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OF THE

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

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- Year.
- 1937 Referendum on Commonwealth control of aviation and marketing defeated on both issues. Imperial conference in London. Commonwealth basic wage increased by 5s. per week. Report of the Royal Commission on Monetary and Banking Systems in Australia.
- 1938 New South Wales Sesqui-Centenary Celebrations. Australian Trade Delegation to review Ottawa Agreement. New Lyons Ministry. New Defence Programme involving expenditure of £63,000,000 over three years; militia forces to be raised to 70,000. New Trade Treaty with Japan.
- 1939 Death of the Rt. Hon. J. A. Lyons, Prime Minister. Page Ministry 7th to 26th April. Menzies Ministry formed. National Register and Wealth Census. War declared on Germany, 3rd September, by Britain and France after invasion of Poland. Prime Minister declared Australia at war on same date. Australia participates in vast Empire Air Training Scheme. Compulsory military training re-introduced for home defence. Special volunteer force of 20,000 men enlisted and trained for service overseas. Purchase by the British Government of the Australian wool clip and the export surplus of butter, cheese, eggs, meat, sugar, wheat, flour, lead, and zinc.
- Royal Australian Navy placed at disposal of Great Britain, 2nd September. No. 10 Sunderland Flying Boat Squadron, R.A.A.F., both personnel and aircraft, accepted by British Government for service with Coastal Command. *Middle East Campaign*. Advance party of Australians embarked for Middle East, 15th December.
- 1940 Exchange of Ministers between Australia and United States of America. Appointment of Australian Minister to Japan. Exchange of High Commissioners between Australia and Canada. Population of Australia reached 7,000,000. Naval Dock commenced at Sydney. New Menzies Ministry formed. Petrol rationing introduced. Commonwealth elections held.
- Cruiser *Perth* on patrol and escort work in Caribbean Sea and Western Atlantic. Cruiser *Australia* in Atlantic and later in operations off Dakar. Cruiser *Sydney* and five destroyers in Mediterranean. *Sydney* put to flight two Italian cruisers, July. One, *Bartolomeo Colleoni*, crippled and afterwards sunk by torpedoes. Cruiser *Hobart* at evacuation of British Somaliland, August. Australians in R.A.F. with squadrons of Advanced Air Striking Force, France, with Fighter Command squadrons, and with Bomber Command over Germany and Norway. No. 3 Squadron, R.A.A.F., sent to Libyan and Egyptian zone for co-operation with A.I.F. divisions. Three R.A.A.F. squadrons sent to Singapore.
- Middle East Campaign*. First Australian convoy (6th Australian Division) sailed for Middle East, 11th January.
- 1941 Appointment of Japanese Minister to Australia. Prime Minister's visit to London. Appointment of Sir Thomas Blamey as Deputy Commander-in-Chief of British Forces in the Middle East. Establishment of Commonwealth Child Endowment Scheme. Cessation of commercial relations between Australia and Japan. Exchange of Ministers between Australia and China. United States Congress passed Lend-Lease Bill. Atlantic Charter signed by Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill. Hon. A. Fadden succeeded Rt. Hon. R. G. Menzies as Prime Minister. Fadden Government defeated on Budget. Hon. J. Curtin formed Labour Ministry. Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Australia declared war on Japan, 9th December. War-time control of trading banks.
- During May and June, *Perth*, seven destroyers and one sloop engaged in Mediterranean—evacuation of Greece and Crete, Syrian campaign, Tobruk. Australian destroyers occupied on "Tobruk Ferry Run". Destroyer *Waterhen* and Sloop *Parramatta* lost in action. *Sydney* lost in November during engagement in Indian Ocean with raider *Steinmark*, which was sunk. R.A.A.F. squadrons with Fighter Command in defence of Britain and with Bomber Command. R.A.A.F. squadrons also operating in Middle East. Further R.A.A.F. squadron sent to Singapore.

