

In 1914 the Mother Country, Great Britain, requested assistance from Australia by sending troops to faraway locations such as Egypt and Europe. It is a widely held belief that soldiers who enlisted into the war joined because of a sense of patriotism to the 'Mother Country', emphasized even today by British flags featuring in commemorations and parades. However, this was not the sole cause of enlistment: numerous other reasons such as the influence of propaganda and the government; Australian identity; a sense of adventure and need to prove one's self were all of equal importance.

Many soldiers wanted to fight for the 'Mother Country.' An extract from a wartime letter describes the motivation, *'to obey the King's commands and fight his enemies wherever I am required,'* (Mulvey, Private record, AWM 2DRL/0233). The extract shows that while soldiers were aware of the seriousness of the situation they still felt like they had a duty to fight for the king. Another letter from the perspective of a soldier's mother shows that soldiers felt obliged to fight, *'His wife and two babies were to have joined him in October 1914, as he meant to settle in Australia, but the war having broken out he felt it his duty to join up, and he worked with all his heart among the men of his adopted country; his first wish and thought being that they should love and serve our blessed Lord and Master*' (La Touche, Private record: AWM 1DRL/0243). These letters show that soldiers felt obliged to serve the King of England. This, however, was not the only reason for volunteers enlisting in the thousands in 1914.

Propaganda and government influence played a major role in enlistment. An influential government speech by the ALP leader Andrew Fisher (1914) stated *'Should the worst happen, after everything has been done that honour will permit, Australians will stand beside the mother country to help and defend her to our last man and our last shilling.'* This speech shows government encouragement for Australians to fight for the 'Mother Country. Another pro-war speech featuring the need to defend the 'Mother Country' was spoken by Liberal leader Joseph Cook (1914), *'Whatever happens, Australia is part of the Empire right to the full. When the Empire is at war, so is Australia at war. All our resources are in the Empire and for the preservation and security of the Empire'*, (Chris, T, 2014). Moreover, emotive posters served as a vital role in increasing troop numbers. These posters were simple but convincing with patriotic and rousing messages. This shows that propaganda and government influence were crucial in encouraging Australian enlistment (BPS, 2014).

Australians wanted to establish a national identity. During 1914, Australia was only recently federated so many felt a sense of national pride was necessary. By joining the conflict, Australians believed they could be represented as a mature and independent entity with their own army following their leader's decision – not as an appendage of Britain's colonial past. A quote supporting this viewpoint from journalist Alfred Buchanan is as follows, *'Australia has so far achieved nothing great from the national standpoint. It cannot be said to have failed because it has not yet been called upon ... the Australian must be prepared in the event of great emergency, to die for something or for*

somebody,'(ABC, 2001).While this was a factor, this is only one of the many reasons why Australians enlisted.

Australians also had deep hatred for the enemy. During the beginning of the First World War, news of German atrocities and wartime propaganda convinced many to hate enemy nations such as Germany. Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick (1914) wrote, *'I would like to have the pleasure of putting a bullet through the damned Old Kaiser for he is the start of the lot,'*. While German opposition was a large factor encouraging enlistment, other factors were greater (Private record AWM 3DRL/3424).

Australians joined in 1914 due to financial hardship. At the time, most jobs were agricultural. This was finicky as circumstances such as droughts can influence this. Robert Edmund Antill (1914) was motivated by employment, *'You may think it funny of me turning up such a great job but it was like this: Philpott had only about 3 days' work left for us and things are so bad out here for there is a drought on. We haven't had any rain for months so I thought I would join the army. Well I joined and here I am. Whoever thought that when I left home that I was leaving for a soldier but still there a such a lot of things happening in this world it's no use being surprised, is it,'* (Private record: AWM 1DRL/0047). Also, in the war, Australian diggers received a minimum wage of 6 shillings a day, a high wage considering the financial conditions of the time (State Library of Victoria, 2014). This was paid regularly, on time, and in the absence of wealth from other careers, the prospect of a stable income from the army seemed miraculous.

Many Australians enlisted for adventure and travel. During 1914, Australians rarely travelled beyond their state let alone overseas. When the war arrived, however, many men saw this as an opportunity to reach faraway lands and experience adventure. A letter created in early 1915 by Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick showed the true extent of this, *'I see by this morning's paper that Australia is going to send another 100 thousand men. I am not surprised for men were just simple going mad out there to go to the war. There was many a man envied us first contingent men for being so lucky to get off to the war,'* (Private record AWM 3DRL/3424). Moreover, many thrill-seeking men recruited due to a popular perception the war would be over by Christmas. This reveals that, in the absence of overseas travel and automobiles, enlistment for travel was extremely common. This was certainly emphasized and reinforced in wartime propaganda which took advantage of this fact to increase enlistments (BPS, 2014).

Australians also joined because of society's interpretation of masculinity. Recruitment material demanded only men who were perfect specimens would be accepted: fit, strong and capable, *'[One man] was told that his eyesight was defective and was twice turned away before a £2 tip facilitated his passage into the Australian Infantry Force. Rejected men stumbled in tears from the tables, unable to answer sons or mates left to the fortunes of war. They formed an Association, and wore a large badge to cover their civilian shame. Those who sailed against Turkey were the fittest, strongest, and most*

ardent in the land,' (Bill Gammage n.d.). Consequently, men felt pressured to prove they fitted this bill, otherwise they were telling everyone they weren't good enough, (which was a slur on their masculinity). (State Library of Victoria, 2014). Proving masculinity was a large factor in increasing enlistments.

To conclude, Australians joined due to a variety of reasons. While a desire to assist England was an important factor, other more practical reasons convinced Australians to fight in the Great War such as financial hardship, societal expectations, a sense of adventure, the influence of propaganda and the government and the need to establish an Australian identity. This shows that Australians didn't only fight to serve the 'Mother Country', instead they also fought for numerous other reasons.

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