

CHAPTER ONE

War to Reconstruction: A National and Regional Perspective

During World War Two when Japan united with the Axis powers of Germany and Italy it was stated in almost all chapters of the Australian War Book that the cooperation or assistance of all States was required in one way or another. Queensland, the State most likely to suffer invasion because of its geographical location, was very averse to handing over its powers to the Federal government. Saunders draws attention to the initiation of a State Transport Bill in 1938 by Premier William Forgan Smith in which he asked for extended powers to deal with disasters such as floods, fires and cyclones.¹ He contended that:

[The bill] also gives that authority necessary with regard to making provision for defence...It is obviously necessary in a condition of grave national emergency which we all hope will never arise - to have power, not only to mobilise all our railways systems but also all our road transports...Of course, that power is contained in the Constitution of Queensland itself. The usual method adopted is for the Premier of the day to take such action as he thinks necessary to deal with any situation, and his actions are validated afterwards if it is required...I repeat that at a time when the nation's interests are involved, personal interests must always be swept aside.²

Queensland and Victoria were the only two States to pass their own emergency powers legislation. In Queensland this legislation gave the government authority, albeit at the cost of civil liberties such as increased police powers and conscription,

¹ K. Saunders, *War on the Homefront*, St. Lucia, QUP, 1993, p.16.

² Premier William Forgan Smith as cited in K. Saunders, *ibid.*

which operated in much the same way as military regulations weld an army into a unified whole, in what Smart calls a macroscopic technique.³ It was as such a power unit that Forgan Smith envisaged State power. From a limited involvement in the war in Europe, to invasion threat by Japan, immigrants, whether they were naturalised Australian subjects or not, Jehovah's Witnesses, Communists and others were investigated and sometimes interned.⁴

Women were not immune from this persecution. After the proclamation in September 1942 of the national security regulations (venereal diseases and contraceptives), if there were "reasonable grounds" to suspect a woman was infected with a sexually transmitted disease, each State's Chief Health Officer had the power to compel her to undergo a medical examination. In Queensland, if she had such a disease, a woman from the general community as well as a prostitute was incarcerated in the "lock hospital".⁵ However, state control of women in Queensland was nothing new. Under The Aborigines and Torres Straits, Islanders Act of 1897, Queensland control over the movement of Aboriginal women, forced them to seek work as domestics and nursemaids at Station homesteads during the 1920s and 1930s, thus preventing them from seeking work in other occupations.⁶ This continued, as has been testified by a woman of Pacific Islander descent, during the 1940s and 1950s.⁷

³ B. Smart, *Foucault, Marxism and Critique*, London, Routledge, 1983, p. 111.

⁴ K. Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁵ H. Taylor, (b), "The policing of morals: State intervention into public health", K. Saunders, 1993, *op. cit.*, pp.89.

⁶ G. Reekie, *On the Edge*, St. Lucia, UQP, 1994, p.13.

⁷ Interview conducted by G. Johansen, with N.D., at Rockhampton on 22 April, 1998. As noted by K. Saunders, "Pacific Islander women in Queensland: 1865-1907" M. Bevale, et. al., (Eds.), *Worth Her Salt*, Hale and Iremonger, 1982, p.17, another contribution to Queensland difference was that Pacific Islander labour was brought here to work on the sugar cane plantations. It has been estimated that some 62,475 Pacific Islanders arrived in Queensland 1863-1904 of which women constituted 6.5 per cent.

As the war progressed, the national shortage of manpower constituted a catalyst for change in perceptions of women's social roles in Australia. All classes of society, irrespective of gender, were called on to contribute to the war effort, and women's roles were given some prominence in both popular and academic publications. Despite this, Queensland historiography with a few notable exceptions, has paid scant attention to the changes which have taken place in women's social roles in this State. As stated the thesis aims to examine events through which these changes occurred, and to explore their impact on the social mores of the period in the key areas of gender, class and region, as stated in the introduction.

To achieve this aim it is essential to present an overview of a number of issues on a national level to establish the relationship between Australia as a whole, and the state of Queensland. Firstly the thesis maintains that an understanding of Queensland difference as put forward in arguments by leading historians is an important part of fully comprehending the roles of women in this State. Additionally, it asserts that as almost all existing historiography about women in Queensland concentrates on the roles of women in the suburbs of Brisbane, for the purpose of the thesis it is also necessary to understand how events during World War Two impacted on women in regional Queensland. In the light of Queensland difference this chapter also provides an overview of the conditions governing the employment of women in paid work in regional Queensland, and of the different ways in which manpower regulations and the struggle for equal pay affected them. It also considers the effects of war on women's unpaid voluntary work and on their roles in the home.

One of the more prominent historians who has contributed to the academic historiography of Queensland during the Second World War is Kay Saunders.⁸ She explores the effects of Queensland's state emergency legislation particularly with regard to the impact of state control on women. Another historian, Helen Taylor, in a valuable contribution to the historiography considers the strategic situation of Queensland during the war years.⁹ She effectively demonstrates the different nature of women's participation in the war effort in this State due to its proximity to the war zone. Additionally, the thesis endorses Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton's argument, that the participation of women in work connected to the war effort led to the feminist struggle for women's rights to paid work, adequate education, social security and other women's issues."

In the light of historiographical discourses concerning Queensland difference, it is argued by Chilla Bulbeck that social difference for women in regional Queensland was to a large extent the result of the policy of decentralisation put forward by Colin Clark, an influential public servant between 1938 - 1952. In his positions as Director of the Bureau of Industry and Financial Adviser to the Treasury, he refused to approve government support in the form of subsidies or tariffs to secondary industry." This effectively resulted in regional Queensland remaining tied to primary industry. A regional study of Capricornia points to its slow growth, as shown by the

⁸ K. Saunders, op. cit., pp.9-32.

