



THE SIMPSON PRIZE



# SIMPSON PRIZE COMPETITION

for Year 9 and 10 Students

2025 Winner | Tasmania

**Eliza Temple**

ROSE BAY HIGH SCHOOL

## 2025 Simpson Prize

*'Australia's relationship with Great Britain explains why Australia and individual Australians went to war.'* Discuss the accuracy of this statement with reference to World War I.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ARTV00021

An  
(AWM)

Australia

recruitment

poster

from

1915

From the exact moment Great Britain declared war against the Germans in August 1914, Australia and individual Australians were also at war. The relationship Australia held with Great Britain prior to and during the First World War was akin to a treasured parent-child relationship, which was valued across the nation, yet much broader than deep colonial ties. Australians supporting Great Britain in the First World War was not simply because of colonial relations but the shared values and history between both lands, including large numbers of people with British heritage or born in Great Britain. Australians responded with waves of enthusiasm and rushed to enlist for wartime service. With bipartisan support across parliament and a dominant issue during the 1914 Australian Federal Election (DVA, 2020), Australia was unreservedly committed to joining British troops on the battlefields. Conversely, the relationship with Great Britain was not the sole motivator. The promise of a more stable income and occupation to support a future family; an opportunity to explore the world; and a perception of self-worth and purpose (DVA, 2024) motivated many individuals, particularly for Indigenous Australians displaced in their own land by colonists.

Strong motherland ties and a voracious pull towards defending ‘King and Country’ saw thousands of Australian men rushing to enlist to support Great Britain in wartime. Australia’s desperation to support Great Britain meant that within two weeks of the First World War being declared, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was established. Within a matter of months over 21,000 men, medical staff, military supplies and horses set sail to Europe (DVA, 2024). Recruitment posters were distributed throughout Australia and newspapers published propaganda to appeal to young men to enlist.

A poem in the *Argus* newspaper on 8 August 1914 is one such example of a direct appeal to individual Australians. *The Call* (*Argus*, 1914) (Appendix A) prominently features the widespread call of “Coo-ee!” – a widespread slang reference (ABC, 2010) which was used to persuade men to sign up for the Australian army. Much like the infamous recruitment poster *A call from the Dardanelles* (Commonwealth Department of Defence, 1915) (Appendix B), the familiar Australian symbolism of “Coo-ee!” is used to appeal. Letters to the *Argus* from patriotic members of the public urged copies of the poem be published in numerous newspapers, including the Hobart *Mercury*, and copies distributed to school students (*The Argus*, 1914). (Appendix A).

*The Call* was a rallying call for unity and loyalty among citizens of the Commonwealth, particularly Australia, aiming to inspire patriotism and collective resolve. The core message, in short, was that Australians were urged to set aside personal differences for a common cause, as well as expressing a deep sense of duty to King and Country. Australians were referred to as ‘sons’ and ‘children’.

“Her sons will make reply...the children of the free.” (*The Argus*, 1914) (Appendix A).

The beloved motherland was clearly a strong motivator for Australia and individual Australians serving in the First World War. Great Britain made the call to action and reiterated the importance of coming together. Ultimately, a shared identity and resilience proved essential for standing strong in the face of challenges, this challenge being a world war. Pro-war publications captured the emotional weight and patriotic commitment relevant to its intended audience.

Lance Corporal FC Mulvey's letter (Mulvey, 1914) (Appendix C) in August 1914, centres on the theme of duty and personal conviction as he justifies his decision to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force. He states that his choice is driven by a sense of responsibility to defend Australia; and a personal belief that his physical and occupational background made him well-suited for military service. Mulvey understands that he has sworn to fight for 'King and Country', but there is an underlying tone suggesting reassurance and approval from his family.

*"I sincerely trust that you will look at my move in the right light, as you do most things, and recognise that out of a family of three sons, one can be spared for the defence of Australia and Australia's fate is going to be decided on the continent and not out here"* (Mulvey, 1914) (Appendix C).

Mulvey expresses a hope that he will be the son 'spared' from the ultimate sacrifice. There is a notable shift in his thinking when he suggests Australia's fate will not be decided on its home soil, but rather 'abroad'. Enlistment was a significant and irreversible step, yet Mulvey's role is necessary for the greater cause – balancing his own desires with the expectations placed on him (Mulvey, 1914).

Consequently, when war was declared in 1914, Australian Prime Minister, Joseph Cook, and Opposition Leader, Andrew Fisher, pledged full bipartisan support for Britain. As a colonial territory, Australia considered itself a proud and loyal member of the empire protecting them. The Prime Minister stated emphatically in Horsham on 1 August 1914 that Australia was at war.

