to say in
comparison to other press, and did not revisit the issue or give it the same attention as
the Hobart paper.\(^{198}\)

From the completion of the Royal Commission’s findings in late September
1926 to late October, nothing definite was undertaken or announced in relation to a
reorganisation of the scheme. It was reported that the Minister for Lands and Works
James Belton and the Attorney-General A.G. Ogilvie were involved in preparations
for a general reorganisation\(^ {199}\) that would presumably entail a broad sweep
revaluation of soldier settler properties, as was about to be undertaken before the
implementation of the Royal Commission. Soldier settlers at Riana in the State’s
north met in mid-October and issued a resolution to the Minister that revaluations
should be undertaken immediately, as “any further delay will end in heavy losses to
both soldiers and the general taxpayer…”\(^{200}\) This was proof that the soldiers

\(^{196}\) Ibid.
\(^{197}\) Ibid.
\(^{198}\) The Examiner discussed the report’s findings in an editorial, ‘Soldier Settlement’, The Examiner, 30
September 1926, p. 4.
\(^{199}\) The Mercury, 13 October 1926, p. 6.
\(^{200}\) Report of resolution from meeting of returned soldier settlers at Riana. The Mercury, 14 October
1926, p. 8.
themselves did not expect a purely benevolent transaction, nor were they willing to accept one as they were mindful of the increasing costs to the taxpaying public. The rumoured appointment at the end of October of Herrick resident and well-known farmer and pastoralist H. Brumby was lauded by soldier settlers in the area, and no doubt state-wide, as firm action was finally being taken on the one issue they held of vital importance. As noted earlier, the impending revaluations before the inquiry of the Royal Commission had stifled the payment of arrears and debts to the Department as the soldiers waited to see the outcome of the revaluations. The revaluation process was so important that *The Mercury*’s Scottsdale correspondent claimed that many of the soldier settlers in the area had only been holding on as long as they had for the chance that “after revaluation they will have a reasonable hope of working their holdings at a profit.”

The inaction of the Minister in regards to statements concerning the future restructuring of the scheme led a fellow Labor member for the seat of Darwin publicly to criticise Belton. Belton was intractable. Neither Premier Lyons nor Belton were prepared to make any definite statements concerning the scheme before the beginning of November. The beginning of the process of revaluations had in the short term satisfied the soldiers, but the political fall-out of the Royal Commission was still being felt. When questioned in Parliament on 24 November about why the Royal Commission was instituted Belton declined to make any statement and deferred to Attorney-General Ogilvie for reply. This indicates his general distaste for the whole issue, best summed up by one of the few things he said on the Royal Commission’s report: “Personally, I looked through the report, and did not notice one helpful suggestion.” The delegation of immediate responsibility for the department to an Acting Minister, Andrew Lawson, suggests that Belton was hoping, just as the Royal Commission report hoped of soldier settlement – to be rid of it – as politically it represented a poisoned chalice. Certainly, both in his opinions to the Royal Commission and later in his public comments, Belton displayed no genuine affection for the issue. Belton’s distaste probably reflected Beresford’s assertion that political interest in the returned soldier land settlement scheme faded the further the

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202 *The Mercury* provides evidence of this public stoush between MHA Philip Kelly and Belton on 25 October 1926, p. 6; and 26 October 1926, p. 4.
203 James Belton’s comments were made in the context of a parliamentary debate over the consideration of granting an extra £450 to cover administrative and management expenses from the Royal Commission. The sum was granted. *The Mercury*, 25 November 1926, p. 11.
remoteness from the war.\textsuperscript{204} The publication of the Royal Commission’s findings had provided the Government with little constructive guidance,\textsuperscript{205} apart from a call for more efficient administration and less political interference.

The first news of the Government’s action over Nicholls’ and Ferguson’s proposals came with the appointment of Andrew Lawson, who took on the day to day responsibilities for soldier settlement.\textsuperscript{206} Belton did not relinquish overall responsibility, but the change allowed closer supervision of the Department in the wake of the Royal Commission’s critical report. Returned soldiers on King Island were unhappy at this administrative transfer and moved a resolution expressing grave concerns at Belton’s apparent withdrawal from the Department’s affairs.\textsuperscript{207} The Public Service Commissioner R.J. Meagher was also instructed to investigate the restructuring of the Department, with the expectation that the Department’s 15 employees would be reduced in number. News of administrative changes were reported just before Christmas,\textsuperscript{208} with the principal change seeing the existing Advances Section of the Department absorbed by the Accounts section. Some temporary positions were also cut in the move, indicating the Government’s intentions toward a restructured contraction of the Department’s staff. The intention of the changes was to avoid duplication where possible, and amalgamate the Closer Settlement and Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Records.

The administrative changes took immediate effect as President Hurst’s 1927 Annual Report testifies. The Board was reconstituted with W.N. Hurst as President, P.J. Perry and Carmichael Lyne as members, and A.D. Cooper as the soldiers’ representative.\textsuperscript{209} A general revaluation of soldiers’ properties was undertaken by the valuer Mr H.E. Downie as the Royal Commission suggested, resulting in a general

\textsuperscript{205} See \textit{Ibid.}, where he argues that, because neither commissioner had much experience in agriculture, their recommendations were based on legalistic foundations. “Consequently their report made little impact on authorities.”
\textsuperscript{206} \textit{The Mercury}, 10 November 1926, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{207} The Returned Soldiers’ Association Branch on King Island moved: “That this association views with grave concern any attempt to remove the control of the Soldier Settlement Department from the hands of the Minister for Lands (Hon. J. Belton). The present Minister, by making every endeavour to remedy an intolerable position, has been directly responsible for preventing many settlers from abandoning their blocks, and this association has every confidence in him.” \textit{The Mercury}, 11 November 1926, p. 6.
reduction in value of holdings. After consulting with Andrew Lawson, the new Board decided to investigate any cases that were unsatisfactory to the Department or where soldiers did not see that the revaluations did not suit their needs. Despite this shift to a more intensive and thorough investigative system, a further 173 leases were cancelled for the year ending June 30 1927, of which 88 were soldiers, continuing the decline in retention rates for the scheme. Only two settlers were placed on farms for the year, taking the total number of settlers placed on farms in the 11 years of the scheme to 1,966. Hurst made little reference in his annual report to the findings or future implementation of the Royal Commission, but added during his account of the Department’s financial transactions that soldier settlement was not, nor could ever be a business transaction. It appeared that the Royal Commission and subsequent public and political debate had at least cleared up one aspect of the scheme. The Inspector’s Reports generally revealed a far more positive year, led by the revaluation in properties. Most Inspectors felt that the revaluation process would have a positive impact on the future success of the scheme, providing them with an opportunity to meet their future obligations to the Department. Orcharding settlers finally experienced a good season, and the future generally looked good for the majority of settlers. From such an optimistic outlook and post-Royal Commission, Inspector Stanfield (Area No. 6) felt that “the soldier settlement scheme is just settling down to real business, it having reached a working basis after the ups and downs of past years.” Stanfield felt that those remaining on their holdings were likely, with continued support, to “become successful producers in the near future.” This perhaps may have lead many to wonder why they had not already become “successful producers” following years of supervision, assistance and special concessions, and considering the fact that according to former President G.C. Rudge, “they [returned soldiers were] being accorded advantages which the average private individual does

210 The Report from Inspector G. Edwards from Area No. 2 found that the revaluation of properties in his area had seen the majority of soldiers “well satisfied.” Ibid., p. 5.
211 Ibid., p. 4. The following year, 1928, the Board sat nine times to predominantly deal with this issue of revaluations not meeting the needs of the settlers. It is obvious therefore that the Government were committed to preserving as many soldier settlers as possible within the scheme to offset the enormous losses, even if it meant providing further concessions to them. See, ‘Department of Lands, Surveys, and Closer Settlement: Report for 1927-28’, JPPP, Vol. XCIX, 1928, Paper No. 30, p. 3.
212 Ibid., p. 4.
213 Ibid., p. 6.
214 Ibid.
This assistance to returned soldiers had cost the State and Commonwealth Governments a combined total of £979,634\(^{217}\) in the ten years of the scheme's Tasmanian operation.