⁹ H. Taylor, (a), "Total war is women's war...all can serve': War mobilisation - a matter of geography", *Queensland Geography Journal*, Vol. 13, 4th Series, 1988, pp.71-88.

¹⁰ K. Saunders and G. Bolton. "Girdled for war: Women's mobilisations in World War Two" K. Saunders and R. Evans, (Eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia*, Marrickville, Harcourt Brace and Company, 1992, pp. 376-395.

¹¹ C. Bulbeck, "Colin Clark and the greening of Queensland: the influence of a senior public servant on Queensland economic development 1938-1953", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 33, 1987, pp.7-18.

following figures of the value of recorded production for 1963-64 in (millions of pounds), as compared with Queensland regions to the North and South.¹² (Table 1.1)

Table 1.1 Value of Recorded Production 1963/1964 in South, Central and Northern Queensland.

Industry	Capricornia	South East Queensland	Northern Queensland
Total Primary	56.2	170.3	136.7
Manufacturing	10.0	162.9	47.5
Total Primary and Manufacturing	66.1	333.2	184.1

Source: D.Crowley (Ed.), *Current Affairs Bulletin* Sydney, UNSW, Vol.37, No. 10, 4 April, 1966, p.155.!

Moreover, it is maintained by Bulbeck and others that the key factor in the development of Queensland was the role played by Colin Clark as Director of the Bureau of Industry from 1938 to 1952, and as State Statistician and financial adviser to the Treasury from 1946 to 1952. She states, that while realising the disadvantages of an economy based solely on primary industry, he refused to countenance the establishment of industries which would need the support of government by subsidies or tariffs.’: As Fitzgerald states, distance and communication difficulties thus isolated farmers from each other, and from the main centre of agricultural scientific development, with the result that Labor government initiated legislation of the 1920s led to an even greater concentration on rural industry.¹⁴

Queensland Difference

Exploration of “Queensland difference” accounts for ways in which state control by successive State governments affected the economy and consequently social structures, that distinguish it from other Australian States. This difference also points to the factors that explain reasons why reactions to events and changes in social attitudes in

¹² D. Crowley and J. Rorke (Eds.), *Current Affairs Bulletin*, Vol.37, No.10, 4 April, 1966,

p.155.

¹³ C.Bulbeck, op. cit., pp. 7-18.

the city of Brisbane may vary from their effects in provincial towns and rural centres. As stated by Reekie, “Queensland has been perceived to be different from the other Australian states within both popular consciousness and academic inquiry”.¹⁵ She goes on to point out that historian Alan Morrison noted a belief by Queenslanders in Queensland difference which demanded that decisions affecting this State should only be taken by Queenslanders themselves. Humphrey McQueen argues that:

The differences which exist are in population distribution, educational attainments and work-force participation, all of which are anchored in the primary industry bias of Queensland’s political economy.¹⁶

The explanation for Queensland difference put forward by Charlton is regionalism, which had its beginnings prior to Federation, when there was a strong argument put forward for the separation of Queensland into three separate states.¹⁷ In agreement with Anthony Trollope he maintains, with some justification, that the Queensland rail system which linked inland areas to coastal ports, rather than linking the coastal areas to Brisbane, meant that economic life did not centre in the capital.¹⁸ He also stated that Trollope noted there was rivalry between Rockhampton and Brisbane in the 1870s, and stated that Rockhampton “has been seized with ambition to become a capital”.¹⁹

Queensland difference was exemplified in the move to sustain State power at a conference of Commonwealth and State ministers on defence and development in March 1939, when Ned Hanlon, then Queensland’s secretary of Health and Home

¹⁴ R. Fitzgerald, *From 1915 to the Early 1980s: A History of Queensland*, 1984, St. Lucia, UQP, p. 173-183.

¹⁵ G. Reekie, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁶ H. McQueen, “Queensland: A state of mind,” *Meanjin*, Vol.13, 1979, p.41.

¹⁷ P. Charlton, *State of Mind: Why Queensland is Different*, North Ryde, Methuen-Hayes, 1983, pp.45-49.

¹⁸ A. Trollope as cited in P. Charlton, *ibid*, p.49.

Affairs, moved specifically to increase the powers and numbers of the civilian police force.²⁰ The day after war was declared Prime Minister Robert Menzies presented the National Security Bill to parliament, and throughout the years of the Second World War increasing power and control was placed in the hands of the federal government. This was a thorn in the side of state governments. Based on the British War Book, the Australian War Book prepared by the Defence department, recognised the necessity of new instrumentalities that could satisfactorily come to terms with technological advances in warfare, which would affect entire populations.²¹

After the entry of Japan into World War Two, Queensland was considered to be the area most at risk should Japan decide to invade Australia because of its proximity to the war zone. This had particular significance for Central and Northern Queensland due to the controversy surrounding the Brisbane Line, or Dedman Line, as it was then often called, which divided Queensland on the line of latitude on which Brisbane is situated. This was the line of demarcation denoting the northernmost point for defence of Australia should invasion occur. Dedman himself pointed out that there was considerable controversy over who was responsible for this plan, “the previous government under Menzies and then Fadden, the incoming Labor government under Curtin, or General MacArthur.”²² As the threat to Australia receded, and the war moved further away from Australia’s shores minimising the danger of invasion, the fighting forces moved northwards, and service women were sent to take over defence positions in Central and Northern Queensland.

¹⁹ P. Charlton, *op. cit.*, p.48.