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- 1941—  
*contd.* *Middle East Campaign.* Bardia, Tobruk, Derna, Benghazi, Giarabub (North Africa) captured, 5th January–21st March. British and Australians commenced withdrawal from area of El Agheila, 24th March. Last Australian rearguard reached Tobruk, 10th April. First engagement of Australian and German forces on Greek front, 10th April. Evacuation of Greece begun, 24th April. Evacuation from Sphakia, Crete, 31st May. Syrian campaign, 8th June–12th July.  
*Malayan Campaign.* Arrival of units of Eighth Australian Division in Malaya, 18th February.
- 1942 Daylight saving introduced. Darwin bombed. Allied Supply Council formed. United States armed forces land in Australia. General Douglas MacArthur Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in South-west Pacific. Regulation of prices, April, 1942. Federal uniform taxation adopted. Commonwealth widows' pensions introduced. Japanese submarines sunk in -Sydney Harbour. Rationing of commodities. Labour Corps formed for Allied Works. Exchange of Ministers between Netherlands, Soviet Union of Russia and Australia. Constitutional Convention held in Canberra—Bill approved for reference to Commonwealth by States of powers to make laws in relation to post-war reconstruction.
- R.A.N. ships, until invasion of Java, under almost constant Japanese air, submarine and surface attacks, while engaged in minesweeping, anti-submarine protection, patrolling and convoy escort work in Malayan waters. *Perth* lost in Sunda Strait, 28th February–1st March. Sloop *Yarra* lost defending convoy against three cruisers and four destroyers. Destroyer *Vampire* sunk by aircraft, Bay of Bengal, April. *Australia* and *Hobart* part of Task Force screening Port Moresby during Coral Sea Battle, May. Cruisers *Australia*, *Canberra* and *Hobart* led attack on Solomon Islands, August. *Canberra* was lost there. Destroyer *Voyager* lost disembarking Army personnel and stores on Timor coast, September. Corvette *Armidale* sunk by aircraft, December. R.A.A.F. Sunderlands operated with Coastal Command on anti-submarine patrols, and R.A.A.F. Hampdens carried torpedoes against enemy shipping off coast of Norway. Detachment of No. 455 Squadron sent to Russia; there carried out convoy escort duty and mapped part of Arctic Ice Barrier. Low-level daylight attacks against important pin-point targets carried out by R.A.A.F. with *Venturas* and *Mosquitos*. In Middle East two R.A.A.F. squadrons engaged in naval co-operation work, convoy escort and sea reconnaissance. Composite R.A.A.F. squadron at Rabaul overwhelmed by intense air attacks prior to capture of Rabaul. First R.A.A.F. fighter squadron operating from Port Moresby reduced to three aircraft in six weeks, but destroyed 35 enemy aircraft for loss of 12 pilots and 22 aircraft. R.A.A.F. contributed largely to enemy's defeat at Milne Bay. Supplies dropped to troops advancing down northern slopes of Owen Stanleys.
- Middle East Campaign.* Ninth Australian Division launched first attack in British thrust at El Alamein (North Africa), 23rd October.  
*Malayan Campaign.* First contact of Australian troops with Japanese, 14th January. Fall of Singapore, 15th February.
- South-west Pacific Campaign.* Japanese landed at Rabaul, 23rd January; Java, 27th February; Jac, Salamaua, Finschhafen (New Guinea), 7th–10th March. First contact between Australians and Japanese at Awala, 23rd July. Australians withdrew from Kokoda, 10th August. Japanese forced to withdraw from Milne Bay, 5th September. Australians recaptured Kokoda and Gorari, and captured Oivi, Wairopi, Gona, 2nd November–9th December.
- 1943 Ceiling prices fixed, 12th April. Commonwealth elections held—return of Curtin Government. National Register of Civilians. High Commissioners appointed to India and New Zealand. Price Stabilization Scheme. Mortgage Bank Department of Commonwealth Bank opened. National Works Council formed.

