



UNIT 7

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN AND COMMEMORATION



Australia has a long history of creating public memorials that commemorate people's service and sacrifice.

There are two national memorials to Australian women's involvement in wars and peace operations: one is to nurses, and one is to servicewomen.

In this unit students can explore those memorials, and consider other ways in which they might commemorate women's involvement in wars and peace operations.

INVESTIGATIONS:

- 1 How has Australian women's service in war been commemorated?
- 2 How could women's roles in peace operations be included in a new memorial?

Teaching suggestions

Essential learning achievements	<p>At the end of this topic students will have developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ knowledge of women’s roles in wars, conflicts and peace operations; ■ understanding of some of the attitudes and values commonly held at various times; ■ empathy with the experiences of servicewomen; and ■ understanding of the significance of symbolism in commemorative representations.
Suggested classroom approaches	<p>This activity is a good way of drawing together students’ knowledge and understanding developed during their study of any or all the previous units (1–6) in this resource.</p>
DVD	<p>Students should watch the DVD as it focuses on representations of history throughout.</p>
CD-ROM activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create a National Australian Women’s Memorial
Finding out more	<p>Janette Bomford, <i>Soldiers of the Queen</i>, Oxford, Melbourne, 2001</p> <p>Peter Londey, <i>Other People’s Wars</i>, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2004</p> <p>Melanie Oppenheimer, <i>Australian Women and War</i>, Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Canberra, 2008</p> <p>Richard Reid, <i>Just Wanted To Be There</i>, Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Canberra, 1999</p>

IN YOUR INVESTIGATIONS you should draw on these components of the *Australian Women in War* resource:



UNIT 7 (pages 101–108)



DVD:
All chapters

CD-ROM activities:

- Create a National Australian Women’s Memorial



Forming ideas

Commemoration involves honouring and remembering. This can be done in many ways.

Here are some examples:

- a school holds an Anzac Day or Remembrance Day ceremony;
- an organisation creates an honour board for members who served;
- a public building is named in honour of a person;
- a government strikes a medal to reflect a person's life and service;
- a family arranges a photograph of a loved one in a special place;
- an organisation names a special award after a notable person;
- students research the service history of a past pupil of their school;
- a family holds a private dedication ceremony.

Some of these commemorations are public, and some are personal.

- 1 How many other examples of commemoration can you think of?