²⁰ K. Saunders, *op. cit.*, p.17.

²¹ *Ibid*, pp, 13-14.

²² J.J. Dedman, “The Brisbane line”, *Australian Outlook*, Vol.22, No.2, August, 1968, pp.141-161.

War industries in which women might have been employed moved no further North than Brisbane, although the production of munitions and other necessities for war went ahead in the southern States. It was obvious with Japanese military bases in New Guinea that it did not make sense to establish industries for the production of armaments within Queensland while it was within striking distance of aerial attacks. Nevertheless as stated by McQueen, a report emanating from Canberra and published in *The Central Queensland Herald*, stated that the Minister for Munitions said that his Department “would have willingly employed the resources of Queensland towns”.²³

Nevertheless munitions production on the eastern seaboard, especially north of Brisbane, was consistently vetoed by the defence authorities. Thus any fillip to a stronger manufacturing economy in Rockhampton, Gladstone or Bundaberg did not occur, and the rural bias in the Queensland economy which had been established under former Labor governments was reinforced. The bias in favour of primary industry, in which male employment retained its position as the dominant pivot of the economy, remained.

Fitzgerald points out that Labor’s concern with agrarian policies resulted in inaction in the establishment of secondary industry and urban problems, and that this did nothing to alleviate the long standing problems associated with the Queensland railway system, or to address the neglect of Brisbane.²⁴ Because of the lack of employment in manufacturing industries in the post-war period fewer European

²³ H. McQueen, *op.cit.*, pp.41-51.

²⁴ R. Fitzgerald, *op.cit.*, p. 180.

migrants were attracted to this State. At the close of the sugar season Germans, who like most European migrants came from highly industrialised areas in their homelands, and who had arrived in Bundaberg to cut cane, packed up and taking their families with them, left for the South as there was no other employment in which their skills could be used.²⁵ During this time manufacturing industry in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia continued to progress, and while the Tasmanian and Western Australian economies also had a primary industry base, the way in which primary industries and population are spread over so much of the state is unique to Queensland.²⁶

Queensland difference for women meant that, particularly in regional centres, there was little change in the types of employment opportunities during the war years. This bias continued into the reconstruction era. However, there was a difference in the numbers employed as the need for processing of farm products escalated. McConnell, makes the point that women's work patterns in Queensland prior to the war were very little different to those during the war period. Her source is the *Production Bulletins* which support this statement.²⁷ (Table 1.2)

²⁵ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with J. B., at Bundaberg, 13 May, 1998.

²⁶ C. Bulbeck, op. cit, pp. 41-42.

²⁷ K. McConnel, "Queensland women in the food and clothing industries", BA Hons Thesis, U.Q., 1995, p.27.

Table 1.2: Female Factory Employment in Queensland, 1937 to 1945

INDUSTRY	1937/38	1939/40	1940/41	1942/43	1943/4	1944/
Food and drink	1 594	1 772	1 997	2 727	2 923	2 808
Clothing and Textiles	5 587	5 990	5,945	6 295	5 836	5 721
Metal Industries	487	465	515	1485	2 772	1 850
Other Industries includes Printing and Stationery	2 234	2 288	2 245	1 707	2 436	3 481
Total	9 782	10 515	10 702	12 214	13 967	13 860

Source: Derived from Production Bulletins Nos. 32-39, 1937-1945 in K. McConnell, "Queensland women in the food and clothing industries" BA Hons Thesis, UQ.

Reekie also points to the male nature of rural industry as the basis of the Queensland economy and suggests that the supportive role of women on the family farm helped substantially to account for the lowered status of women in this State.²⁸

Gender Roles

Due to tacit acceptance of the status of housewife and mother bestowed on them by the male hegemony prior to 1940, views put forward by first wave feminists did not gain wide support from a substantial proportion of Australian women. As stated by Jill Matthews, historical male superiority stemmed from a systematic process of power relations which placed women in an inferior social role and established a division of labour amounting to discrimination against women²⁹ Notwithstanding an initial step backwards at the cessation of hostilities, it began to be realised that they could no longer be relegated to a secondary role, regarded simply as nurturers, nor as Summers pointed out, seen by men as "Damned Whores and God's Police".³⁰ Lynne Davis states that right up until the crisis

²⁸ G. Reekie, op. cit., p.15.

²⁹ J.J. Matthews, *Good and Mad women*, North Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1984, p.13.

³⁰ A. Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1975.

brought into being by the entry of Japan into the Second World War female work was classified in relation to maternal and marital status.³¹

It has been asserted by Summers that wars were not “significant turning points for women”.³² This is debatable. For women who remained at home or continued in traditional women’s employment during the years of the Second World War, their standing in the social system was slow to change. This was particularly true in regional Queensland where changed employment opportunities were few and far between, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five. However for those women who worked in armaments and aircraft factories, joined the **AWLA**, or enlisted in the women’s armed forces, their employment forced social recognition of the fact that women could perform efficiently in many types of occupation.

This advance received a set back at the end of the war when many women opted to return to the home, but it had challenged the whole concept that “women’s place is in the home”. It demonstrated that the notions that the public sphere was a male prerogative, and that women’s roles in society were as nurturers and home makers were social constructs.³³ Not only their proven ability, but what were then very high rates of pay for women working in armament factories in Brisbane and the Southern States, empowered them in decision making, and advanced the women’s movement towards a greater degree of gender equality.

³¹ L. Davis, “Minding Children or Minding Machines: Women’s Labour and Child Care during the Second World War” *Labour History*, No.53, pp.86-98.

³² J.Damousi & M.Lake, *Gender and War*, Melbourne, CUP, 1995, p.6.