During 1928, the trend in settler retention rates continued in a downward spiral with a further 52 properties reverting to the Crown.\(^{218}\) This represented a substantial decrease in failures from the preceding 12 months, and was actually the lowest figure since 1920. The good news continued with over 75 per cent. of monies owing for the year repaid by lessees, but heavy losses continued.\(^{219}\) The settlers were slowly repaying their debts to the Crown but at great financial cost borne by the State, leading the President of the Closer Settlement Board to declare that it was "beyond the capacity of the State to bear the losses which are resulting from the scheme."\(^{220}\)

The Inspectors' Reports continued in much the same vein as previous years, although many noted the positive effect of the revaluation of properties. Despite the season being particularly ruinous for settlers not engaged in mixed farming due to poor prices for potatoes and fruit in particular, the general sense was finally positive for a successful outcome for soldier settlement. Inspector E. Cooper from King Island praised the scheme for increasing the output of the dairying industry there. None of the Inspectors interestingly rated the scheme anything like a success in 1928, but all predicted future material and financial returns that would benefit the State. Inspector R. Stanfield (Area 6) found a positive note even despite the scheme's poor progress. He felt that soldier settlement would eventually "bring compensation for the money lost in the endeavours to repatriate returned soldiers", and that even those men who tried and failed were "wiser, and in most cases better, men for their experience."\(^{221}\) However, Stanfield also felt that notwithstanding the liberal treatment so far, further concessions were inevitable to ensure success. Further advances and concessions were granted the following year.


\(^{218}\) Department of Lands, Surveys, and Closer Settlement: Report for 1927-28', p. 3.

\(^{219}\) As was so often the case in Tasmania's experience with returned soldier land settlement, the State continued to sustain heavy losses with over £38,000 written off in bad debts - up from only £1,888 the previous year. In all, only 56 per cent. of all monies owing to the scheme since its inception had been repaid, despite the concessions and liberal treatment of the settlers. The number of settlers owing amounts over £700 had doubled in 12 months (from 5 to 10 settlers), and the number owing from £500 to £700 had also increased, but other amounts saw a reduction, or at the very least, stability. See, \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 3, 4.

\(^{220}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 4.

\(^{221}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 6.
In the year that Chief Justice Herbert Pike handed down his findings on the state of returned soldier land settlement in the Commonwealth, the Tasmanian leg of the scheme was suffering additional difficulties. Floods in the north of the State adversely affected crops, particularly potatoes, while other crops did not realise their full values with the onset of the worldwide Depression. This predictably had a generally detrimental effect as cancellations of soldiers' leases continued, albeit at a comparatively lowly 30 for the twelve month period to 30 June 1929.\textsuperscript{222} Collections from lessees increased for the year, with nearly 83 per cent. of outstanding monies owing on rent and interest repaid, although an injection of funds into the reserve account for bad and doubtful debts, reduced that figure to only 64 per cent.\textsuperscript{223} Hurst lamented the continued lack of sincerity of some settlers, who took a laissez faire approach in their fiscal obligations to the Department. He bemoaned that only “approximately 50 per cent. of settlers meet their obligations as they mature”, and that those who accrued large debts did very little to retrieve their position – adding, “it is hard to understand that any person should take up this attitude, which is most illogical and unreasonable.”\textsuperscript{224}

The scheme’s difficulties are revealed by some financial statistics: between 1922 and 1929, the State had written off £229,185 in bad debts,\textsuperscript{225} while the gross loss sustained by the scheme in Tasmania reached a staggering £1,228,678 – offset by Commonwealth rebates of interest and writing off losses to the value of £549,907 – thus leaving the Tasmanian Government to find the remaining £678,771.\textsuperscript{226} The issue of financial responsibility for the scheme reared its head in Justice Pike’s 1929 Report just as it did in the initial haggling between the States and Commonwealth when the early concept of a scheme was mooted. While Tasmania suffered losses involved in the administration of the scheme, and on the interest from which the money was

\textsuperscript{222} ‘Department of Lands, Surveys, and Closer Settlement: Report for 1928-29’, \textit{JPPP}, Vol. CI, 1929, Paper No. 39, p. 4. In his speech to the House of Assembly, the Minister for Lands, Sir Walter Henry Lee declared that 8 soldier leases were cancelled, and 23 leases were surrendered, tallying a total of 31. Clearly there is some ambiguity with the figures that make it difficult to know the exact numbers. \‘Ministerial Statement of The Minister for Lands, Works and Agriculture, and Minister Controlling Forestry (1929)’ \textit{JPPP}, Vol. CI, 1929, Paper No. 10, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{223} ‘Department of Lands, Surveys, and Closer Settlement: Report for 1928-29’, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{225} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{226} These figures were delivered in a speech to the House of Assembly by then-Minister for Lands, Works and Agriculture, and former Premier, Sir Walter Henry Lee on 24 September 1929. The original Soldier Land Settlement Bill had of course been passed under his Premiership, and it was ironical that twelve years later he was the Minister responsible for the scheme. \‘Ministerial Statement of The Minister for Lands, Works and Agriculture, and Minister Controlling Forestry (1929)’, p. 6.
borrowed from the Commonwealth, the State Government’s intention was for the Federal authorities to foot a larger proportion of the bill. As Tasmania’s venture went awry and its capacity to repay the loan diminished, the losses to the State’s financial coffers increased.

Chief Justice Herbert Pike’s 1929 Commonwealth Inquiry

In 1929, Chief Justice Herbert Pike\(^\text{227}\) handed down his report on the Commonwealth Soldier Land Settlement Scheme. Pike had visited the various states in compiling evidence, touring Tasmania in January 1928 to collect particulars relating to the financial nature of the scheme. Pike’s instructions were to investigate the losses due to Soldier Settlement in the Commonwealth, so the report is rather narrow in focus, but still provides some useful information as to comparative schemes around Australia. While most areas of soldier settlement were covered, they only investigated how they may have contributed to financial losses, rather than as investigations into various practices in their own right. Both Hurst and the Minister recognised the critical nature of Pike’s findings in regards to the Tasmanian scheme.

Pike’s Report found that Tasmania did not have adequate Home Maintenance Areas – holdings large enough to maintain a farmer and his family “in reasonable comfort” while retaining the ability to fulfil his obligations to the State. In Tasmania’s case, Pike felt that a “large number of holders had not home maintenance areas, due, no doubt, to the greatest shortage of suitable land in that State.”\(^\text{228}\) This accusation was fundamental to the Tasmanian programme for the lack of adequately sized properties restricted settlers’ abilities to repay their debts and maintain a comfortable living. That the authorities, despite their kindest efforts, may have restricted the settler from getting ahead would have disappointed and angered Hurst, who had been struggling as President to make the scheme a success. The mainland States did not have the same problems in securing suitably sized plots, according to Pike.

\(^{227}\) George Herbert Pike was, ironically, Hobart-born, but spent the majority of his education and career in Sydney. See, M. Dicker, ‘George Herbert Pike (1866-1947)’, \textit{ADB}, Vol. 11, pp. 231-232.

Despite his focus on the losses involved with soldier settlement, Pike also delved a little into the causes for the failures on the land, and his final evaluations were very much along similar lines as the reasons outlined in the Tasmanian Royal Commission findings, but with one major difference: Pike believed that the lack of an adequate Home Maintenance Area — a minimum standard, as it were — contributed to a great degree to the incapacity of settlers to repay their debts, particularly when their mortgages to the State were 100 per cent.\(^\text{229}\) The lack of adequate home maintenance areas was central to the Tasmanian failure in Pike's report. Even the writing down of a soldiers' indebtedness would have been of little value unless there was adequate capability for the holding to meet annual charges, and unless these two aspects were carried into effect concurrently (writing down indebtedness and provision of a home maintenance area), "there is every reason to believe that there will be very many more failures and a consequent loss to all authorities concerned."\(^\text{230}\) Pike found that Tasmania's heavy losses were as a result of the policy of small ready-made farm purchases already highlighted by the 1926 State Royal Commission (and later, by L.J. Pryor, writing in 1932). The failure sufficiently to maintain these smaller properties (like cultivated holdings and orchards, as soldiers with limited experience and expertise were liable) meant that they depreciated heavily. Pike also found that Tasmanian soldier farmers suffered as a consequence of a fall in prices of the crops they produced (hay, potatoes, peas and oats).\(^\text{231}\)

The result of these failures was that the Tasmanian scheme was the most expensive from a proportional basis, as per head, Tasmanian returned soldier settlers cost the most to settle and retain. Of 1,976\(^\text{232}\) settlers, Pike notes that only 777

\(^{229}\) Ibid., p. 23. With almost 100 per cent. of a settler's debt mortgaged to the State (in cases where settlers contributed no capital toward their enterprise), this lack of extra space was critical and led to many failures.