*"Whatever happens, Australia is a part of the Empire right to the full. Remember that when the Empire is at war, so is Australia at war ... So far as the defences go here and now in Australia, I want to make it quite clear that all our resources in Australia are in the Empire and for the Empire, and for the preservation and the security of the Empire"* (Cook, 1914) (Appendix D).

Individual Australians felt that it was their obligation to honour their heritage by defending their 'motherland' whenever it was threatened. Whilst Australia was self-governing, it remained a Commonwealth territory and obligated to follow Great Britain's lead (Easton et al., 2023). At a political rally in Colac, Victoria on 31 July 1914, the Opposition Leader emphasised that Australia was an inseparable part of the British empire, particularly during wartime. Fisher reiterated the need for unity from Australians. He suggested that Australian resources were not solely for its own benefit but the betterment of Great Britain and should it begin to falter, Australia will willingly put itself in harm's way, even at the risk of its own survival.

*"Australians [would] stand beside the mother country to help and defend her to our last man and our last shilling"* (Fisher, 1914).

This perspective illustrates the deep connection Australia had with Great Britain at the time, portraying it as an attachment that primarily serves the empire rather than asserting its own identity. Additionally, Fisher calls for reason amidst rising tensions, urging the public to prioritise calm and rationality over passionate feelings. By framing the situation in this way, Fisher captured the urgency of the moment, all the while reinforcing the interconnectedness of Australia's fate with that of Great Britain. Labor, led by Fisher, ultimately won the election on 5

September 1914 due to its stronger position on defence (DVA, 2020). Therefore, bipartisan support was seen as an overwhelming endorsement of Australia and individual Australians going to war due to the relationship with Great Britain.

Whilst many Australians enlisted by reason of government advertising and recruitment efforts linked to the relationship with Great Britain, Indigenous men chose to serve more so for personal morals and a desire to prove their loyalty and patriotism. Military service offered a chance for Indigenous Australians to access equal pay and treatment and the opportunity to go on an adventure, contrasting with the discrimination they faced because of British colonisation (AWM, 2019). Although there was a reluctance to fight for their colonisers, enlistment was a way to earn a living in uncertain times.

Whilst Indigenous Australians were socially ostracised and disallowed Australian citizenship – the Australian Constitution was not amended until 1967 – perhaps military service made them feel more equal (McCulloch, 2014). Despite the motivation from Indigenous Australians to serve in wartime, they had to prove they had English descent, otherwise they were not allowed to join because of racial discrimination they endured (AWM, 2019). This did not deter Ngadjonji man Douglas Grant (NAA, 2020) who served in the First World War, re-enlisting after initially being refused appropriate permission to travel overseas (NAA, 2024). Similarly, five Lovett brothers left Lake Condah Mission in Victoria to enlist - Alfred, Leonard, Frederick, Edward and Herbert. Their family's record is a "strong reflection" of Indigenous Australians who have served, with 21 family members now having served Australia (VACCA, 2024). Opportunity, and equality saw 27 Indigenous men from *truwana* / Cape Barren Island in Tasmania enlist, including Private James Henry Paul Maynard (Appendix F) who returned home a deeply damaged man (ANU, 2015). The complex motivations of Indigenous soldiers during wartime, questioning whether they were fighting for Australia, the British Empire, or for personal reasons may never be known.

*"Aboriginal men did not go to war simply because they lacked options or choice. Some probably signed up for the same reasons as non-Indigenous men."* (Maynard, 2018) (Appendix E).

Whilst defending the Commonwealth and supporting the colonial relationship with Great Britain was a significant factor, it was not the sole reason Australia and individual Australians served in the First World War. Men who enlisted did so for numerous reasons. Personal incentives and a perception of self-worth and purpose incentivised Australians to serve during the First World War, as well as loyalty to Great Britain.

# APPENDIX

## Appendix A

Verses from '*The Call*', a poem published in *The Argus* newspaper (Melbourne), 8 August 1914

Coo-ee! It's the mother country calling;  
Coo-ee! Her sons shall make reply;  
The children of the free,  
From sea to surging sea,  
Have heard the call, they'll stand or fall, prepared to do or die.

Forget our tale of party strife, forget our varied creeds,  
Perhaps we've wrangled over words, we stand as one in deeds;  
Divided in her time of peace – when first the bugles blare  
Her enemies have yet to learn the Empire stands foursquare!