³³ P.Ryan & T. Rowse, “Women, Arbitration and the Family”, A. Curthoys., et.al., *Women at Work*, Canberra, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1975, p.15.

Australia's involvement in World War Two called for the establishment of medical units to treat the sick and wounded. This impacted on Australian women as greater numbers of women were called on to serve in medical units in theatres of war, and to bear more responsibility in hospitals at home because of the shortage of doctors. They were dedicated and professional in their attitude to their patients. The thesis strongly disputes the dubious statement made by Damousi and Lake that the work of nurses in caring for injured men in war time "bore a close resemblance to that of prostitutes".³⁴ If the work of nurses is judged by this criteria it could be said that the work of male doctors with injured female patients also has sexual overtones. It does not take into account the fact that gender difference, as conceptualised by the majority of women at that time, was simply that men played a different role in society. Nor did it take into account that like all women, nurses would have been ever mindful of the consequences of unwanted pregnancies. As pointed out by Swain and Howe, throughout most of the period of white settlement in Australia, the unmarried mother and her child existed in a separate space on the fringe of society.³⁵ The thesis asserts that the statement made by Damousi and Lake about members of the nursing profession results from a historicist view of the moral values of the time. It also maintains that it is a feminist construct, and that the inference it makes is indefensible.

Feminist historians have directed much study to the links between gender and war and the effects of the "Yank invasion" in Australia. This was an Australia wide

³⁴ J. Damousi & M. Lake, op. cit., p.23.

³⁵ S. Swain, with R. Howe, *Single Mothers and their Children*, Melbourne, CUP, 1995, p.1. The stigma attached unmarried mothers was used to strengthen the social mores to discourage what was believed to be immoral behaviours.

phenomenon, but as the front line receded steadily northwards, so too did the Americans. From the original establishment of their headquarters in Melbourne, they moved to Brisbane as the Allied troops advanced towards Japan. Their camps were strategically placed in many areas throughout Queensland including Rockhampton and Gladstone. As historians have pointed out, war and the American presence in Australia brought about changes to ways in which the roles of women in Australian society were constructed.

As stated by Lake, following on from the introduction of Hollywood style romantic movies in the 1930s, women's magazines introduced the concept that the acme of femininity was to be sexually attractive, rather than the perception that femininity was embodied in the notion of women as housewives and mothers. She points out that this was reinforced by the sexual politics of war time which suggested they should use their sexuality to attract a partner and find their sexual fulfilment in marriage rather than to seek a career.³⁶ This further supports the earlier argument that war did play a significant role in the lives of Australian women by instituting a change in social attitudes.

The advent of the "Yank invasion" in the 1940s thus led to change in pre-marriage gender relations from courtship to dating. According to Finch, "the shift to dating signalled the deeper shift to consumerism, and to an acceptance by both sexes that key consumer items brought attractiveness".³⁷ This change placed women very much in the centre of the public eye. People from all positions and classes, whether as

³⁶ J. Damousi and M. Lake, *op. cit.*, 268.

³⁷ L. Finch, "Consuming Passions: Romance and Consumerism during World War II", J. Damousi and M. Lake, *Ibid.*, p.107.

newspaper or magazine reporters, politicians, or simply as individuals, had opinions about how women should behave. Central to this was the then current dichotomy between courtship and dating.³⁸

Paid Work

In the area of paid work in Queensland prior to World War Two, gender difference in the workplace was a feature of the social mores of the time. Working class girls like their male peers mostly left school at the age of fourteen, but for the majority the only work opportunities open to them were in low-paid tedious employment such as domestic work, employment in the retail trade and in the clothing and textile trades. Some were also employed in repetitive factory work, but in regional Queensland these work opportunities were limited even further by the lack of secondary industry. Even in women's traditional fields of employment, the clothing and textile manufacturing industries, work opportunities were minimal.

Apart from the meat industry in Rockhampton, a small female workforce employed in offices and laboratories by the sugar industry in Bundaberg, office workers employed by other industries, and a few opportunities for employment by Queensland Rail, working class women were mostly dependent on the domestic and retail job market for work. By contrast boys found work as labourers in various fields such as a tradesmen's assistants, which could later give them qualifications comparable to those held by apprentices. The more fortunate entered apprenticeships or trade courses when they left school. Therefore women's

³⁸ M. Lake, "Female Desires: The Meaning of World War Two", *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 95, October, 1990.

employment into workplaces which had always been considered the preserve of men was a dramatic change in the 1940-1945 period. As has been recorded in the historiography of the war years, it occurred because of the critical need on a national level for women to be employed in industry, farm work, and in the armed forces, to release men for service in the fighting forces.

In the area of paid work throughout the entire period of the thesis working class women for the main part worked, as they had always done. If not actually employed in full time paid work, many became self-employed in a variety of occupations. These included undertakings such as dressmaking, hairdressing, or as music teachers, while others worked as part-time domestics or took in laundry for private persons. An in-depth analysis of working class family economy which examines reasons for the return of women to the work force in the post-war period is detailed in Chapter Three of the thesis.