\(^{230}\) Ibid., p. 24.

\(^{231}\) Ibid., p. 19.

\(^{232}\) On a technical note, according to a cumulative calculation of the Annual Reports of the activities of the Returned Soldier Settlement/Closer Settlement Departments, from the scheme's inception in Tasmania to 1929 an astonishing 1,494 failures had been registered out of a total of 1,969 assisted by placement on farms, representing a failure rate of 76 per cent. — a retention rate of 24 per cent. rather than Pike's higher 39 per cent. The figures provided in Justice Pike's Commonwealth Report differ, for, although his figures only calculate the failures up to mid-1927, the number of settlers he quotes were placed on farms in Tasmania do not accord with a cumulative assessment of the Board's own facts and figures, as printed in the annual Tasmanian Parliamentary Papers. There are difficulties in delineating the precise number of soldier failures, as opposed to failures registered under the auspices of the scheme — properties reverted to the Crown from failed returned soldier farmers were then re-let to civilians under the Returned Soldiers' Settlement Act (from which the properties/buildings etc. were originally purchased), and consequent cancellations of their leases appear to be added to the entire failure rate of the scheme. Therefore Justice Pike's figures should be taken as representative of
remained, to a retention rate of 39 per cent – the lowest in the Commonwealth. To place Tasmania’s figure into perspective, the national settler retention average was 71 per cent. Losses (rather than costs) per head for the original settlers were £668 each, while for the remaining settlers, after advances, revaluations and other concessions were provided, cost £1,702 per head. Both figures were higher than the national average cost per head. In addition, the 1927 Commonwealth Year Book showed that, along with Victoria, Tasmanian costs for land purchased for soldier settlement per acre were far in excess of the national average. The combination of the lowest success rate in Australia and the financial burden of retaining the remaining settlers made Tasmania the most costly State, in terms of losses per head, to settle the land.

After Pike

Local authorities feared the vulnerable financial condition of the State’s scheme would leave Tasmania in an even worse position after the publication of Pike’s Report, with the Commonwealth Government keen to rid itself of its financial

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Tasmania’s returned soldier failure rates up to 1927 only, while the failure rates for Tasmanian soldiers after that year are more suggestive than precise. The figures calculated by a cumulative calculation of the Annual Reports are most certainly incorrect due to the above reasons, although they do at least highlight the immense difficulty in collating and generating any accurate figures surrounding the scheme.

233 See Appendix XI, ‘Analysis of Losses In All States, Showing Also Number of Original Settlers, and Those Remaining, Together With Loss Per Settler’, ‘Report on Losses Due to Soldier Settlement by Mr Justice Pike’, p. 59. Richard Cotter briefly looked at Pike’s Inquiry as part of a broader study into the Australian economy between the wars, and despite noting the percentages of abandoned farms for New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia, Tasmania as the lowest percentage of soldier settlement success was omitted. His somewhat brief note on the scheme nationally was that, “The result was a fantastic financial failure alongside significant increases in production especially in wheat and fruit. At the very best, the scheme aimed at providing ‘homes fit for heroes’ achieved marginal success.” See, R. Cotter, ‘War, Boom and Depression’, in J. Griffin (ed.), Essays in Economic History of Australia, Brisbane, 1970, p. 253.


235 Ibid.

236 Tasmanian land for soldier settlement cost £7.5 per acre, whereas the national average cost was £4.8 per acre. Figures from Commonwealth Yearbook, 1928, Vol. 21. See also Powell, An Historical Geography of Modern Australia, p. 104.

237 After calculating the losses in Justice Pike’s Table of Analysis of Failures in All States, Appendix XI, the Tasmanian figures do not add up to the final tally in the Totals column. Pike’s figure of £1,321,169 is £400 more than the figure of £1,320,769 I calculated using the losses – Principal, Interest, Administration, Training and Sundries – that he used to reach his final figure. I suspect a typographical error in the final published table rather than an accounting error.
obligations toward soldier land settlement. The Commonwealth Government was keen to share equally the cost of liabilities above 5 per cent. on monies loaned to the State, which Hurst argued would "have operated most adversely" on Tasmania, and he was gratified that the Commonwealth eventually waived that condition. In 1928, Lyons’ Labor Government lost power to J.C. McPhee’s Liberals, and former Premier Sir Walter Lee was appointed Minister for Lands. Lee argued that the original liability share arrangement may at first glance have been of value to Tasmania, but argued that it would have actually cost the State £64,738. After representations to the Prime Minister, the issue was resolved in favour of the State, as the Commonwealth decided to write off another £113,897 in loan monies owed by Tasmania, but this writing-off signified the final contribution by the Commonwealth toward the State’s soldier land settlement scheme. In future, Tasmania would have to meet its own losses in full which was not surprising, and, in light of the potential obligations the State might have been made to meet, the final arrangement was somewhat better than could have been expected.

The recommendations made by Justice Pike as to the need for Home Maintenance Areas to ensure a higher probability for success saw the Board turn their attention to such a measure in Tasmania—perhaps a little too late— but useful nonetheless to the soldier settlers who had managed to remain. The practice of granting leases to good tenants when their neighbouring properties were vacated was being undertaken with good results, but while the majority of soldier settlers were finally doing well, the lessees in Inspection Area No. 6 (Claremont to Derwent Valley region in the south of the State) were not showing the sort of progress that was being achieved in other parts of Tasmania. The poor state of the markets in a worldwide economic downturn coupled with extremely wet weather produced conditions that were not conducive to a successful season, with Inspector R.H. Stanfield not holding bright prospects for the soldiers in his area due to their serious financial difficulties.

241 Ibid., p. 3.
with the Department and other creditors.\textsuperscript{243} Despite the poor seasons' returns, other areas were showing encouraging signs that success would not be too far away – Inspector J.W.R. Cairns estimated 90 per cent. (of the remainder) would make good, while Inspector J.H. Woolley could only cite six settlers from his area who were doubtful.\textsuperscript{244} Soldier farmers involved in dairying saw the best returns as demand for milk grew, while mixed farming returned fair results for the year, but this reflected a general trend for soldier settlers in Tasmania since the beginning of the scheme. The Board's earnestness in implementing Pike's recommendation forecast a positive future for the remaining soldier settlers in Tasmania into the 1930's,\textsuperscript{245} although for the overwhelming majority who saw the land as an avenue for future employment and a new life, the realisation came too late.

The damage caused in Tasmania by the 1929 floods had a more devastating effect on the State's soldier settler producers than first thought. As well as crops like potatoes being washed out, small fruit brought little joy in depressed markets, while extreme cases saw the poor weather destroy "upwards of 20 tons of fruit."\textsuperscript{246} Wool and sheep prices plunged, and growers who had turned to flax as a cash crop failed miserably as the Flax Corporation went into voluntary liquidation leaving growers with no other buyer. Thirty-nine soldier settlers found it too difficult to carry on and had their leases forfeited or surrendered. As a consequence of the difficult season, arrears on soldier settlement "unsurprisingly" increased, as President Hurst noted, with the Board finding it necessary to write off £41,045.\textsuperscript{247} The continued assistance of the Tasmanian taxpayer was necessary to ensure the retention of their soldier settlers in a year where even experienced farmers faced unbearable hardship. The cost of soldier settlement for the year ending 30 June 1930 was £91,994,\textsuperscript{248} which continued the trend of heavy losses for every year since the scheme's inception. On a more positive note, no further new applications for assistance or land were received,

\textsuperscript{244} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{245} Inspector J.W. Pegus wrote that "several returned soldiers who left and went to the mainland have come back and settled down again under Closer Settlement conditions." This could indicate a variety of things – that family concerns drew them back; that employment opportunities on the mainland were little better than in Tasmania; that it was simply a case of 'better the devil you know'. Having seen a little more of what the rest of Australia could offer them, they preferred to return to the island state to take advantage of once again living under "John Bull's Roof." Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid.
allowing the Board to concentrate solely on the lessees already on the Department’s books.

