By January 1943, Australia had emerged from the shadow of war in a strong position. The victories in 1942 at Kokoda, Milne Bay, Buna, Gona and Sanananda had secured the northern coastlines of Papua and Australia. Australian forces were now poised for a full-scale offensive to liberate New Guinea from the Japanese, the largest and most complicated operations in their history.

*Australia 1943* explores the high point of Australia’s influence on operations and strategy in the Southwest Pacific, a campaign that has been traditionally overshadowed by the drama of Kokoda. It investigates critical operations from January 1943 to April 1944, including Salamaua, Lae–Nadzab, Finschhafen, Shaggy Ridge, the Markham Valley and the Huon Peninsula. This was a crucial period in the development of Australia’s military capabilities during the Pacific War in the areas of strategy, tactics, doctrine, logistics, equipment and techniques.

*Australia 1943* is the first detailed single-volume study of Australia’s military operations in the Pacific during 1943 – Australia’s ‘finest hour’ in the Second World War.

**Peter J. Dean** is the Director of Studies at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, the Australian National University and a Senior Lecturer at the Australian Command and Staff College. He is the editor of *Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War* (2012), the author of *The Architect of Victory: The Military Career of Lieutenant-General Sir Frank Horton Berryman* (2011), a contributing editor to the Second World War journal *Global War Studies* and a managing editor for the journal *Security Challenges*. 
Also published by Cambridge University Press

Peter J. Dean (ed.), Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War
For Flynn
Foreword

Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson
Director, Australian War Memorial

Although the shadows of war had receded somewhat compared to those of the year before, there were still dark days ahead for Australia in 1943. It was the year in which Australia and its key ally, the United States, moved from the gripping struggle to defend the Southwest Pacific to the offensive.

My family, like many of the period, had its members serving in the various theatres of the war. My grandfather, Arthur Beercroft, had left home in 1941 serving in New Guinea and the Pacific Islands as a pilot officer in the airfield defence guards, and would not return home until 1945. One of his brothers, having been captured at Tobruk, was imprisoned in Italy for four years before escaping. Another brother had returned from the barren-desert carnage at Tobruk to fight in the jungles of Milne Bay and on the coast of New Guinea. The youngest brother had in 1943, at the age of just sixteen, convinced his mother to sign enlistment papers allowing him to join the Royal Australian Navy to serve on HMAS Hobart in New Guinea and beyond. Two of his sisters joined the Women’s Auxiliary in Launceston, giving their all until the war’s end. My family’s experience symbolises just one small part of how every facet of Australian life, after the nation’s ill preparedness for war, was now deeply immersed in it – overseas, on the borders and at home.

In reading through Australia 1943, no one should forget the context in which Australia’s war in the Southwest Pacific occurred. The Sino-Japanese conflict on mainland China, the struggle in Burma, the Allied victory in North Africa, the invasion of Sicily, the Italian campaign,
the toll taken on the Eastern Front – especially at Kursk – the heroic battle for the Atlantic and the dreadful toll exacted by the bomber offensive over Europe were but some of the theatres of the war of critical importance to its outcome. A number of these were also ones in which Australians fought and died.

Closer to home, Rabaul had to be isolated before further advances could be made through the Southwest and Central Pacific towards the Philippines and the Japanese home islands. Sadly, too little thought has been given to the 1943 offensive in New Guinea. This collection of essays will do much to redress this.

The 1943 campaigns in New Guinea were slogged out against a tough opponent in some of the most oppressive and harsh conditions experienced anywhere during the Second World War. But it was these hard-fought, and even harder earned, victories that paved the way for the better known Allied successes in the Pacific in 1944 and for the war’s end. Without 1943, there would have been no Marianas, Palau, the Philippines, Iwo Jima, Okinawa or Borneo.

Few Australians appreciate that the 1943 campaigns in New Guinea were the largest military operations ever conducted by Australian forces. These were larger than the operations on the Western Front in 1918, which had involved five Australian divisions. These divisions included both volunteers of the Australian Imperial Force and conscripts of the militia. Most of the Royal Australian Navy was deployed here as was a great part of the Royal Australian Air Force. None of us should forget that these campaigns liberated an Australian mandated territory from an invading foe.