Prior to the 1950s it was mostly girls from middle class families who received secondary education. The level to which it extended varied according to the means of their respective families, while only a tiny minority entered tertiary institutions. As a general practice, those who had the advantage of some secondary school education often sought employment as either nurses or teachers, while others undertook clerical work, or simply stayed at home until such time as they married. Pre-war, women's paid work was thought of merely as a stop gap, until marriage when they assumed "their proper roles in life". In Queensland, as in other States in Australia, upper class women were also expected to marry. Their search for a husband entailed attendance at social functions, where their photographs were

much sought after by the press to grace the social pages of newspapers and women's magazines.³⁹

Thus during World War Two the creation of job opportunities brought social change in a way that had never been previously envisaged. However although women were accepted into the work force in the production of war materials in Brisbane and the suburbs, very little change in women's employment occurred in regional towns in Queensland where primary industry predominated. Although meat production in Central Queensland did lead to more work for women, extension of port facilities in Rockhampton, Gladstone and Bundaberg did not provide new job opportunities for them, despite the dependence of the meat industry on rail and sea transport. Employment in heavy waterfront industry was socially defined as "men's work", and remained so. A contributing factor to the maintenance of this concept was that the weight women were permitted to lift was limited by restrictions put in place by the WEB.⁴⁰ Notwithstanding that this restraint was seen at the time as a health and safety issue, it did reinforce the notion of gender difference, and upheld the social construction of male identity in the workplace.

In cities and regional centres in other States, particularly Victoria and New South Wales, the expansion of industry to meet war needs and the shortage of manpower, combined to make the employment of women a necessity. In Brisbane

³⁹ In most Monday issues of the newspapers and the weekly edition of women's magazines after the social events which were most often held on Saturdays: *Courier Mail*, *A W W*, *Bundaberg News-Mail*, *Gladstone Observer*, *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin*.

⁴⁰ R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1992, pp. 178-180.

suburbs women were also employed in primary industry such as the meat works. Work was also available in the clothing and textile industries, but until the Japanese Army was pushed northwards, manufacturing industry, including the manufacture of munitions, was only promoted on a very minor scale in Queensland.⁴¹

Little has been recorded of women's paid work during the pre-war period, and as has been mentioned, there has been a lack of interest by academic historians in recording the conditions prevailing for women employed in war work and in the armed forces during the Second World War.⁴² This was partly due to women themselves, as despite their service in the armed forces and essential war industries during wartime, many accepted the notion that the opportunity provided by this employment was only for "the duration".

At the outbreak of war in 1939 in an upsurge of patriotism, many women's paramilitary units were formed, and subsequently government approval was given to the establishment of the Women's Voluntary National Register, (WVNR). This by its very nature, envisaged the mobilisation and utilisation of women's contribution to the war effort as being minimal.⁴³ Furthermore, in Queensland as demonstrated by historian Helen Taylor, the geographical location of this state brought the response from the Federal government that for strategic reasons there was little likelihood of the establishment of war industries in this part of Australia.

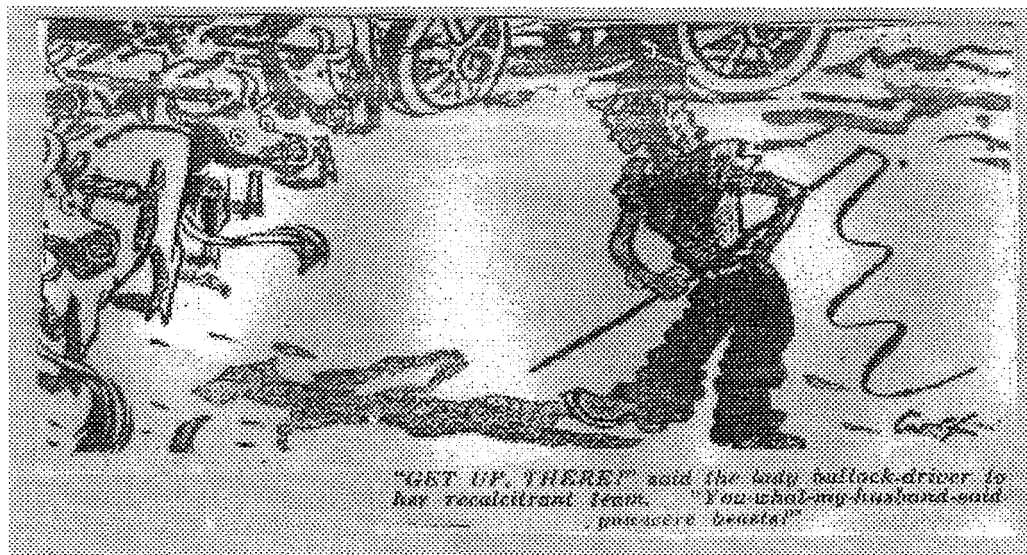
⁴¹ H. Taylor, op. cit., p.83.

⁴² L. Connors, et. al., *Australia's Frontline*, St. Lucia, QUP, 1992., pp. 117-139. Popular histories such as P. Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War*, Melbourne, Nelson, 1984, A. Howard, *You'll be Sorry*, Dangar Island, Tarka, 1990, go some way towards filling the gap.

⁴³ H. Taylor, (a), op.cit. p.72.

Thus, the concept that women's roles during war time were to be voluntary was endorsed by newspaper, radio and women's magazines. Headlines appeared in the *Australian Women's Weekly* in 1940 and 1941 that read: "Keeping Peace in the Home"⁴⁴, "Hold the Home Forts"⁴⁵, "Business Girls Visit Camps to Sew and Darn"⁴⁶, and on a negative note for those women who might consider taking on "men's work" on the farm, "How'll they keep Land Girls down on the farm?"⁴⁷ (Illustration 1.1). Despite this many women continued to play a role in paramilitary groups. While their value varied from group to group, it did emphasise that although many women were aware of the limited participation that the policy makers had in mind for them, they were ready to serve their country in any way which was opened for them.

Illustration 1.1: "How'll they keep Land Girls down on the farm?"



Source: *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 27 July, 1940.