The fact that the Department was still operating at a substantial loss, yet was required to maintain an active and largely benevolent administration despite more than a decade since the scheme’s inception, indicate the level of intensive financial and administrative involvement required to make the scheme a success in Tasmania. This core issue could not have been forecast in the euphoria of returning soldiers and a war-time mentality where financial stringency applied only in so far as it was necessary to fulfil a win-the-war philosophy, but no-one politically speaking would have applied that same rationality to the repatriation of returned soldiers in a land settlement scheme – at least not in Tasmania. The lack of any proper training scheme or definite selection policy as noted by the 1926 Royal Commission led North-West Inspector J.W. Pegus to reflect on the path of the soldier settlement scheme, and ultimately provides a fitting judgement from someone central to the project on the scheme’s progression in Tasmania:

The weeding out of men who were not suited to the land, which has been an expensive business to all concerned, makes one think that it is a pity that some method of qualification before a man was let go on the land could have been insisted on; but I quite understand that disadvantage the Government was working under when the men were put on the land. To turn a man’s application down at that time was considered criminal, even though you knew he would be a failure.249

Pegus’ simple reflection in 1930 provides a solid assessment of the course of the Tasmanian scheme from its inception to 1929, and, taken with statistical data on the financial cost per head and ratio of failure as illuminated by the findings of Pike’s Inquiry, place in context the scale of the scheme’s failure in Tasmania. Despite best intentions, the scheme was beset with problems in the first decade – both man-made in nature and others beyond control – that ultimately led to the sad state of the scheme by the end of the 1920s.

In a general survey of Tasmanian agriculture from the mid-late 1920s through the Depression, Roger Kellaway identified a slide backwards of the Tasmanian

249 See Report of J.W. Pegus, Inspector Area No. 1. Ibid., p. 5.
economy over this period, and that decreasing agricultural production was responsible. Kellaway argues that “The poor performance of the rural economy was recognised as being a central component of the whole ‘problem of Tasmania’ issue” and soldier settlement contributed to this problem. Related to this was the general trend of rural depopulation, and Kellaway argues this was born out in the failure of the soldier settlement scheme: “At the very least, soldier settlement had speeded up the cycle between arrival and abandonment.” The influx of inexperienced farmers who largely abandoned their holdings at a later point also fuelled a drop in male agricultural employment recorded in the five years from 1921. The post-war peak of 18,693 was inflated by the soldier settlement scheme, and that number fell as many of the soldiers gave up by 1925. Kellaway attributes the fall in male employment in the agricultural sector as “one of the more visible signs of decay in the Tasmanian economy,” while Ruth Farmer argues that soldier settler patterns followed civilian trends regarding economic dislocations and migratory movements. Add to this the extra cost of funding and administering the soldier settlement scheme and the extra burden of diminished agricultural production, and the 1920s were a dismal decade for the State of Tasmania.

**Conclusion**

The whole scheme was doomed from its inception. Like a crippled child, it never had a chance.  

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255 Farmer found that the general mid-1920s agricultural struggle precipitated by the post-war economic slump also affected civilian settlers, and that, “Regardless of the special factors that gave them an aura and habits of thought somewhat different from those of the civilian population, they gravitated towards the towns, left the State and remained put according to common economic conditions.” This also has relevance to Tasmanian returned soldier employment migration. R.S. Farmer, “The Geography of Migration in Tasmania 1921-1961”, PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1968, pp. 126, 127.  
The World War One Soldier Land Settlement Scheme in Tasmania was by any standard a disaster. By 1929, Justice Pike’s report found that the State had accrued losses amounting to £1,321,169, with only 777 settlers out of a total of 1,976 remaining on the land.\textsuperscript{257} That figure amounted to a retention rate of only 39 per cent – the lowest in the nation by 21 per cent. In contrast, Victoria’s retention rate was the best in the country at 83 per cent, but it suffered the highest financial loss of £7,721,891.\textsuperscript{258} The great dream of creating an agrarian landed settler class from Australia’s returned soldiers had generally failed, with, nationwide, 71 per cent of settlers remaining on the land, and losses of £23,525,522.\textsuperscript{259} Tasmania had provided the worst possible example of how to establish and administer a land settlement scheme for its returning men, and it learnt the hard way, not only through appalling financial costs but the personal costs to the soldiers themselves. All the crucial aspects of the scheme were inadequate – the legislation, the ministers responsible, and to an extent, the soldiers themselves. The palliative approach of offering remissions on rent and arrears, fixed terms of interest and further advances, could not overcome the handicap of the original conditions under which soldiers settled, nor could it overcome the problems of marketing whatever crop was produced. As Martin has asserted, “Varying rates of interest did little to ensure a settler received a reasonable return for his efforts.”\textsuperscript{260} Quentin Beresford has argued that

There had...been a connivance by both the Board and the various ministers responsible to keep from the public the true facts about the scheme. This had resulted from a continuing fear in the mind of successive governments of the political ramifications involved in disclosing to the public the inept management of the scheme and the human tragedy it was causing.\textsuperscript{261}

Tasmanian soldiers (and Tasmanian taxpayers) bore the brunt of this appalling ineptitude. Sixty-one per cent of Tasmania’s soldier settlers failed on their farms for one reason or another, and each of those failures was a story of heartbreak, of physical, emotional and financial hardship. Of course the focus has predominantly

\textsuperscript{257} Table XI, ‘Soldier Land Settlement. Analysis of Losses in all States, Showing also Number of Original Settlers, and Those Remaining, Together with Loss per Settler’: ‘Report on Losses Due to Soldier Settlement by Mr Justice Pike’, p. 1959.
\textsuperscript{258} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{260} Martin, ‘War and after War’, p. 209.
\textsuperscript{261} Beresford, ‘The World War One Soldier Settlement Scheme in Tasmania’, p. 98.
centred on the appalling failures of the Tasmanian scheme – two investigations, £1,321,169 and 1,199 failed settlers to 1929 make it difficult to focus on anything else, but it must be kept in mind that a percentage managed to craft a living from the opportunity that Tasmania’s Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act offered them. As a Select Committee reported in 1922, the objective of the scheme was to provide an opportunity for returned soldiers to secure land “sufficient to provide a living for themselves and families...[and] be given a fair and reasonable start in civil life after their strenuous and nerve-racking experience in the late war, and also to some extent compensate them for the sacrifice made for the State and Empire.”\textsuperscript{262} The “fair and reasonable start” may have been rather indulgent and arguably exceeded the initial responsibilities of the Repatriation, State, and Commonwealth Government authorities, but, with an issue as politically and socially sensitive as returned soldiers, the difficulty was finding an appropriate place to finalise their assistance. By 1929 that limit had been reached by the Commonwealth Government, but still had not been found by the State Government in Tasmania who had to continue supporting the remaining soldier settlers. Men with sufficient capital, experience, business head, support and hard work realised the original intention of the scheme, although, it must be said, not without writing down value in many cases to allow them to survive.

