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## AUSTRALIA 1944–45 VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC

The years 1944 and 1945 were pivotal in the development of Australia's approach to strategy during the Second World War and beyond. While the main battlefield of the Pacific War had moved further north, Australian air, land and sea forces continued to make a significant contribution to the Allied campaign and towards achieving Australia's strategic interests and objectives. In New Guinea, Australian operations secured territories and released men from service, while in Borneo a highly successful campaign was clouded by uncertain motives and questionable strategy.

*Australia 1944–45: Victory in the Pacific* examines this complex and fascinating period, which has been largely under-represented in Australian military history. Peter Dean leads a team of internationally regarded military historians in assessing Australian, Allied and Japanese strategies, the conduct of the campaigns in the Southwest Pacific Area and Australia's significant role in achieving victory.

Thoroughly researched and generously illustrated, *Australia 1944–45* is the compelling final instalment in Peter Dean's Pacific War series.

**Peter J. Dean** is an Associate Dean in the College of Asia-Pacific and a Senior Fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, at the Australian National University. He is a member of the editorial board of the *Australian Army Journal* and the journal *Global War Studies* and a Managing Editor of the journal *Security Challenges*.

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AUSTRALIA  
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VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC

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*For Jessica*

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## FOREWORD

The year 2015 is a momentous one for remembering Australia's military history. Few Australian citizens would be unaware of the 100th anniversary of the landings at Gallipoli. This milestone represents one of the most significant commemorations to take place in Australia's history. One of the reasons that this anniversary is so significant is that it honours the experience of the members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps who landed at Gallipoli over 100 years ago. The Anzac Centenary is a time to 'reflect upon the service and sacrifice of *all* those who have worn our nation's uniform – past and present', and as Chairman of the Anzac Centenary Advisory Board I am committed to ensuring all Australians gain an understanding of 'our military history and its enduring impacts on the Australia of today'.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the centenary of the landing at Gallipoli, another significant day of remembrance for Australia in 2015 is 15 August. On this date we will commemorate the 70th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific (VP) Day. This date honours Japan's acceptance of the Allied demand for unconditional surrender, and for our country it meant that the Second World War was finally over. It was a day when the Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, noted that Australians should 'remember those whose lives were given [so] that we may enjoy this glorious moment and may look forward to a peace which they have won for us'.<sup>2</sup> The announcement was met with scenes of jubilation, and crowds of Australians spontaneously gathered in cities and towns to celebrate.

The Second World War would have a lasting effect on generations of people around the globe. I was born in the immediate aftermath of the war in Scotland and grew up as part of the generation that lived with its legacy and with immediate family who were directly affected by the experience of war. My family, like so many across the Commonwealth and around the globe, had its members serving in the various theatres of the war.

My father served in the Royal Air Force and was shot down at Handzame in West Flanders, Belgium, on 20 September 1943, spending the rest of the war as a prisoner of war. While Belgium is a long way from the ravages of the Pacific War, his time as a prisoner of war was part of an

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experience shared by thousands of other British, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian and other Commonwealth air crew that remind us of the truly global nature of this conflict. On the very day that he was shot down, Australia's military forces were in action around the globe; thousands of air crew were undertaking missions in the skies over Europe and New Guinea, while the 7th and 9th Australian Divisions consolidated their position after taking the strategically important town of Lae.

This was a time when Australia's military contribution had shifted firmly to the Pacific theatre. In the previous year war had come to our doorstep, and it changed our nation forever. From this period to the end of the Pacific War it would be a long, difficult and at times tortuous road to victory. In reading through *Australia 1944–45: Victory in the Pacific*, what is striking is the magnitude of Australia's war effort at this time and the lasting impact it has had on this great nation. By 1944 Australia had already been at war for five years, and unlike the First World War the war in the Pacific demanded a 'total' war effort: conflict had come to the homeland. This war changed Australia in innumerable ways, including major structural changes to the economy, as well as profound changes to society, Australian culture and our nation's engagement with the region.