The question of women's work as a patriotic endeavour during World War Two is the subject of a report by A.P. Elkin in 1943, involving two hundred women in

⁴⁴ "Keeping Peace in the Home' *AWW*, 10 May, 1941. p. 16

⁴⁵ "Hold the Home Forts, *A WW*, 26 April, 1941, p. 12

⁴⁶ "Business Girls Visit Camps to Sew and Darn, *AWW*, 20 June, 1940, p. 31.

⁴⁷ "How'll they Keep Land Girls Down on the Farm?", *AWW*, 27 July, 1940, p. 19.

Sydney who failed to respond to requests by the Federal Government to enlist in the Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF).⁴⁸ Documentary sources demonstrate that despite the threat of invasion, and the national advertising campaign for women to enter the work force to overcome the shortage of men in employment in industry, or to enlist in the armed forces or enrol in the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA), there was some reluctance by women to comply. Based on Elkin's report, supported by documentary evidence and reports in the *Australian Women's Weekly (AWW)*, the thesis argues that this did not mean women were not patriotic.⁴⁹ Additionally, Saunders and Bolton point to the opposition to Australia's involvement in war by small groups of pacifists and members of the Communist Party of Australia.⁵⁰

A close examination of the chart (Table 1.3), compiled from figures shown in Elkin's report, reveals much about the social attitudes towards, and by women, of their status in society in the early 1940s. It emphasises the value placed on the socially defined high moral standards of the day. Moreover, in relation to the social mores at that time it is interesting to note that by far the greatest single reason given for non-compliance with requests by the government to women to enlist in the WAAAF, 25% of those surveyed, objected on the issue of morality.⁵¹ The results of the *AWW* survey supported the Elkin survey in many respects. Additionally morality issues concerning service women, AWAS in particular, have

⁴⁸ A.P. Elkin Papers, Fisher Library, University of Sydney, Box 104, Item, 4, (pages un-numbered).

⁴⁹ *AWW*, Vol.11, No.1, 5 June, 1943, p.13.

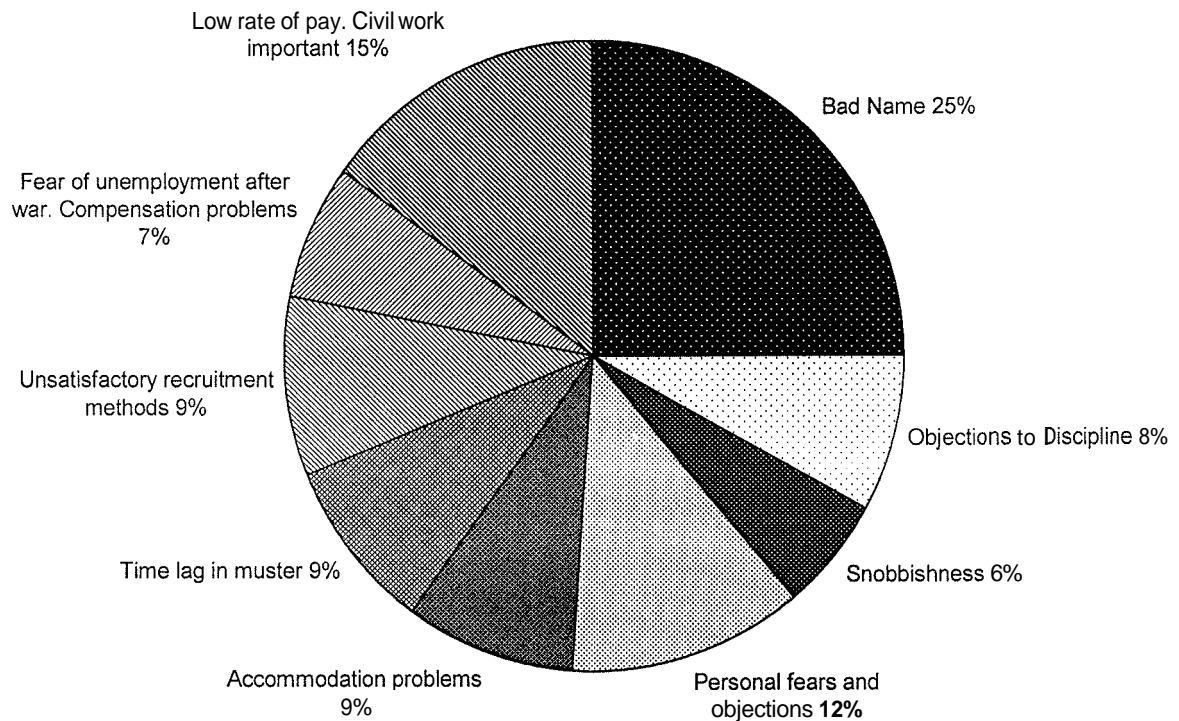
⁵⁰ K. Saunders, and G. Bolton, op. cit., pp. 383-385.

⁵¹ J. Thomson, *The WAAAF in Wartime Australia*, Carlton, MUP, 1991, pp.237-241.

Table 1.3: Classification and percentage of reasons for lag in enrolment in WAAAF given by representative cross section of 200 in NSW.

FINANCIAL
22%

MORAL
25%



ORGANISATIONAL
27%

SOCIAL AND PERSONAL
26%

Source: Derived from AP Elkin Papers, Fisher Library, University of Sydney, Box 104, Item 4.

been demonstrated extensively in G. Johansen, BA Hons Thesis, “A Social History of the Australian Women’s Army Service during the Second World War.”⁵²

The chart also indicates class attitudes that question assumptions about the existence of an egalitarian Australian society. Class consciousness was shown by the low percentage who objected on the grounds of snobbery. Additionally a small percentage said they objected to discipline. As pointed out by Elkin, it was significant that the main objection to this, was that they would be subjected to discipline by other women. Working class women were of the opinion that women of a higher social standing, prior to enlistment, would be preferred as commissioned and non-commissioned officers. As stated Elkin’s report was compiled in 1943 and yet just ten years later the notion that Australia had a classless society, arising from the concept of the nuclear family, was being promulgated by Liberal Party philosophy.