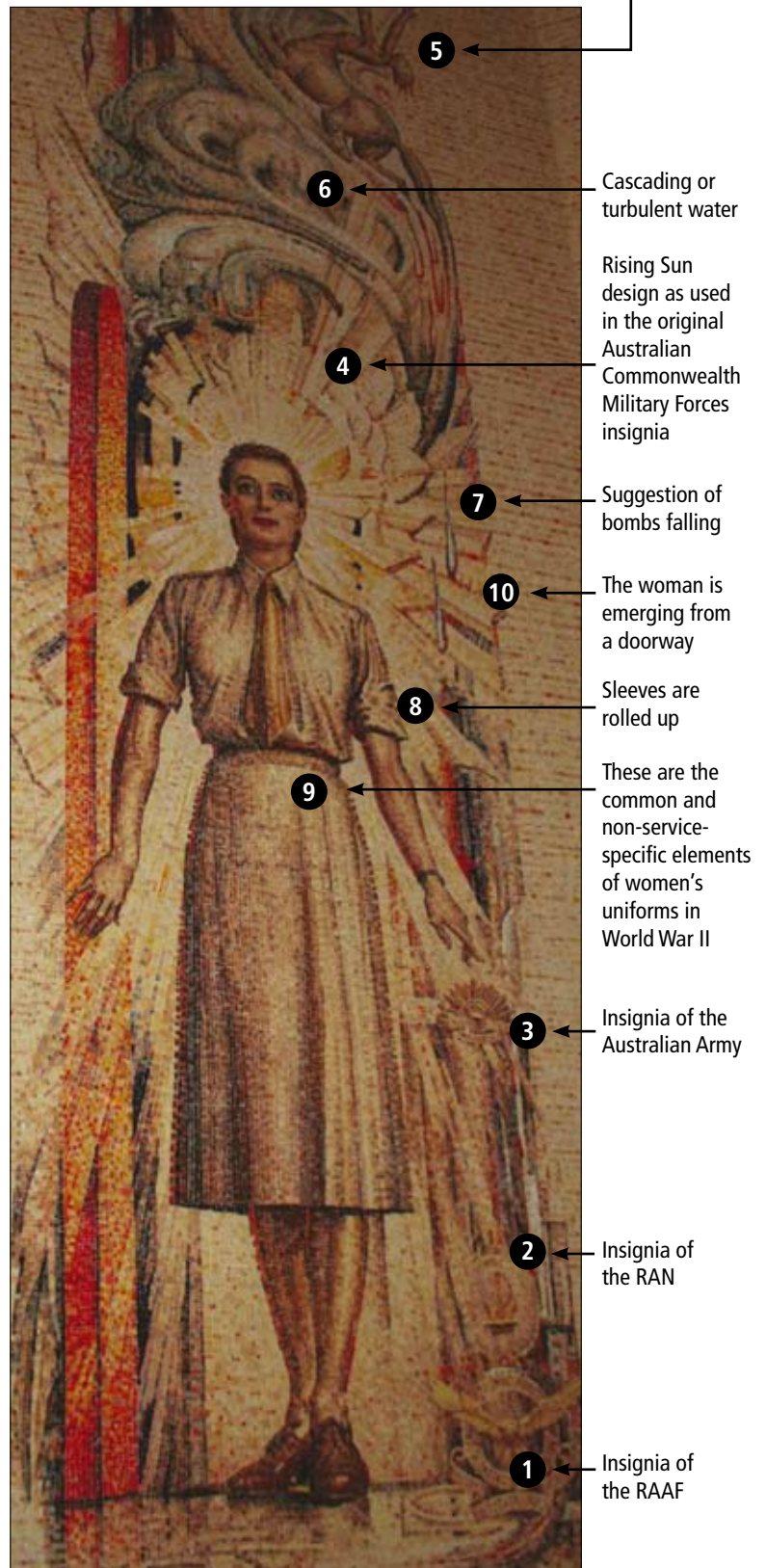
Here is a photograph of the commemorative mosaic in the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial. It represents Women's Services, and was created after World War II. The mosaic uses strong symbols to provide messages about the service of women.

- 2 Some of the symbols that are used in this mosaic are provided opposite. Use this list to decide the meaning that each of these symbols has been designed to convey.

In this unit your main task is to decide:

- What do the two existing symbolic and commemorative national memorials (to Australian service nurses and to Australian servicewomen, explored on the following pages) tell us about Australian women in war?
- How can a proposed national memorial to Australian peacekeepers include an acknowledgement of the role of women?

Mythological Centaur figure. *The Centaur* was the name of a hospital ship that was sunk off the coast of Queensland on 14 May 1943, with the death of many service and medical personnel, and patients. Sister Ellen Savage, despite being badly wounded herself, continued to provide medical aid to survivors throughout the ordeal. For her courage she was awarded the George medal, the highest medal awarded to a woman in World War II.





INVESTIGATION

1

How has Australian women's service in war been commemorated?

The Australian Service Nurses National Memorial

- 1 What are the main things you have learned about nurses' service and experience from your study of them in history? Make a list of the facts, qualities and values that have most impressed you, and that you would want to include in a memorial to Australian service nursing.
- 2 You have seen in the *Forming ideas* activity on page 103 that memorials can use symbolism to convey meanings. Think about the symbols that you might use in a memorial to Australian service nurses. You can practice this using the Create a National Australian Women in War Memorial activity on the CD-ROM with this resource.
- 3 Look at the photographs below and the description on page 105 of the Australian Service Nurses National Memorial in Canberra. Identify the qualities or values of the service nurses that the memorial portrays. Write these beside the appropriate feature. One example has been done to help you.



The Australian Service Nurses National Memorial consists of two curvilinear glass walls. Each wall is faced with clear glass over glass. Etched and cast into the inner glass walls, in a timeline sequence, are important images and events drawn from the history of Australian service nursing. They include names of places in which nurses have served and a collage of historical photographs and extracts from diaries and letters, in the original handwriting.