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1943—  
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Royal Australian Navy maintained essential sea communications between Australia and New Guinea and guarded Australian coastal traffic. In December began a long series of amphibious operations which finally defeated the enemy forces in the South-West Pacific Area. Royal Australian Navy ships of all sorts took part in these operations thenceforward until the end of the war. From 1943 to the end of the war R.A.A.F. squadrons in Britain continued anti-submarine patrols and to protect convoys. The R.A.A.F. attacked shipping in the North Sea and along the Norwegian coast, bombed strategic targets in Germany and in occupied countries, carried out intruder operations, provided cover for bombers, operated against flying bombs "V" weapon launching sites, and followed the invasion forces to the Continent. In the Middle East the R.A.A.F. operated over Tunisia in support of the Eighth Army and over Italy, Greece and Crete, assisted Yugo-slav partisans, and took part in the invasion of Southern France. By 1943 R.A.A.F. medium bombers and long-range fighters were operating around Dutch New Guinea and heavy bombers about Borneo and Netherlands East Indies. Mining of enemy ports in the South-West Pacific Area was begun by Catalinas in April, 1943, and sustained throughout the remainder of the war. No. 10 Operational Group, a mobile task force formed in January, 1944, gave direct support to land forces in the Ramu Valley and took part in subsequent operations in northern New Guinea. Renamed First Tactical Air Force, R.A.A.F., it moved to Morotai and from there attacked enemy watercraft. Northern Command, R.A.A.F., formerly No. 9 Operational Group, protected shipping, and supported land operations in Wewak, New Britain and Bougainville. First Tactical Air Force, R.A.A.F. and heavy bombers of north-western area took part in Tarakan, Brunei and Balikpapan landings. Throughout the war R.A.A.F. mainland squadrons helped to guard important shipping lanes. R.A.A.F. personnel served in R.A.F. squadrons in the Burma-India theatre.

*South-west Pacific Campaign.* Australians and Americans took Buna, 2nd January; Sanananda, 22nd January. Australians counter-attacked at Wau and began drive to Salamaua, 3rd February. Australian and American paratroops, Australian artillery, engineers and pioneers took Nadzab, 5th September. Aerial movement of Australian troops into Markham Valley began, 7th September. Australians captured Salamaua, Lae, Finschhafen, Dumpu, Sattelberg Heights, Wareo, 11th September–8th December.

- 1944 Mutual Co-operation Agreement between Australia and New Zealand. National Works Council approved £200,000,000 post-war works programme. Disastrous bushfires in Victoria. Mutual Aid Agreement between Canada and Australia. First Victory Loan of £150,000,000 over-subscribed. Invasion of France by sea and air on 6th June. Pay-as-you-earn taxation operated from 1st July. Completion of term as Governor-General by Lord Gowrie. Referendum on Constitution Amendment to give Commonwealth Government increased powers in post-war period defeated. Almost £155,000,000 subscribed to Second Victory Loan. First High Commissioner for India arrived in Australia.

*South-West Pacific Campaign.* Australians took Bogadjim, Madang, Alexis-hafen, 13th–26th April. Australians landed on New Britain, 11th October. Australians took over from Americans in Bougainville, Solomon Islands, 23rd November, and at Aitape, New Guinea, 1st December. Danmap River, New Guinea, crossed, 17th December. Pearl Ridge, Bougainville, occupied, 30th December.

- 1945 H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester sworn in as Governor-General. Captain Cook Dock opened. £100,000,000 Third Victory Loan over-subscribed. Cessation of hostilities in Europe, 8th May. Delegates of 50 countries sign United Nations' Charter at San Francisco. Fast new Lancastrian air service between Sydney and England. Occupation Survey taken of all civilian males aged 14 years and over. Re-establishment and Employment Act 1945 assented

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1945—  
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to 28th June. Death of Rt. Hon. John Curtin, Prime Minister of Australia. Hon. J. B. Chifley appointed Prime Minister. War Gratuity Act 1945 and Australian National Airlines Act 1945 assented to 3rd August. Cessation of hostilities against Japan, 15th August. Casualties of Australian Fighting Services as known at 31st October, 1945, totalled 95,746, including 28,753 killed. Decision to standardize Australian railway gauges. Termination of Lend-Lease. General demobilization of Armed Forces commenced. £85,000,000 Fourth Victory Loan filled.

*South-West Pacific Campaign.* Australians occupied But airfield, near Wewak, New Guinea, 17th March. Landing on Soraken Peninsula, Bougainville, 20th March. Battle of Puriata River, Bougainville, won 30th March. Wewak, New Guinea, captured in combined amphibious landing and land assault, 11th May. Australians landed on Bonis Peninsula, northern Bougainville, 8th June. Yamil, in Torricelli Mountains, New Guinea, occupied, 11th June. *Borneo Campaign.* Australians landed at Tarakan Island, north-east Borneo, 1st May. Tarakan and oilfields and airstrip captured 6th–11th May. Landing at Brunei Bay, north-west Borneo, 10th June. Brunei town captured, 13th June. Landing at Lutong, Sarawak, north Borneo, 20th June. Oilfields at Brunei and Sarawak taken, 22nd–23rd June. Landing at Balikpapan, south-east Borneo, 1st July.