*Argus* (1914). *The Call*. Accessed from [1https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/10381487](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/10381487)

## Appendix B

Recruitment poster, *A call from the Dardanelles* (1915)

Defence



Commonwealth  
Department of  
(1915). *A call from the  
Dardanelles*.  
Accessed from  
[www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)

## Appendix C

Extract of letter by Lance Corporal FC Mulvey, 2nd Light Horse, AIF, 23 August 1914, private record (AWM 2DRL/0233)

I know no more than that I have sworn “to obey the King’s commands and fight his enemies wherever I am required”. I sincerely trust that you will look at my move in the right light, as you do most things, and recognise that out of a family of three sons, one can be spared for the defence of Australia and Australia’s fate is going to be decided on the continent and not out here. Of course we may never see the front; there are rumours and conjectures that we are bound for India or some such place to take the place of the regular troops there. I know that I have taken a serious step but this war is a serious matter and I feel convinced in my own mind that being suited in physique and occupation and being prompted by a sense of duty and spirit of adventure I can hardly do anything else but volunteer.

Mulvey (1914) Extract of private letter. Accessed from <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C88961>

## Appendix D

Newspaper report of a speech given by Prime Minister Joseph Cook at Horsham on 1 August 1914. From *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 1914.

MELBOURNE, Friday. In the course of a speech at Horsham tonight the Prime Minister (Mr. Cook) referred to the European crisis. He said, “I hope that reason will get the better of these passionate feelings that have been aroused, and that there may be peace ...

Whatever happens Australia is a part of the Empire right to the full. Remember that when the Empire is at war so is Australia at war. That being so, you will see how grave is the situation. I want to make it quite clear that all our resources in Australia are in the Empire, and for the Empire, and for the preservation and the security of the Empire.” (Loud cheers.).

Museum of Modern Democracy (2024). *Election speeches – Joseph Cook 1914*. Accessed from <https://electionspeeches.moadoph.gov.au/speeches/1914-joseph-cook>

## Appendix E

Extract from John Maynard's 'The First World War', published in Beaumont & Cadzow (eds) *Serving Our Country: Indigenous Australians, War, Defence and Citizenship*, 2018.

Were these Indigenous soldiers fighting for 'their country', for Australia or for the British Empire? We cannot know the answer to this question with any certainty, since few of those who served left any record of their motivation for so doing. As previously discussed, the records of Aboriginal men who joined up suggest that they were previously employed in other occupations. This challenges the idea that the prospect of a wage was the major motivation behind their volunteering. Aboriginal men did not go to war simply because they lacked options or choice. Some probably signed up for the same reasons as non-Indigenous men: for travel and adventure; because their mates or brothers had signed up; because they believed in the war effort; or because they were subjected to aggressive recruitment campaigns. However, Aboriginal people during the early twentieth century were also developing a sense of a pan-national Aboriginal identity loosely tied to the rise of a wider Australian national identity. This would come very much to the fore during the 1920s when organised Aboriginal political protest began to emerge. However, like many white Australians, Aboriginal men may have positioned their sense of identity within a wider 'British' loyalty. James Arden and Richard King on their arrival at the Ballarat military training camp, stated that they were:

[A] nxious to get to the front as soon as possible in order to fight for the Empire ... the natives at the Condah station felt that they were real Britishers, having been born under the Australian flag, and were willing to fight to a man if they were accepted by the military authorities.

Maynard (2018). *The First World War*, published in Beaumont & Cadzow (eds). *Serving Our Country: Indigenous Australians, War, Defence and Citizenship*.

## Appendix F

Studio portrait of an Aboriginal serviceman 7314 Private (Pte) James Henry Paul Maynard, Indigenous soldier from *truwana* / Cape Barren Island (1915)

Australian War  
Memorial. Accessed



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00889.014

Memorial (2024). *Private James*  
from

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1068787>

## Reference list

### Primary source material

Argus (1914). *The Call*. Accessed from [1https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/10381487](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/10381487)

Australian War Memorial (2024). *Private James Maynard*. Accessed from <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1068787>

Commonwealth Department of Defence (1915). *A call from the Dardanelles*. Accessed from [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)

Fisher, A. (1914). *Bundaberg election rally speech*. Accessed from <https://electionspeeches.moadoph.gov.au/speeches/1914-andrew-fisher>

Mulvey (1914) Extract of private letter. Accessed from <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C88961>

Australian War Memorial. "A Call from the Dardanelles..." Wwww.awm.gov.au, 10 June 2024, [www.awm.gov.au/collection/ARTV05167](http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/ARTV05167). Accessed 7 Nov. 2024.

"Australia Has Promised Britain 50,000 More Men." Awm.gov.au, 2016, [www.awm.gov.au/collection/ARTV00021](http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/ARTV00021). Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.