In the year from March 1943, some 1200 Australians lost their lives on the battlefields of this theatre. The Japanese lost 35 000. That Australian casualties remained so relatively low says something of the leadership, professionalism and conduct of Australia’s forces during the campaign. Australians had to master first the brutal terrain and then jungle warfare itself. Whereas the campaigns of 1941 and the ‘turning points’ of 1942, such as the battle of the Coral Sea and Kokoda, are well remembered in Australia, the tough struggles against an enemy far from defeated in 1943 receive much less attention.

Although born of the battle of the Coral Sea in 1942, it was the New Guinea campaigns of 1943 that really forged what would become the bedrock of the Australia–US Alliance formalised in 1951. Not a day should go by in Australia without reflection on the extent of American
sacrifice in the Pacific from 1942 until the end of the war. That we do so – publicly or privately – has informed much Australian defence and foreign policy since.

As 2013 marks the 70th anniversary of the 1943 campaigns in New Guinea, it is important we pause to reflect on their significance to Australia and our freedoms. Although the 1942 battles were turning points in the war, it is often forgotten that they were ones in which an enemy advance had been stopped. The first tentative steps to victory had to be taken in 1943.

After 1942, the Allies had to fight a series of tough campaigns – in Europe and the Pacific – against a determined enemy as yet far from defeated. After the victory at El Alamein, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill reminded an increasingly confident public that this was not the end. With great sobriety he said it was, ‘not even the beginning of the end’. But it was, he said ‘perhaps, the end of the beginning’.

It was also true for the Australian and American victories that had turned the tide in the Southwest Pacific by the beginning of 1943. Following the gains hard won at Midway, Guadalcanal, Kokoda, Milne Bay and the beachhead battles of Buna, Gona and Sanananda, the Japanese fortress at Rabaul had to be isolated. It was to this extraordinarily difficult task that in 1943 the nation’s military attention turned.

At home, a different kind of battle re-emerged – conscription. Prime Minister John Curtin who had fought so strongly against conscription during the First World War in the deeply polarising debates at the time, now found himself its reluctant but necessary advocate. But this was a different war and, clearly, Australia’s vital interests were at stake.

The north of the continent had been bombed and by 1943 more than 20 000 Australians were prisoners of war. The government amended the Defence Act to extend the definition of areas to which conscripted servicemen could be sent to include all areas south of the Equator in Southeast Asia. All major war zones in the Pacific theatre were included.

In February, the Sydney Morning Herald’s Gavin Long was appointed on the recommendation of Charles Bean as the General Editor of the projected official history of the Second World War. It would take his oversight, 14 authors and over 25 years for it to be completed.

In the same year the ANZAC Day Dawn Service was held at the Australian War Memorial for the first time. This reflected in part the improved nature of Australia’s precarious war position. In 1942, Curtin had considered the state of war to be such that only a very subdued service
could be conducted. But in 1943, Their Excellencies the Governor-General Lord Gowrie and Lady Gowrie attended an afternoon service.

In October 1943, the Memorial’s art committee commissioned Nora Heysen as the first female war artist. Heysen was the only female artist allowed to work in operational areas, and travelled to New Guinea in April 1944. Also of an artistic nature, the great Damien Parer’s film *Kokoda Front Line!* was awarded an Oscar in 1943.

On 9 November, the Carley lifeboat from HMAS *Sydney* (II) went on display in the Memorial to mark the second anniversary of the cruiser’s loss on 19 November 1941, sunk by the German raider *Kormoran*. It was, until the wreck of the *Kormoran* was discovered in 2008, one of the few tangible links to the cruiser and one of the great mysteries of the war.

Politically, 1943 was dominated by the ‘equality of sacrifice’ debate. Australians were challenged to ask themselves who was really suffering in the fight to win the war. Further to this, the nation had to shake off the view that the state governments were the predominant form of governance. The referendum approving the transfer of taxation powers from the states to the Commonwealth laid the foundation for Australia’s modern fiscal system and through it Australia came to true nationhood. This would be Curtin’s lasting legacy beyond his wartime leadership. His election victory in August 1943 was crushing, achieving 58 per cent of the two-party-preferred vote and winning all Senate seats contested.

A 29-year-old Australian soldier in north Queensland, already a seasoned veteran, wrote home to his sister in 1943 on the eve of his embarkation for New Guinea. Under no illusion as to his possible fate he noted, ‘I do hope I get through our next action okay. Life is so good and sweet when one has such a grand wife as Beryl, don’t think I am frightened to die, it is not that, but the thought of leaving behind such glorious things’. This soldier was Tom ‘Diver’ Derrick. ‘Beryl’ was his one true love whom he had married before the outbreak of the war.