Stephen Garton’s reappraisal of Australian post-war soldier settlement urges, with some merit, a cautious view of the traditional notions of failure. He feels that, in light of the almost 20,000 families it assisted nationwide, soldier settlement might even be deemed a relative success.\textsuperscript{263} It must also be remembered that Pike’s 1929 figures estimated nationally a 71 per cent settler retention rate, which should, as Fedorowich argues, “suggest a successful policy.”\textsuperscript{264} Using Pike’s numbers of remaining Tasmanian soldier settlers, some 777 Tasmanian ex-servicemen and their families were successfully repatriated under the scheme to 1929. As a proud nation

\textsuperscript{263} Garton, \textit{The Cost of War}, p. 141. Reynolds argues that “The benefits of soldier settlement to King Island were longstanding and ongoing.” The settlements “injected new people into basic industries”, eventually brought about an extensive road development, an “enormous amount of pastoral development...with many new grasses sown and new crops planted”, and “improvements to breeding lines developed over the years.” Reynolds, ‘The Noble Failure: King Island Soldier Settlement, 1918-1930’, p. 83. In this way, King Island can probably be argued as Tasmania’s most productive and successful soldier settlement effort, despite the massive problems it too encountered in the mid-late 1920s.
\textsuperscript{264} K. Fedorowich, \textit{Unfit For Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire Between the Wars}, Manchester, 1995, p. 175.
proclaimed, 'nothing we can do will ever be too good for our returned soldiers.' In this view, the monies expended to repatriate the ex-servicemen still on the land, by 1929, may even be seen as a successful, if expensive method of achieving it.

Garton also rightfully notes that our view of soldier settlement is largely gleaned from the large archived repositories of complaint from the soldier settlers and their defenders. In the Tasmanian case, this is even more pertinent. Yet, Powell urges further caution in using "abusive" terms such as failed and failures: "the measure of success naturally depends on the definition of goals, and whatever the rhetoric the Soldier Settlers were increasingly required to give the country a worthwhile return on its investment. So the schemes were bound to 'fail'..."265 Does that make assessments like success and failure on the Tasmanian soldier settlement scheme redundant? Yes and no — these are the very terms used by contemporary and official sources to describe the outcomes of the scheme. The settlers themselves would have identified with these very verdicts. What it does not do, as Powell has argued, is necessarily make them correct or useful assumptions. The schemes, as Fry, Powell, Garton, Lloyd, Rees, Fedorowich and many others have noted, were the playing out of nationalist-imperial fantasies, where the nineteenth-century yeoman myth was given one last hurrah. Powell argues (rather cynically) that the soldier settlers were trialing this last attempt at fulfilling a national myth: "The Soldier Settlers had been heavily used to try out a few more corners of the empire’s 'vast open spaces', and they and their fellow-citizens paid the bills once more to the traditional sources."266 The irony is that that the creators of one national myth — the diggers from the Anzac legend — were responsible for destroying another — the yeoman agrarian dream. Those that could not endure the circumstances of their settlement were the unfortunate casualties in this dream, or more eloquently, "victims of a patriotic but misdirected effort for increased production which had shown the same kind of incompetence and lack of vision in the upper echelons as they had found, to their own considerable cost, in the Great War itself."267 Tasmanian soldier settlers were the heaviest victims in the Australian Commonwealth, and as large as anywhere in the empire. Clearly their sacrifices to the Empire at the Dardanelles,

265 Powell, An Historical Geography of Modern Australia, p. 119.
266 Ibid., pp. 119-120.
267 Ibid., p. 120.
Passchendaele, Ypres and the Somme, had to be reinforced by their sacrifices on the land.

Returning to the assessment on the Tasmanian scheme, I would argue that even with Garton's revisionist view Tasmania's scheme still exhibits all of the characteristics of failure. The plethora of inquiries, Select Committee reports, the Royal Commission, Board correspondence, newspaper columns, and finally Pike's 1929 assessment itself stating remaining Tasmanian settlers at only 39 per cent, all point to the Tasmanian scheme failing to achieve much that can be termed successful. Unquestionably, the Tasmanian returned soldier land settlement scheme contributed to an increase in the productivity of the State generally in the long term, but at what financial, social, personal and political cost? It is debateable that the returns were commensurate with the outlay – in all senses of the term.

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269 Ruth Farmer arrives at a similar conclusion, arguing that, “The achievements of the scheme for establishing soldier settlers on the land were entirely disproportionate to the costs involved.” Farmer, 'The Geography of Migration in Tasmania 1921-1961', p. 126.
Conclusion

The Long Road Home

[It will be seen that the Repatriation Department is certain to be one with a perpetual and permanent list of grievances against it.]

The devastation of the Great War forced Australia's first cogent response to the problem of demobilising and providing for a large military force. The sheer scale of the hostilities, the number of combatants, the increased mechanisation of armaments, and developments in triage and medicine meant that unprecedented numbers of war participants and casualties were marked by the events of 1914-1918. The Australian Imperial Force's commitment to the conflict forced a response from civilian authorities to prepare for the inevitable problems they would encounter in trying returning - repatriating - these men back into Australian society. While early moves toward a repatriation programme were tentative and born out of the misguided belief that private efforts could fulfil the task, the realisation that the process would be larger brought forward a more cogent response from the Federal Government, and an official Repatriation Department was established in April 1918. The major issue facing authorities was the problem of how to legislate for return. Schemes that provided for the social and psychological dislocation caused by war service, the provision of medical care for the wounded, the creation of vocational training and employment policies, and the housing of veterans and their families were established to effect as successfully as possible the repatriation of servicemen. The legislative process could only provide support to a point - the remainder was an emotional journey for every individual returnee.

This thesis set out to investigate, in a broad sense, the application of Repatriation policy in Tasmania, and responses to it. As I stated in the Introduction, very little distinct and specific work had been written on the Tasmanian experience of repatriation, and the island state's relatively isolated geographical and economic position provided an interesting place to explore that process. The key thematic areas

1 'Repatriation', editorial, The Mercury, 30 August 1918, p. 4.
of Repatriation policy were examined in a Tasmanian context: health policy, War Service Housing, Employment policies (incorporating vocational training and preference programmes), and the soldier land settlement scheme. These were introduced within a framework acknowledging the political nature and sensitivity of Repatriation policy as a defined programme, Repatriation as a political tool, and repatriation as a personal process to be lived and understood. The Prologue recognised the difficulty some men had in repatriating, and the importance of engaging them with the process. Failure to do so often led to serious psychological and emotional isolation, manifested in some cases in alcoholism, suicide, domestic violence and murder. Others drifted through life much as they had done before the war, to which Repatriation policies could help little. Others again never required assistance in coming 'home.' This work focuses on repatriation policies and experiences of the men who went on active service. I therefore have not explored Tasmanian nurses who returned, nor of policies applicable to them. Similarly, I have restrained from surveying aspects of the Repatriation policy applicable to dependants of soldiers. Pensions for wives and children, War Service Homes for dependants, and policies responsible for the care and education of children have not been included in this study. In many ways, this thesis has explored the concept of repatriation as policies and experiences designed for male combatants returning from active service. I acknowledge that the repatriation narratives of nurses, and experiences of Repatriation policy by dependants and children are just as stimulating and valid. They have not, however, found their place here, and are for another study.

The gulf between the Government's assistance in repatriating and the soldier's own contribution had to be surmounted individually; the Repatriation system provided the means to facilitate the process of return, but the process itself had to be undertaken independently. The fact that the majority were able to make the transition is testament to their enduring strength, as well as the fundamental integrity of the original concept of the Repatriation framework. The Repatriation system tried to cater for as much of the dislocation experienced by returned men as possible, easing many of the dangers and problems veterans faced in making that transition to civilian life – but ultimately the individual was responsible for negotiating the politics of their
return. Stephen Garton’s thematic framework\(^2\) has provided a valuable guide to assessing Tasmanian soldiers’ own concepts of returning to a community that had, as Marilyn Lake has demonstrated, changed much during the course of the war.\(^3\)

Repatriation authorities faced tremendous difficulties in creating and establishing a structure that could facilitate the return of Australia’s returned soldiers. The difficulties were even greater in Tasmania, as this thesis has argued. It was a natural consequence of Commonwealth Repatriation administration that a basically similar policy toward employment, vocational training, health and housing be adopted across the country, but local and regional peculiarities inevitably occurred. That industries to place returned men in employment in Sydney and Melbourne differed from Hobart and Launceston were representative of the necessarily differing infrastructure in place. Tasmania was the smallest State in Australia with industry in a less advanced condition than mainland States, where the vast majority of veterans returned.