The emphasis on the responses to moral, social and personal reasons for hesitation to enter what they perceived as masculine employment is evidence of the way women saw themselves and the social values of the time. From a sociological point of view, ascribed characteristics of being female prior to World War Two were to be seen as feminine, having feminine expectations learnt by spending more time with her mother than her father, and marriage to a “bread winner”.⁵³ These characteristics were put forward by the *Australian Women’s Weekly* as being the

⁵² G. Johansen, “A Social History of the Australian Women’s Army Service during the Second World War”, BA Hons thesis, Ch.2, Rockhampton, CQU, pp.28-43.

⁵³ D. Edgar, *Introduction to Australian Society*, Sydney, Prentice-Hall, 1980, pp.96-97.

ideal for young women, by the use of fashion pages, romantic stories, and other items seen to be of interest to females.

Reasons given for refusal to enlist in the WAAAF because of financial considerations point to concern over a variety of matters. Elkin points out that some women contributed to the upkeep of their parents' home, and the low rate of pay for servicewomen, was as stated, an "unanswerable argument" against enrolment in the Service. As Elkin, also demonstrated, their contributions to the home finances were often necessary if a father or a brother was serving in the armed forces, or the father was deceased, Because of the shortage of manpower many women were made to feel that they could best serve their country by remaining in their pre-war jobs, and were made aware that if they enrolled in the WAAAF they might lose status in their employment.⁵⁴ In regional Queensland the shortage of manpower for farm work and associated primary industries also kept women and their daughters at home to help out, or in some cases to run the farm when men enlisted.

The question also arises as to whether isolation and distance from community centres may have been an influential factor, in what appears to be an almost complete lack of interest by women, in participation of activities in the war effort in a large area of rural regional Queensland. Inquiries have also found that very few women enlisted in any of the women's armed services. In view of the national level of women's voluntary work for the war effort, particularly in towns in

⁵⁴ Ibid.

regional Queensland it raises the question as to whether their isolation in the rural life-style of the period, in which women were often over-worked and war was considered to be the business of men, made them unaware of the urgency of the call for patriotic endeavour.⁵⁵

Difficulty in gaining recruits for the WAAAF was long term. Elkin does not give a date for the survey he conducted but simply states “the recent frequent appeals for girls to join the WAAAF imply that an insufficient number have been offering themselves for this Service”.⁵⁶ **An** oral history survey conducted in 1996 by the author among ex-members of the Australian Women’s Army Service (AWAS) demonstrated that although most respondents said they enlisted because they were patriotic, many also gave other reasons as well for their enlistment in this Service.⁵⁷

Voluntary workers too admitted that patriotism was not the sole incentive for their activities during war time. One interviewee for the current study who did voluntary work for the Gladstone Branch of the Australian Red Cross emphatically denied that she had performed this work because she was patriotic. In Bundaberg, as will be detailed later in Chapter Two, members of the Queensland Country Women’s Association (QCWA) reported that women who lived some distance from town spent many hours filling in time working at making camouflage nets. This work

⁵⁵ Current research by the author for a history of a Central Queensland shire has failed to obtain a response from oral history interviewees regarding patriotic work they did during World War Two. At that time the Shire was made up of very small isolated communities.

⁵⁶ The Director of Manpower conducted a campaign in 1943 to recruit women to the WAAAF. This was also the year the *AWW* conducted their survey so it can be assumed that it was during this year that Elkin conducted his survey.

⁵⁷ G. Johansen, *op. cit.*, p.43.

was the means of filling what would otherwise have been tedious waiting time for their train to return home.

The thesis does not deny the patriotic effort of a great many women during the war years. However it does question the assumption that women were motivated to enlist voluntarily in the armed services or contribute to the war effort solely for patriotic reasons. The notion that this was so has been, and still is, continually affirmed by the media because of its substantial emotional appeal. Factors that contradict this assumption are threefold. Firstly, propaganda campaigns initiated by government and taken up by newspapers, women's magazines and radio, emphasised either overtly or covertly that women's participation in the war effort was a patriotic duty. Secondly, journalistic use of human interest stories in all forms of the media during the war was practised to support government manpower controls. Thirdly, in the memories of women themselves in the years following the cessation of hostilities, the importance of the other reasons for enlisting have, over time, become less significant. Nevertheless, whatever the reasons were for women's participation in the war effort, there were very few who did not contribute in some way. Their accomplishments, often under less than ideal conditions, are certainly worth recognition, and this was very slow in coming.

Interviews conducted with ex-Australian Women's Army Service personnel indicated a feeling of war weariness and a desire to return to what was seen as normality, after living in barracks and/or under canvas under strict Army regimentation for a number of years. They testified that most of them at the conclusion of hostilities desired nothing more than to get back to civilian life and

their own homes. Moreover those who were married and had deferred having children now wanted to start families.⁵⁸ This finding has been endorsed by Runcie-Pinney. She points out that women “discovered their worth in the Services, in industry, and as head of the household during the war years.”⁵⁹ She goes on to say that despite the different, and sometimes harsh effects of state control in their lives during war time, at the cessation of hostilities the hardships and difficulties were put aside until the wounds healed and life returned to normal. Of course too many social changes had occurred during the war years for a return to the social status quo of 1939.