National Archives of Australia. "Australian Recruitment Statistics for the First World War | Naa.gov.au." Naa.gov.au, 2024, [www.naa.gov.au/students-and-teachers/student-research-portal/learning-resource-themes/war/world-war-i/australian-recruitment-statistics-first-world-war](http://www.naa.gov.au/students-and-teachers/student-research-portal/learning-resource-themes/war/world-war-i/australian-recruitment-statistics-first-world-war). Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.

Australian War Memorial. "Australia Has Promised Britain 50,000 More Men." Wwww.awm.gov.au, [www.awm.gov.au/collection/ARTV00021?image=1](http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/ARTV00021?image=1). Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.

### Secondary source material

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2010) *Cooee: the history of a call*. Accessed from [Cooee: the history of a call - ABC listen](http://Cooee: the history of a call - ABC listen)

Australian War Memorial (2019) *Aboriginal service during the First World War*. Accessed from <https://www.awm.gov.au/about/our-work/projects/indigenous-service>

Australian National University (2019) *Aboriginal service during the First World War*. Accessed from <https://onehundredstories.anu.edu.au/stories/something-remember-him>

Deadly Story (2024). <https://deadlystory.com/page/culture/articles/anzac-day-2018/the-lovett-brothers>

Department of Veterans' Affairs (2020). *Australia's responses to World War I*, DVA Anzac Portal. Accessed from <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/politics/response-to-war>

Department of Veterans' Affairs (2024), *First convoy of Australian troops in World War I*, DVA Anzac Portal, accessed from <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/where-australians-served/first-convoy>

Easton, M., Carrodus, C., Wilson, J., Wilson, A., Ryan, M., Thomson, K., Davey, K., Smith, R., Davis, J., & Wessel, M. (2023). *Oxford Humanities and Social Sciences 9 - Australian Curriculum - Second Edition*. Oxford University Press.

McCulloch, A. (2014) *Indigenous Australian soldiers in First World War: British Council*. Accessed from <https://www.awm.gov.au/about/our-work/projects/indigenous-service>

Maynard (2018). *The First World War*, published in Beaumont & Cadzow (eds). *Serving Our Country: Indigenous Australians, War, Defence and Citizenship*.

Museum of Modern Democracy (2024). Election speeches – Joseph Cook 1914. Accessed from <https://electionspeeches.moadoph.gov.au/speeches/1914-joseph-cook>

National Archives Australia (2020) *The story of Ngadjonji man Douglas Grant*. Accessed from <https://www.awm.gov.au/about/our-work/projects/indigenous-service>

Australian War Memorial. “First World War 1914–18 | the Australian War Memorial.” Awm.gov.au, Australian War Memorial, 2 June 2021, [www.awm.gov.au/articles/atwar/first-world-war](http://www.awm.gov.au/articles/atwar/first-world-war). Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.

---. “The Simpson Prize 2025 | Australian War Memorial.” Www.awm.gov.au, 19 Feb. 2024, [www.awm.gov.au/learn/schools/simpson2025](http://www.awm.gov.au/learn/schools/simpson2025). Accessed 29 Oct. 2024.

---. “Treaty of Versailles - 100th Anniversary | Australian War Memorial.” Www.awm.gov.au, 12 July 2024, [www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/Treaty-of-Versailles100](http://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/Treaty-of-Versailles100). Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.

corporatename :Old Parliament House, an Executive Agency within the Regional Australia. “Getting It Together: From Colonies to Federation. A Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House Schools Learning Resource.” Getting-It-Together.moadoph.gov.au, 15 Oct. 2024, <https://getting-it-together.moadoph.gov.au/national-story/people-and-places/investigation-3.html> Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.

corporateName =Department of Veterans’ Affairs; address=21 Genge St, Civic/Canberra City. “Australia and the Paris Peace Conference | Anzac Portal.” Anzacportal.dva.gov.au, 14 Oct. 2024, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/politics/peace-negotiations> Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.

Department of Veterans' Affairs. “Enlisting in the Australian Forces during World War I.” Anzac Portal, 11 Mar. 2020, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/military-organisation/enlistment> Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.

Norwood Library Victoria. “Why Did Soldiers Volunteer to Go to War (Sir John Monash Centre, N.d.).” Sjmc.gov.au, 13 Oct. 2024, <https://sjmc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/5.Topic-2-Why-did-Soldiers-Volunteer-to-go-to-War.pdf>. Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.

Office Of The Historian. "The Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles." State.gov, United States Department of State, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/paris-peace>. Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.

Oxford Humanities and Social Sciences 9 Australian curriculum, et al. 292-295 and 330-331. 5 June 2023. Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.