Some panels are blank. This is intentional, reminding visitors of the inconclusive nature of any memorial to an ongoing service group.

The interlocking glass walls represent nurturing hands, symbolic of nursing.

Extracts from:
www.skp.com.au/memorials2/pages/00010.htm

The quotations etched in the glass are:

Oblivious to fatigue, to hunger or any need for sleep	<i>This shows dedication, and selflessness</i>
In the midst of the chaos of war, the nurses on the civilian surgical teams provided small islands of sanity, security and care.	
The oil smoke, the drill, the ever present threat and vulnerability ...	
Patients were nursed in blankets, there were no sheets, no running water.	
War casualties called for new skills ... VADs AAMWS and orderlies assisted in their nursing care.	
The suction was great, I was pulled into the terrific whirlpool with the sinking ship.	
We grew tomatoes near the wards so we could give the boys a tomato sandwich.	
We were quite a distance out to sea before any of the bullets hit us. No one panicked. They just marched ahead with their chins up.	
They came to us straight from the trenches, their muddy clothing frozen on them.	
An example of calmness and courage to many a shaken soldier.	

An inscription reads:

In memory of Australian Service Nurses whose supreme sacrifice, courage and devotion were inspiring to those for whom they so willingly risked their lives
 Their memory will always be our sacred trust

The Australian Servicewomen’s Memorial

Here is a photograph of the Australian Servicewomen’s Memorial in Canberra. The table underneath it gives a summary of the key features of the Memorial.

4 Look carefully at the memorial, and complete this table, outlining the message or meaning you think the various features are conveying to the observer.



AWM ART30968

Features	Meaning
It is a bare platform of granite, slightly raised above the ground	
The small granite rocks are in a mosaic pattern	
The platform is divided in two by a curved trench made of black granite	
Water runs through the trench	
The colours of the granite stones in one segment are black, blue, grey, and then red and pink	
The colours in the other segment are predominantly lighter	
The insignia of the various women’s services are displayed discreetly around the mosaic	
The platform is composed of different coloured granite stones	
It is set in a peaceful grove between deciduous trees. Leaves fall on the memorial	
One segment is marked pre-1945, the other is post-1945. Plaques list the names of the women’s services pre-1945 in one segment, and post-1945 in the other segment	
The insignia of the three services (Navy, Army and Air Force) are incised into the stone border	

5 Now look at the additional information on page 107 and add to your answers if necessary.

Interpretation plaque at the site of the memorial

Set in a peaceful grove of trees, the use of mosaics echoes the spiritual themes in the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial. The granite stones were selected from all over Australia.

A river bed of black granite bisects the mosaic. One side of the river represents the pre-1945 period, where looming clouds of black, grey and blue evoke the ominous clouds of war. The red and pink stones symbolise the bloodshed and pain of sacrifice, while lighter colours represent courage and joy of success.

On the other side, representing service after 1945, lighter colours predominate, conveying a stronger sense of peace. The artist's intent was to "make a memorial for the future as well as the past, and one that carried with it ... joy, sadness, comradeship and loss".

Visitors are invited to stand within the memorial and reflect on the service and sacrifice of Australian Servicewomen.

Plaque on concrete slab in front of the memorial

Pre-1945: Royal Australian Naval Nursing Service, Women's Royal Australian Naval Service, Australian Army Nursing Service, Australian Women's Army Service, Voluntary Aid Detachments, Australian Army Medical Women's Service, Royal Australian Air Force Medical Service, Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service, Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force