This period and this book are also about war fighting. While Australia's military effort would be overtaken in size and scope by our larger Allied partner, the United States, the final year of the war would see some of the largest operations that the Australian military has ever undertaken. While many of these battles and campaigns remain controversial, the commitment of Australia's service men and women, their tactical prowess and their fortitude remains undiminished.

During the period of 1944–45, the pressures, stresses and strains of war were evident at every level of command and organisation. With 41 years' of service in the Australian Defence Forces, having held command and leadership positions and having served in Indonesia, Singapore, Papua New Guinea and across the region, I have a deep sense of respect and empathy for the experiences that the personnel of Australia's Army, Navy and Air Force endured in the lead up to Victory.

From a military perspective what stands out is the sheer scale and complexity of operations in which the Australians were involved. As Professor David Horner notes in chapter 1, in July 1945 the Australian Army had six infantry divisions in action at the one time, more than any other month of the war. For the Royal Australian Air Force the war in the Pacific was the first time that integrated formations of the Air Force had seen service; it would also organise, deploy and operate its own Tactical Air Force during 1944–45.<sup>3</sup> For the Royal Australian Navy this was the pinnacle of its war effort. It had been there from the very beginning of the war; from 'the dark days in the Mediterranean, at Dakar, in the Middle



East ... [through] the Indian Ocean, the ABDA Area, the South-West Pacific, the Mediterranean again, on to the shores of Japan up to the last day of the war'. The Navy was continually on operations side by side with its British and American 'companions, in the exercise of that sea power which decided the issue of the conflict'.<sup>4</sup>

The 'sea power' that Herman Gill refers to was above all achieved through the exercises of combined, joint and coalition operations at the very cutting edge of technology and doctrine in a continuous cycle of learning and adaptation. For Australia 1945 represents the high point of tactical and operational proficiency of Australia's military forces in the Second World War. This period also represents a time when our strategic leaders carved out particular 'Australian' objectives, in response to the recognition of a set of unique Australian strategic interests, separate from those of the British Empire and our other coalition partners.

During the war in the Pacific, 1942 saw most of the major turning points, including the halting of the Japanese advance, the Allied seizure of the initiative and the movement of the Allied forces over to an offensive posture. The first tentative steps to victory were to be taken in 1943, and in 1944–45 the war in the Pacific came to its climatic conclusion. The year 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the completion of the campaigns in New Guinea, Bougainville, Borneo and the Philippines.

More Australians saw service in the Second World War than in any other war Australia has fought. It is important that we take the opportunity of this Centenary year to honour the service and sacrifice of all those who have worn our nation's uniform, including the 39,000 who made the supreme sacrifice during the Second World War, the vast majority fighting the Japanese. In this significant commemoration it is important that Australians pause to reflect on the significance of the role that Australia's men and women played in the Pacific War to protect our nation and our freedoms.

Lest we forget.

**Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston**  
**AK, AC, AFC (Ret'd)**

*Chair of the Anzac Centenary Advisory Board*

### Notes

- 1 Message from the Chair of the Anzac Centenary Advisory Board Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, AC, AFC (Ret'd), 'Anzac Centenary Advisory Board', [www.anzaccentenary.gov.au/anzac\\_centenary/advisory\\_board.htm](http://www.anzaccentenary.gov.au/anzac_centenary/advisory_board.htm).
- 2 Ben Chifley, address to the nation, 15 August 1945.

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- 3 George Odgers, *Air War against Japan 1943–1945*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1957, p. 499.
- 4 G. Herman Gill, *Royal Australian Navy, 1942–1945*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1968, p. 705.