Tasmanian authorities, the Tasmanian RSSILA, other assorted philanthropic organisations as well as the individual efforts by returned soldiers, had as a consequence, to adopt a different approach to repatriating Tasmanian ex-servicemen than that found in larger States. Tasmania’s comparatively low population base, high unemployment, decline in major industries, taxation, and other internal and external factors combined to starve Tasmania of the post-war boom and years of prosperity enjoyed by its interstate colleagues. As Sir Nicholas Lockyer noted in his 1926 report on Tasmania:

> The State not only has been unable to share in the remarkable prosperity which has been so marked a feature in regard to Australia generally during the period covered by Federation but to an increasing extent each year she lags behind her more fortunate sister States.\(^4\)

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\(^2\) S. Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, Melbourne, 1996. Garton’s approach explored the effect of Repatriation policies within the framework of ‘returning’ and all of the anxieties related to it. His handling is far subtler than Lloyd and Rees’ administrative approach, and pays more attention to the human experience. It has been of intrinsic value at all stages of this study.


These consequences meant that the society to which Tasmanian soldiers returned was more likely to be comparatively deficient in the very means that veterans required to assist in effecting their repatriation – a stable economy, employment opportunities, infrastructure and investment to drive business and provide job opportunities and security. That these aspects were in shorter supply in the island state compounded difficulties in negotiating the problems of repatriating.

The provision of hospital and medical care for returned soldiers exercised a tremendous financial obligation on the Commonwealth. Wounds, afflictions, and diseases contracted through active service demanded tax-payer funded treatment, although the difficulty was in where to draw the line of responsibility. As individual case files reveal, Tasmanian Repatriation medical authorities tended to display a liberality toward the acceptance of health problems attributable to war service. Pensions and sustenance allowances provided a safety net that kept the most vulnerable from the clutches of poverty, although arguably their importance in Tasmania was magnified in the depressed job market as employment opportunities to supplement pensions were fewer.

As Judith Allen has noted, “Both Australian contemporary authorities and later historians have concluded that few survived the First World War psychologically unscathed.” Surmounting these issues was a further Repatriation burden, and the legacy of service remained in some form or another for the remainder of veterans’ lives. For those with broken bodies and broken minds, the Repatriation Department provided for them in Tasmania in the same manner as it did soldiers in other states. Generally, Tasmanian medical care under the Repatriation auspice provided good quality health care for veterans and the Repatriation General Hospital in Hobart and the Repatriation Ward in Launceston General Hospital ensured that soldiers at both ends of the State had access to this level of treatment. As health responsibilities were part of the broader Federal model, the only significant variation with interstate health care were regional differences born out of Tasmania’s geography and parochial north/south spirit. Once the internal administrative conflict of late 1920 dictated that the centre of Repatriation health services were to be ensconced in Hobart rather than Launceston, medical, hospital and specialist services operated in the same manner as

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5 Garton intimates that nationally this was likely – that the pensioner may have bitterly criticised the system and process to obtain medical and hospital care, but grudgingly appreciated that he was receiving the level of care he felt he was owed. See, Garton, The Cost of War, pp. 86-88.

the larger states. Medical Practitioners were contracted by the Department in remote areas to provide medical assistance for returned soldiers judged eligible under repatriation regulations, while treatments that could not be undertaken in Tasmania were sent to Melbourne with its larger and better facilities. The standard of health care Tasmanian ex-soldiers received was on par with interstate standards, as befitting its basis in Federal policy.

The War Service Homes Scheme proposed to provide returned soldiers and their dependants an opportunity to own quality housing under competitive terms. Under the Federal Commissionership of James Walker, the Tasmanian branch of the War Service Homes Department endured a succession of Deputy War Service Homes Commissioners and administrative instability that resulted in high staff turnover, wastage, and overcharging. Despite this, comparatively high numbers of homes were built. Following the July 1921 Public Accounts Committee investigation, it was found that the quality of homes was generally good, although houses built in the south of the State suffered more problems in construction and cost than those in the north due to different labour systems. Administrative consolidation under Capt. W. Taylor gave way to a transferral of administrative responsibility to the Tasmanian Agricultural Bank in the mid-1920s, while the Commonwealth underwrote the costs.

The Tasmanian scheme was blighted with the worst administrative deficiencies in the country up to 1921. The legacy of this early disorganised administration was that Tasmania suffered higher than average rates of unallotted houses as buyers could not continue with repayments, and new purchasers could not be found due to the high costs of construction of these early homes. Tasmanian returned soldiers also owed the highest amount per capita in outstanding instalments, likely a consequence of the less than satisfactory economic conditions prevailing in Tasmania during the 1920s.

As early as 1916, Tasmanian returned soldiers had felt that finding employment was crucial to the success of their rehabilitation and assimilation into civilian society. Employment was also crucial in ameliorating the financial and social dislocation suffered by the community from the war. The Tasmanian RSSILA recognised the “absolute necessity”7 of employment to a sense of self and responsibility, and advocated that even light work for the incapacitated should be

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found as soon as possible. The correlation between employment and rehabilitation into civilian society was paramount, and the RSSILA argued that even if “[a returned man] was worth half a pension, he should be given half a job and paid for a full one.”8 Clearly, the haste in which employment was found as well as the employment placement was critical to the success of repatriation. The State War Council facilitated some employment placements, but the vast majority of was achieved by the Repatriation Department, and later the RSSILA’s own employment bureaus. Vocational Training classes were offered to men who had enlisted before completing their trade, who had enlisted under the age of 21, or who suffered an injury that otherwise prevented them from resuming normal employment. The Vocational Training scheme did not support the same variety of trades training relative to interstate schemes, and, while the Tasmanian uptake for this training was small, it nonetheless provided a positive contribution to employment prospects of those who completed their courses.

The path to returning home in the fullest physical, emotional and psychological sense was a profound experience for members of the AIF.9 Some coped better than others in making the transition from soldier to civilian, and the process of making that transformation was largely dictated by the capacity to engage in the life of the community. The RSSILA and returned soldier supporters claimed preference in employment for veterans the better to facilitate their rehabilitation, and as a reward for their sacrifice for the country. Tasmanian legislation enshrined the principle for the State Public Service, while patriotic private employers did their best to accommodate preference to ex-soldiers, although the principle was bitterly contested in some quarters. Preference to returned men caused stagnation in the State’s Public Service, as it effectively blocked the recruiting of youth crucial to the Service’s vitality. Despite preference in the Public Service, Tasmania endured

8 Ibid.
9 A. Tiveychoc discussed the difficulty of this problem in his 1935 experiences on war and returning: “The change over from the soldiering to the civilian order was not just a matter of getting out of a uniform and selecting a dress to suit one’s individual fancy—it was not as simple as that. Even those who were fortunate enough to return whole body found it more difficult to establish themselves in peace than it had been to find their place in war. Mostly young men, their lives had been moulded, cast, and set to the standardised pattern required by the immense and heartless machinery of war. Their lives had now to be thrown into the melting pot. The very substance of their being had to undergo a complete change if they were to fit into the subtle ramifications of ‘Peace on earth, good will toward men.’ The outlook on life and the values had to be recast.” A. Tiveychoc, There and Back: The Story of an Australian Soldier, 1915-1935, Sydney, 1935, pp. 269-270.
difficulty in placing its unemployed veterans into the 1920s, with some moving interstate – a consequence of limited opportunities locally.

Adding further complexity to the necessity of employment to the process of repatriating, Garton claims that the process of returning and the Repatriation policies created to aid that process were intimately tied to the restoration of gender and masculinity:

[R]eturned soldiers structured meanings for their return to civilian life in gendered terms as much as they did for their war experience. [I]f return to civilian life was frequently infused with a need to come to terms with a feminine world, with all its attendant threats of diminished masculinity, then repatriation was in part a process and a set of policies that had to negotiate this crisis of masculinity.\(^\text{10}\)

An unsuccessful reintegration was the progenitor to such a masculine crisis, as the inability to make the transformation from soldier to civilian and assume a man's place in domestic society questioned the very principles of what it meant to be a man. If combat was a formative experience that imbued the soldier with masculine attributes of courage and bravery, the inability to find work or provide for one's family in a victorious peacetime environment asked questions of the veteran's masculine capacity as breadwinner and provider. The acceptance of a pension had to be legitimised in the basis of a right earned through sacrifice. The Repatriation framework, as Garton argues, provided the foundation successfully to rehabilitate and restore the ex-soldier's masculine gender by restoring his place in society. I would suggest that the Tasmanian experience, with more limited opportunities than other Australian States, placed even greater burdens on the Repatriation framework to assist the returned man to reclaim his masculinity under these conditions.