At Sattelberg, on the heights overlooking Finschhafen, New Guinea, in November 1943, Derrick was awarded a Victoria Cross. He singlehandedly captured a Japanese machine-gun post with extraordinary bravery. He would survive and return home to see Beryl. But for the last time. In 1945, just three months before the war’s end, he would die fighting on Tarakan just off the coast of Borneo.

Unlike the Derrick family the Beercrofts were incredibly fortunate that all of our family returned from the war. But they, like Australia, were changed by it in ways that are still difficult to fully understand and that inform who we are today.
Beyond 1788, 1942 was arguably the most important year in our nation’s history. But the iconic nature of that year and the bloody, courageous sacrifices that made it so would not have counted for much if not for the hard, selfless work at home and at war in 1943.
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Acknowledgements

The initiative for this book came from the project Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War. The campaign for the reduction of Rabaul in 1943, in particular the Australian operations in New Guinea, has, for a long time, been my favourite campaign in Australian military history. The New Guinea operations were the largest ever by Australia’s Military Forces yet they remain relatively unknown outside of the small circle of veterans, military historians and Pacific War enthusiasts. They warrant and deserve a broader audience. As such I have always planned on producing a book on Australia’s role in this campaign during 1943. As luck would have it, the success of Australia 1942 in combination with the encouragement of my colleagues at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (the Australian National University) and the staff at Cambridge University Press (CUP), plus the 70th anniversary, has meant that I have been able to fulfil this ambition. It is a success that in every respect is equally due to my co-authors.

A book of this kind always depends on the quality of the historians who author the chapters. Those writing in these pages, with their dedication to the field, their extensive knowledge of 1943 and their professionalism has made this book what it is. They have been a pleasure to work with. While this book is very much focused on Australia I felt it was imperative that the strategy, operations and perspectives of the two major powers involved, Japan and the United States, were well represented. As such, in particular I want to thank the two fine scholars from these countries, Hiroyuki Shindo and Kevin Holzimmer, for having provided chapters for the book.

In Australia there is no finer military historian than Professor David Horner, one of the world’s foremost authorities on the Pacific War. He continues to mentor me in my career and I remain forever in his debt for the opportunities and guidance he provides to me.
In particular I also wish to thank the Australian War Memorial (AWM) for its support. Not only has its director, Dr Brendan Nelson, provided the foreword to the book, but two of its historians, Karl James and Lachlan Grant, have also provided outstanding chapters. In addition the AWM has supported the reproduction of photographs and many more staff have also contributed both directly and indirectly to the book’s production.

All of the authors gathered here represent some of the best and brightest in Australian military history and I whole-heartedly thank them for their contributions. Their generosity of time, effort and energy has been amazing.

The production of this text would not have been possible without the support of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (SDSC). A conversation with the Head of SDSC, Dr Brendan Taylor, provided the impetus for this book and thereafter he has been exceptionally supportive of this project. This is the second book in two years with CUP that Brendan and SDSC have supported and the Centre’s backing has been of vital importance to both publications. The ANU cartography team has been wonderful in their support for the production of the maps for this book and I am greatly in debt to the hard work of Kay Dancey and, in particular, Jennifer Sheehan. I would also like to offer thanks to the team at CUP, in particular Isabella Mead, Jessica Pearce, Jodie Fitzsimmons and Lily Keil, who have shown great enthusiasm and support for this work.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADF</td>
<td>Australian Defence Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adm</td>
<td>Admiral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv LHQ</td>
<td>Advanced Headquarters Allied Land Forces; headed by Blamey</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIF</td>
<td>Australian Imperial Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMF</td>
<td>Australian Military Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANGAU</td>
<td>Australian New Guinea Administration Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APD</td>
<td>high-speed amphibious transport (ex-destroyer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWM</td>
<td>Australian War Memorial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bde</td>
<td>Brigade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bn</td>
<td>Battalion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig</td>
<td>Brigadier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-in-C</td>
<td>Commander-in-Chief</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Commanding Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coy</td>
<td>Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCGS</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of the General Staff (Australian Army)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Div</td>
<td>Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSO</td>
<td>Distinguished Service Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCB</td>
<td>Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHQ</td>
<td>General Headquarters, SWPA (MacArthur’s HQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOC</td>
<td>General Officer Commanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQ</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAAF</td>
<td>Japanese Army Air Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>JCS</td>
<td>Joint Chiefs of Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCI</td>
<td>Landing Craft, Infantry</td>
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<td>LCT</td>
<td>Landing Craft, Tank</td>
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<td>Landing Ship, Infantry</td>
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<tr>
<td>LST</td>
<td>Landing Ship, Tank</td>
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<tr>
<td>NARA</td>
<td>US National Archives and Records Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCO</td>
<td>Non-Commissioned Officer</td>
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</table>
ABBREVIATIONS