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## XX CONTRIBUTORS

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**Garth Pratten** is a Lecturer in the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre. He has had a varied career having worked for the Australian Army’s Training Command, the Australian War Memorial and the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Dr Pratten was a member of the research staff for the *Official History of Australia’s Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts* and is currently contributing to the *Official History of Australian Peackeping and Post-Cold War Operations*. In 2010, while working for the British Ministry of Defence, Dr Pratten was deployed to Afghanistan as part of the team compiling the war diary for the International Security Assistance Force’s Regional Command South. He is the author of *Australian Battalion Commanders in the Second World War*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2010.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the third and final book in a rather accidental trilogy on Australia in the Pacific War. The first book in the series *Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War* (2012) developed out of a conference of a similar name run by Marcus Fielding and Andrew Kilsby of Military History and Heritage Victoria in mid-2011. In an effort to honour the excellent work done in the academic papers presented to this conference I volunteered to put them together as a book. The wonderful success that this book received both commercially and critically, as well as my personal interest in the major campaign that followed led to *Australia 1943: The Liberation of New Guinea* (2013). Soon after the completion of the manuscript for that book, Cambridge University Press enquired about *Australia 1944*, and in order to round out a series we decided that, due to the nature of Australia's war effort after 1943, a third book on 1944–45 would do nicely. While this book would naturally be a little larger, covering a few more chapters, like the previous other two it does not intend to be a comprehensive coverage of the period 1944–45. The extra room did, however, allow me to join the hands of a few sections covered in *Australia 1942* and add in a few more thematic chapters to round out some areas of focus in all three books.

As with the previous books the work here is a combined effort of a large group of historians. Again they have been a fine group to work with and in particular I want to acknowledge David Horner, Karl James, Ian Pfenningwerth, Mark Johnston and Hiroyuki Shindo who have contributed chapters to all three books. Kevin Holzimmer, Garth Pratten and Lachlan Grant have delivered for a second time in this volume, with Garth generously completing two chapters. I am also very grateful to the other contributors to this volume who all generously gave their time, effort, energy and expertise. On a personal note I decided to co-write two of the chapters in this book with Kevin Holzimmer and Rhys Crawley, both of whom were wonderfully easy to work with and definitely increased the quality of my contribution.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ABG	Australian Beach Group
Adm	Admiral
Adv LHQ	Advanced Headquarters Allied Land Forces
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AITM	Army in India Training Memoranda
AMF	Australian Military Forces
ARP	Air raid precautions
ASIS	Australian Secret Intelligence Service
ATC	Amphibious Training Command
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BBCAU	British Borneo Civil Affairs Unit
Bde	Brigade
Bn	Battalion
Brig	Brigadier
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CO	Commanding officer
COIC	Combined Operations Intelligence Centre
CORONET	Code name for planned allied invasion of Honshu, Japan
CoS	Chief of Staff
COS	Combined Operations Section
Coy	Company
DCGS	Deputy Chief of the General Staff (Australian Army)
Div	Division
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence (Australian Army)
ESB	Engineering Special (Amphibious) Brigade
FELO	Far Eastern Liaison Office
FFR	Frontier Force Regiment
Forland	Forward Echelon of Blamey's Advance LHQ based at GHQ
FRUMEL	Fleet Radio Unit, Melbourne
FRUPAC	Fleet Radio Unit, Pacific (Station HYPO)











Fwd	Forward
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding (Australian Division)
GOC-in-C	General Officer-in-Command (Australian Corps or Army)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IGB	Independent Garrison Battalion (Imperial Japanese Army)
IMB	Independent Mixed Brigade (Imperial Japanese Army)
IMR	Independent Mixed Regiment (Imperial Japanese Army)
JOOTS	Joint Overseas Operational Training School
MLG	Military Landing Group
MTP	Military Training Pamphlet
NARA	US National Archives and Records Administration
NGF	New Guinea Force (Corps, later Army level command based at Port Moresby)
NoA	North-of-Australia ( <i>Gō-hoku</i> )
OLYMPIC	Code name for planned Allied invasion of Kyushu, Japan
RAA	Royal Australian Artillery
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RANVR	Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve
RENO	GHQ SWPA Plan for the advance to the Philippines
SEA	Southern Expeditionary Army (Imperial Japanese Army)
SOA	Special Operations Australia
SOPAC	South Pacific Area (US Navy Command under Adm Halsey)
SRD	Services Reconnaissance Department
SWPA	Southwest Pacific Area
TAF	Tactical Air Force
US	United States
USASOS	US Army Services of Supply
VP	Victory in the Pacific