Related to the employment issue, the soldier land settlement programme was the fulfilment of a national land settlement scheme created from a long held desire to convert uninhabited tracts of land into farms. The Tasmanian soldier settlement scheme was framed in a patriotic war-time atmosphere where a general commitment to supporting Australia's military effort was a community effort, where thousands of pounds were donated to various funds and appeals, and where throngs of people

greeted returning soldiers on railway stations and in civic receptions across the State. The decision to settle returning soldiers not only fulfilled a recruiting promise (interstate at least), it was a pragmatic decision in the face of an increasing number of returnees through the end of 1917 and early 1918. While the Commonwealth Government financially underwrote the scheme, the Tasmanian legislation (like other states) was created independently due to the lack of a national centralised soldier settlement policy, and a unified national development strategy — both consequences of the States' control over land provision. Tasmania's scheme therefore was created out of the complex but specific social, political and economic circumstances it faced in 1916. The geographical exigencies of Tasmania's terrain also dictated the property sizes available, which later proved problematic to settlers.

Public support and political expediency drove the scheme, for there was immense political value in creating and implementing such a program and great political currency in adapting a sympathetic outlook toward returned Anzac heroes, of which letters and column inches in the major Tasmanian dailies attest. The insistent urgings from civilians and returned soldiers for haste in developing a land settlement program can largely explain the failure to enshrine adequate safeguards in the Tasmanian legislation, and thus the Royal Commission's opinion that the lack of selection was the worst outstanding fault. As a result, the Royal Commission reported that the scheme appeared to be an open invitation to anyone interested in obtaining land — regardless of qualification, ability or aptitude: "It seems to have been taken for granted that every soldier who wanted a farm ought to have one. At any rate the fact is that every soldier who wanted a farm got it, whether he was fit or not." Former Soldier Settlement Board President G.C. Rudge noted in his evidence to the Commission that a "wave of popular enthusiasm for soldier settlement on the land...swept every one away...", indicating the forces in support of the scheme. In such an atmosphere, there was little likelihood of refusal of a returned soldier's

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13 Ibid., p. 9.
14 Fedorowich notes that, "The patriotic hysteria created by the war and the subsequent public pressure" was behind attempts to instigate land settlement schemes throughout the Empire, despite decades of settlement experience showing soldiers made poor settlers. See his, Unfit For Heroes, p. 195.
application for fear of the public and political backlash such an unpopular move would have encouraged. As the Commission found:

> There can be no doubt that hundreds were pushed on to farms by public enthusiasm or by the urgings of those whose motives were less idealistic and after wearily struggling for a time, short or long, at last found that they were utterly incapable of making a success of their farms, threw them up and drifted back to the cities.

It is thus understandable, if unacceptable, to see how such an arrangement took effect in the circumstance of a war-time administration with the backing of a minor but vocal returned soldier community and the support of a patriotic public largely ignorant of the requirements for agricultural success.

By 1929, the Tasmanian scheme was largely a social and production disaster. The substitution of established farmers for inexperienced soldier settlers on productive land consequently led to an inability to achieve the same level of productiveness. The soldiers themselves expended in many cases years of their toil, strength and capital only to leave at the end with very little. As one of the Royal Commission submissions noted, “Mostly, these men have left their holdings penniless and go looking for work in the Cities.” In purely numerical and statistical terms, the Tasmanian soldier settlement experience was a dismal failure. The State-run programme to 1929 achieved limited success at great financial and social cost to the

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15 See also Martin’s ‘War and after War: the Great War and its Aftermath in a Tasmanian Region: the Huon 1914-1926’, Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1992, p. 120. He claims that: “No doubt if the Board had applied vigour [in screening applicants] then it would have faced both the wrath of the majority of Tasmanians and the increasingly powerful R.S.L. No political party wished to be seen as acting contrary to the interests of the returned men.” Similarly, Fedorowich claims that “most politicians, except the most foolhardy, were understandably reluctant to oppose such a noble cause given their wish to remain in office after the war.” See his, Unfit For Heroes, p. 196. This was particularly true of Sir Walter Lee’s Nationalist Government in Tasmania. Additionally, authorities in both Australia and New Zealand were “berated for unwise purchases” of property after the first few years, J.M. Powell argues, “and in each case the reasonable responses was that they had been under fierce local pressure to obtain as much land as quickly as possible.” See his, An Historical Geography of Modern Australia: The Restive Fringe, Cambridge, 1988, p. 100.


17 Archives Office of Tasmania (hereafter AOT): RC 37/1 ‘The Returned Soldiers’ Settlement Act. Report of Royal Commission’, 1926, additional submission by unknown author under five age section headed Writing Off Losses, p. 1. Quentin Beresford claims that “Little... is known of the fate of those who lost their farms.” Q. Beresford, ‘The World War One Soldier Settlement Scheme in Tasmania’, Tasmanian Historical Research Association. Papers and Proceedings, Vol. 30, No. 3, September 1983, p. 98. As employment grew more difficult to obtain (as evidenced by the use of unemployed returned soldier labour where possible for general farm labouring by the Board in the late 1920s), it is likely that on their reassimilation into the cities and normal civilian life, most identifiers as to their status as returned soldiers became insignificant and consequently were not noted.
settlers to a far larger extent than any other Australian State. Indeed, in the face of Tasmania’s 1929 soldier settler retention rate of 39 per cent, the State’s failed soldier land settlement properties could be viewed as war memorials in their own right, and could legitimately be included in Ken Inglis’ study of such ‘Sacred Places.’

The broad scope of Repatriation policy and responsibility for post-war care brought inevitable criticism and comment from all sides, but it arguably created one of the most enduring pressure groups in Australian society – the RSSILA. It owed its formation to the demobilisation of such large numbers of ex-AIF, and to the ongoing requirement to provide for veterans’ wellbeing after war: the RSSILA’s relationship to, and engagement with, Repatriation ensured its continued existence. Returned soldiers participated in the entire process of repatriation at every level, and it was part of Edward Millen’s vision that the Department charged with administering the scheme should be constituted of the very members it was designed to assist. Repatriation became a confrontational site where bureaucracy, politics and comrades intersected.

Soon after returning, some Tasmanian returned soldiers exhibited a separate identity from the remainder of society derived from their war experiences. Early moves in 1916 to form a branch of the Returned Soldiers’ Association were successful, and spread throughout the State. The Tasmanian branch affiliated with an emerging national body at the first National Congress, proving Tasmanian returned soldiers were as politically active as any in the country, and prominent members (like Duncan McRae and George Foster) were at the forefront of local Returned Soldier Associations and political endeavours. The more formalised RSSILA grew out of this early national structure. The Tasmanian branch of the RSSILA was aware of the power of returned soldiers as a political tool, and, while eschewing direct party-political affiliation, its members embarked on successful political campaigns to Local, State and Federal political seats. While local membership fell during the 1920s, the

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18 See, Ken Inglis, Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape, Melbourne, 1998, passim. The legacy of soldiers engaged in the settlement scheme, its impact, as well as the failed properties surely mark the scheme and the land cultivated by them as war memorials in their own right. Lloyd Robson forwarded a similar view in his, A History of Tasmania. Volume II. Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980’s, Melbourne, 1991, p. 408. Robson described the soldier settlement scheme as, “as much a gigantic memorial to the fallen as a gift to the survivors.”

19 Lloyd Robson also notes this separation between those who served and those who did not in Tasmania: The “custodians of the Anzac legend were the R.S.S.I.L.A. Returned men formed a divisive elite in the society and the word ‘Anzac’ was sacred.” Ibid., p. 407. The perpetuation of the Anzac myth has been the jealously guarded domain of the RSSILA (and its incarnations) since.
RSSILA remained committed to providing employment assistance to returned soldiers. Traditional parties from both sides of the political spectrum appealed to and ran returned soldier candidates in elections, confirming the returned man as an attractive political proposition.