NGF  New Guinea Force (Corps, later Army level command based at Port Moresby)
OCHM Office of the Chief of Military History (US Army)
PIB  Papuan Infantry Battalion
PIR  Parachute Infantry Regiment (US Army)
PNG  Papua New Guinea
RAA  Royal Australian Artillery
RAAF Royal Australian Air Force
RAN  Royal Australian Navy
Regt Regiment
SOPAC South Pacific Area Command (US Navy Command under Adm Halsey)
SWPA Southwest Pacific Area
TPS  Test Pilot School
USAAF United States Army Air Forces
USN United States Navy
US United States
## Codenames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codename</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Binocular</td>
<td>Codename for Lae, New Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dexterity</td>
<td>Codename for US operations in New Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminish</td>
<td>Codename for Finschhafen, New Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doublet</td>
<td>Codename for Morobe/Salamaua, New Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchequer</td>
<td>Codename for Markham Valley, New Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphorus</td>
<td>Codename for Australian Task Force for New Guinea operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postern</td>
<td>Codename for Lae and the operation for its capture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Chronology

*Major Campaigns, South and Southwest Pacific Areas, 1942–44*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Papuan Campaign</td>
<td>23 July 1942 – 23 January 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadalcanal Campaign</td>
<td>7 August 1942 – 21 February 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Guinea Campaign</td>
<td>24 January 1943 – 24 April 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Solomons Campaign</td>
<td>22 February 1943 – 21 November 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bismarcks Campaign</td>
<td>15 December 1943 – 27 November 1944</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Major Events 1943–44**

**Southwest Pacific Area (MacArthur)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese repulsed at Wau</td>
<td>30 January 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombard Sea battle</td>
<td>2–4 March 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlark and Kiriwina Is. occupied</td>
<td>22–30 June 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nassau Bay Landings</td>
<td>29–30 June 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlark and Kiriwina Is. occupied</td>
<td>22–30 June 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Air Force Raids on Wewak</td>
<td>17–18 August 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphibious Landing at Lae</td>
<td>4 September 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadzab Parachute Landing</td>
<td>5 September 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salamau Captured</td>
<td>11 September 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lae Captured</td>
<td>16 September 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaiapit Captured</td>
<td>19–20 September 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finschhafen Landing</td>
<td>22 September 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumpu Occupied</td>
<td>5 October 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sattelberg Captured</td>
<td>25 November 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arawe Landing</td>
<td>15 December 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Gloucester Landings</td>
<td>25 December 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sador Landing</td>
<td>2 January 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sio Captured</td>
<td>16 January 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manus Island Landing</td>
<td>15 March 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollandia and Aitape Landings</td>
<td>22 April 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madang Captured</td>
<td>24 April 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleneshafen Occupied</td>
<td>26 April 1944</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**South Pacific Area (Halsey)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woodlark and Kiriwina Is. occupied</td>
<td>22–30 June 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Georgia Group Landings</td>
<td>30 June 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munda, New Georgia captured</td>
<td>5 August 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vella Lavella Landing</td>
<td>15 August 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naval battle off Vella Lavella</td>
<td>6–7 October 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury Island Landing</td>
<td>27 October 1943</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bougainville Landing</td>
<td>1 November 1943</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naval Battle of Empress Augusta Bay</td>
<td>1–2 November 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naval Battle of Bougainville</td>
<td>25 November 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Island Landing</td>
<td>15 February 1944</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MILITARY SYMBOLS ON MAPS

FUNCTION SYMBOLS

- headquarters
- infantry
- armour
- anti-tank artillery
- artillery
- defensive position

STRENGTH INDICATORS

- section
- platoon/troop
- company/squadron
- battalion
- regiment
- brigade
- division
- corps
- reinforced
- sub-unit(s) detached

xxx