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## MILITARY SYMBOLS ON MAPS

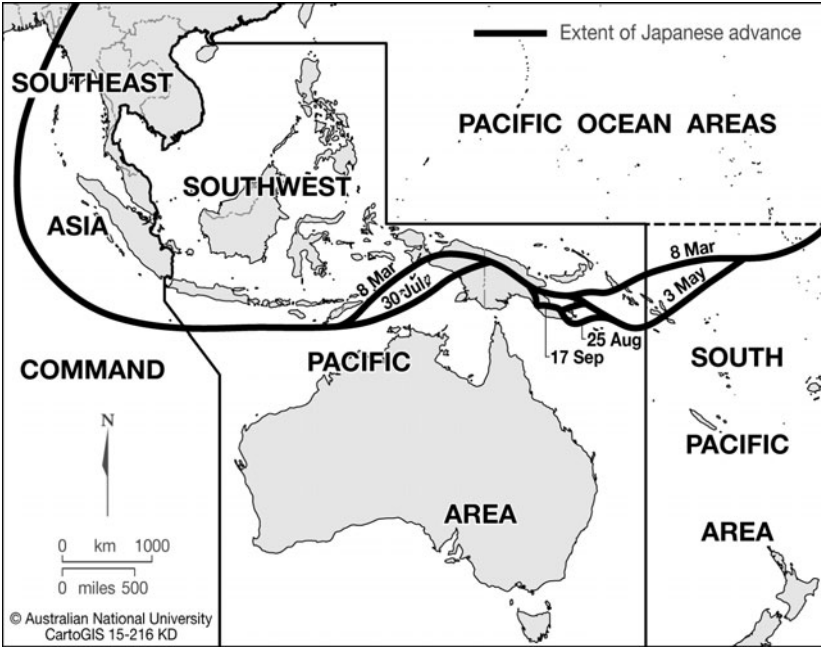
### FUNCTION SYMBOLS

	headquarters
	infantry
	armour
	anti-tank artillery
	artillery
	defensive position
	Japanese Naval Infantry
	Airfield

### STRENGTH INDICATORS

.	section
...	platoon/troop
	company/squadron
	battalion
	regiment
x	brigade
xx	division
xxx	corps
(+)	reinforced
(-)	Sub-unit(s) detached

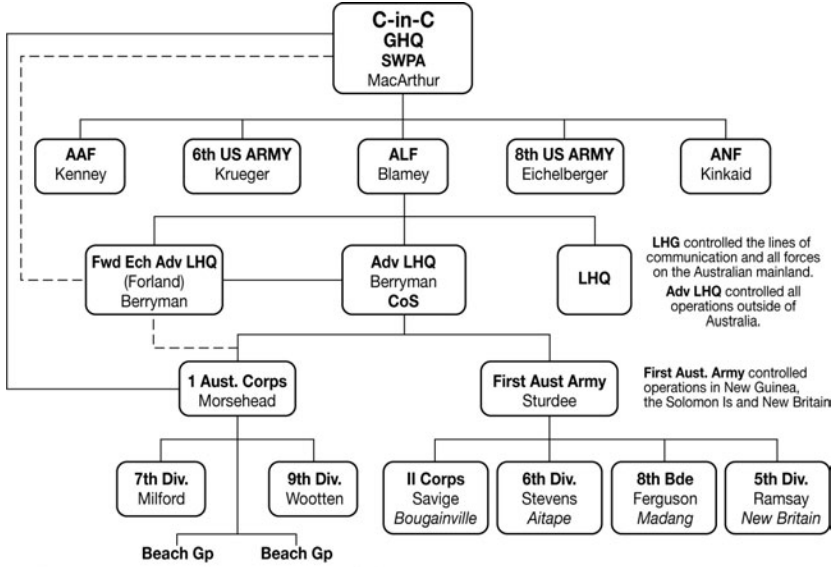
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Map I: Southwest Pacific Area



Map 2: Hanoi to Aitape



From March 1945 1 Aust. Corps operated under GHQ with Adv LHQ to undertake administrative arrangements and Fwd Ech Adv LHQ to liaise with GHQ on Operational matters.

Chart I: Command diagram