Grievances over repatriation policies like pensions and employment – born out of pre-war promises – led to an occasional undercurrent of tension between veteran and civilian society who claimed that the returned man had had a fair go. The RSSILA and its supporters, like Federal politicians in Melbourne, politicised Repatriation as a way to ensure that it remained in the public eye. In this way, Tasmanian returned soldiers adopted the same strategy as their interstate counterparts. Tasmania’s geographical isolation removed the State from the serious returned soldier disturbances experienced in the major States, although the conscription campaigns inflamed returned soldier and civilian emotions enough to occasionally boil over into skirmishes. That Tasmania did not see returned soldier riots suggests that the State RSSILA hierarchy had sufficient control over its members, that a proportion of ex-soldiers were unwilling to engage in such behaviour, and that Tasmanian men did not exhibit the same radical streak as those elsewhere.

The Tasmanian Repatriation experience largely confirms the general scholarship on Australian Repatriation with only a few modifications. Repatriation policy was debated and criticised as it was in the remainder of Australia. The same Federal programmes were established in Tasmania, although the scale was far smaller due to the comparatively limited numbers of ex-servicemen to provide for. Returned men formed their own associations, agitated for special conditions, and were a highly visible presence in the landscape, just as they were interstate. However, the State’s relative geographical and economic isolation provided an immediate departure point in delivering and administering Repatriation policy from interstate experiences. The expanse of wild water between Victoria and Tasmania served to separate the island


21 As Tiveychoc notes of pre-enlistment promises: “Were they not promised that they would never want for anything? Granted, but they must learn that their return to the field of civilian life was not to be as green as they had visualised it from ‘over there.’ In fact, they would find that the thorns and nettles had increased during their absence. There was much to be realised and endured.” Tiveychoc, There and Back, p. 256.
from the political and administrative centre of the country in Melbourne.\textsuperscript{22} It delayed the delivery of important machinery for Vocational Training purposes, when industrial strife halted shipping in 1919. Clumsy bureaucratic regulations within the War Service Homes Scheme saw correspondence between Hobart and Launceston branches pass through Melbourne first, and added to the problems the Tasmanian branch faced in administering the scheme before 1921. Tasmania's reliance on shipping brought hardship to soldier settlers who needed to export their produce to interstate and international markets. In this instance, Tasmanians were in a more vulnerable position than interstate producers, and Tasmanian soldier settlers as a group struggled more again. In Tasmania's economic plight, as Lockyer's Report noted, employment prospects during this period were slimmer than opportunities interstate. This in turn fuelled the exodus of Tasmanians to the Australian mainland—returned soldiers among their number. Differences in geography and deficiencies in Tasmanian infrastructure made issues like returned soldier land settlement, health, and employment issues develop in direct response to these shortfalls.

The Tasmanian War Service Housing administration's waste, unnecessary expense and administrative instability represented the national apex for a programme widely viewed as extravagant under Commissioner James Walker. The aftermath of the 1921 Public Accounts Committee report brought administrative stability and a continuation of quality housing for veterans, which eventually represented, along with Repatriation Health programmes, arguably the most successful Repatriation policy in Tasmania. Employment and vocational training programmes had to be tailored specifically to what the State could provide. The range of vocational training classes was smaller than those offered interstate due to Tasmania's smaller industries. A smaller population did not support multifarious trades. The centrality of employment to the process of repatriating and returning cannot be understated. Repatriation policies undoubtedly facilitated an easier and less disjointed return to civilian society in Tasmania for returned soldiers than otherwise would have occurred. The vast majority of them were successful, but the varying degrees of this success was where the Tasmanian experience differed from those of mainland Australia. Despite the provision of Repatriation policies, Tasmania's prolonged economic depression, consistently higher unemployment rates, and a comparative dearth of industries and

\textsuperscript{22} The Repatriation Commission too was based in Melbourne.
employment opportunities in comparison to mainland Australia, made the long road home for Tasmanian returned soldiers, longer and more difficult.
Appendices

Illustrations
'Tasmania's Political Serenaders on Tour', 1919 State Election cartoon.

*Note the prominent role of the RSA as a genuine political entity.*
RSSILA Clubrooms, 47 Murray Street, Hobart.
Source: *The Tassie Digger*, December 1921, p. 3.
'Sir John Gellibrand at Anarantine on North Bruni [sic] Island with a group of AIF soldiers 1919'

Source: Archives Office of Tasmania; NS 187/39/4
RETURNED SOLDIERS

Wanting a good farm, call on us—we have
them in every part of
the island. Hundreds
of all classes to choose
from Orchards, Daikye,
Grazing, Mixed
farms, Ponto, Hay,
Poultry and Pig farms
all over the State from
£300 to £20,000.

FREE CARS TO
"INSPECT"

All arrangements for
possession made with
the Soldiers' Closer
Settlement Board.

To investors—
City and Suburban
Homes and Invest-
ments showing big
returns.

MONTFORD PAGE, Stock, Station and General Commission Agent

COLLINS STREET, HOBART PHONE, 1130,

Coverpage, The Tassie Digger. Official Publication of the Tasmanian
RSSILA.
Source: The Tassie Digger, April 1920, p. 1.
Local cartoons like this suggest that the Tasmanian RSSILA were as politically active as anywhere in Australia.
Our State President.

‘Our State President’, Caricature of D.P. Young. Tasmanian RSSILA, April 1920. The Hobart City Council “sold us a pup” on the Whittle preference case.

MAJOR F. E. FORREST, M.C.,
STATE SECRETARY R.S.S.I.L.A.

Caricature of Tasmanian RSSILA State Secretary Major F.E. Forrest.
Source: The Tassie Digger, March 1920, p. 22.
Former Tasmanian State RSSILA Secretary, F.E. Forrest, National Secretary of the RSSILA. Forrest is seated on the right.

The vocal Tasmanian returned soldier, Duncan McRae, is seated in the second row, far left, in the slouch hat. Other Tasmanian delegates J. McGregor and W. Cameron cannot be identified.

George Foster.
Foster was a vocal member of the Tasmanian RSSILA, and also held a seat in the House of Assembly, and later the Senate.

In this Official portrait, Foster proudly wears his RSSILA member badge.

Sgt. John Whittle, VC.

* John Whittle was at the centre of the Mount Wellington Park Ranger preference issue between the RSSILA and the Hobart City Council.
Dr Harry Nairn Butler
Butler was the senior Repatriation Medical Officer in
Tasmania.

Source: 'Harry Nairn Butler', Obituary, Medical Journal of
Australia, 4 June 1955, p. 859.
Orielton, Tasmanian Soldier Settler Country.
Source: Photograph taken by the author, May 2005.
Souvenir Programme for the official opening of the Repatriation Trades School.


Boot Repairing and Making Class.

The question raised seem to be the people of [redacted] are not to accept a disability without proper...
Interpretation of Repatriation policy in Tasmania, internal memo written by Deputy Comptroller J.F. Humphris, 11 August 1926.


Permission to reproduce this document gratefully acknowledged. *Note: Veteran's name removed as per DVA request, shown by black line.
War Service Home, Sandy Bay, Hobart, Tasmania.

War Service Home, New Town, Hobart, Tasmania.
War Service Home, New Town, Hobart, Tasmania.
War Service Home, Moonah, Hobart, Tasmania.
War Service Home, Bellerive, Hobart, Tasmania.

War Service Home, Sandy Bay, Hobart, Tasmania.
War Service Home, Newstead, Launceston, Tasmania.
War Service Home, Newstead, Launceston, Tasmania.
War Service Home, Launceston, Tasmania.
**War Service Home, Claremont, Hobart, Tasmania.**

Erected at Newtown, Tasmania.

Cost of land
Cost of building, including fixtures...

Amount advanced by applicant
Amount of loan to be repaid in

3,500
625
2,965

Floor area: 1,069 sq. ft.

War Service Home, New Town, Hobart, Tasmania.
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