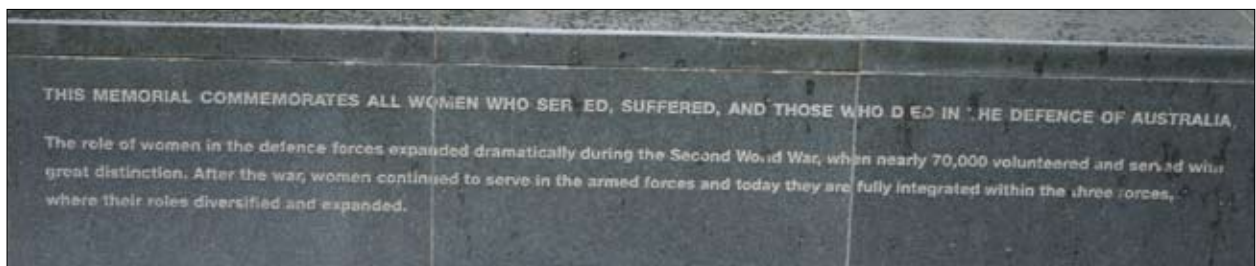
Insignia of Royal Australian Navy
Insignia of Australian Commonwealth Military Forces
Insignia of Royal Australian Air Force

Plaque on concrete slab in front of the memorial

Post-1945: Royal Australian Naval Nursing Service, Women's Royal Australian Naval Service, Royal Australian Navy, Australian Army Nursing Service, Royal Australian Army Nursing Service, Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps, Women's Royal Australian Army Corps, Australian Army, Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service, Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force

Insignia of Royal Australian Navy
Insignia of The Australian Army
Insignia of Royal Australian Air Force

Commemorative plaque along the base of the memorial





INVESTIGATION 2

How could women's role in peace operations be included in a new memorial?

A space has been set aside in Anzac Parade, Canberra, for an official national memorial to Australian peacekeepers.

There is a competition among architects to design the memorial.

Look at the following information about what the organisers of the memorial want it to achieve, and answer these questions. Then work out your own ideas about how you think Australian women should be acknowledged and commemorated as part of the memorial design. You may be able to follow the development of this memorial and see how the winning entry is implemented.

- 1 Are women to be identified in part of the memorial?
- 2 Should they be?
- 3 How could you include references, symbols and meanings that include women?



(Department of Defence image WK01042) East Timor 2000. Force Commander General de Los Santos presents the United Nations Peacekeeping Medal to Corporal Jodie Mason.

Use the CD-ROM activity Create a National Australian Women's Memorial to try out your ideas.

Commemorative Purpose

The Memorial will commemorate and celebrate Australian peacekeeping. It will commemorate the courage, sacrifice, service and valour of Australian Peacekeepers given in the same spirit as in other conflicts honoured by cenotaphs and memorials across Australia and on Anzac Parade.

The Australian Peacekeeping Memorial will also:

- celebrate Australia's contribution to international peacekeeping since its commitment to the first UN peacekeeping mission on 14th September 1947;
- honour the excellent achievement and reputation of Australia and its Peacekeepers in international peace and security;
- acknowledge the deaths and casualties suffered by Australian Peacekeepers while deployed on operations;
- recognise the critical contributions made by the ADF, the Federal, State and Territory Police Forces, and Australian civilians to peacekeeping operations which are commanded or authorised by the United Nations, or are sanctioned by the Australian Government;
- be a reminder of the difficulties and dangers international peacekeeping often faces in remote and isolated regions, where infrastructure is destroyed and peace is at best fragile;
- acknowledge the skills, professionalism, resourcefulness and courage required of individuals in such circumstances, the often horrific humanitarian

crises and human rights abuses they must confront and the long term emotional and physiological impact these experiences can have on individuals;

- reflect awareness of the support and sacrifices given by the families of peacekeepers;
- show that Australia's contribution to peacekeeping exemplifies Australian openness, fairness, egalitarianism, mateship, initiative, and respect for diversity and social justice for all people;
- reflect the evolution of international peacekeeping over the last 60 years, including the development of complex multi-dimensional and integrated missions with multi-national military, police and civilian components;
- demonstrate that Australia and the individual Peacekeepers that it sends overseas contribute positively to international peace and world stability by assisting nations to regain stability and aiding individuals in distress and danger; and
- form a focal point for national parades and remembrance ceremonies in recognition of Australian peacekeeping on appropriate occasions.

The Australian Peacekeeping Memorial will be a living memorial in that it will identify past and future peacekeeping operations and ongoing national and individual commitment and sacrifice.

https://peacekeeping.nationalcapital.gov.au/commemorative_purpose.asp