The changes wrought by the acceptance of women into the work force during this time of national emergency, combined with rising inflation which created the need for extra income, resulted in ever increasing numbers of married women entering the field of paid employment in the post war period.⁶⁰ However, it was only after the rise of the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s, that the notion that women did not need to accept the social dictum that denied them the right to enter the public sphere found wide responsive female acceptance. Nevertheless by 1944 the number of women in paid employment in industry, commerce, the armed services, professional, and other work, rose to 719,000 from 565,000 in 1938.⁶¹ However, as was made evident in the *Australian Women's Weekly* this was a wartime measure only. Like other women's magazines it

⁵⁸ G. Johansen, op. cit., p.74.

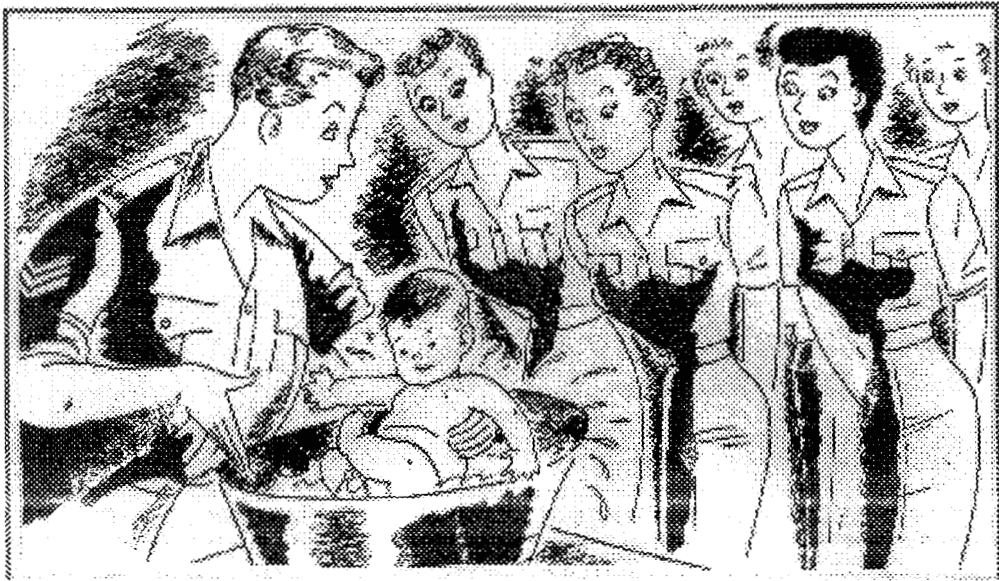
⁵⁹ E. Runcie-Pinney, “War's end?...What now? The Second World War from a Woman's Point of View”, *Queensland Review* Vol.3, No. 1, April, 1996, p.85.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.14.

⁶¹ Ibid.

endorsed the sentiment that after the war a woman would become “the bride” .⁶² The ruling hegemony was still male, and it was made clear through radio broadcasts and the print media, that women were expected to return to the home after the cessation of hostilities. For servicewomen this attitude was endorsed by the Army Education Service which provided classes on home management and child care.⁶³ (Illustration 1.2)

Illustration 1.2: AWAS Learn to Bath Babies



Source: *Army*, December, 1944

New opportunities of employment for women during the Second World War had a dramatic effect on their place in the economy, and diverted women from domestic and other menial employment.⁶⁴ It also led to an upsurge of women’s involvement in the workplace and public life, thus breaking down the barriers previously initiated by restraints put in place to preserve male control in the public sphere. Nevertheless, many women did not spontaneously avail themselves of the new job opportunities war time conditions presented to them. Consequently, in January

⁶² A. Wright, “The Australian Women’s Weekly, Depression and the war years, romance and reality”, *Refractory Girl*, No.3, 1973, p. 11.

⁶³ *Army Women’s Services*, AWM 54[88/2/2], (AWM), and *Army*. AWM File 540994, A741.

⁶⁴ *Women at Work*, Discussion paper prepared by the Australian Army Education Service, Vol.6, No.3, October, 1944, MS F2334, Fryer Library, UQ.

1942, the Federal government introduced manpower controls to meet wartime production needs.⁶⁵

The Director-General of Manpower was given the power to direct any male person, or single female under the age of forty, to work in industry, or in the case of males, to serve in the armed forces. He was also empowered to direct any person to work for a particular employer and to perform any task specified.⁶⁶ As a result state control played a significant role in the implementation of change in the status of women throughout the whole of Australia.

Manpower Controls

As pointed out by Elkin, not only was there a lack of interest by many women in becoming members of the WAAAF, women also showed a reluctance to enrol in the AWLA.⁶⁷ In a letter dated 5 March 1943 from the Department of Information to the Director-General of Manpower, signed by the Deputy-Controller of Advertising in connection with the “WAR WORK EMPLOYMENT CAMPAIGN”, it was stated that a scheduled advertisement to persuade women to volunteer their services as members of the AWLA would commence on 12 March 1943.⁶⁸ This was in addition to widely distributed leaflets designed to motivate women to seek employment in war industries.(Illustration 1.3).

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.4.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ A.P. Elkin, op. cit.

⁶⁸ Correspondence Dept. of Information to Director-General Manpower, re War work employment campaign, 5 March, 1943, AA Series B551/0, Item 42/110/1529, AA Melbourne.

Illustration 1.3: Come in and Talk it Over.

**Come
in
and
talk
it over**



Your Victory Job! Perhaps you are like many other women . . . you want to do a Victory job. . . . But it's yours since you went out to work. . . . Or you have never worked before. . . . Or you're nervous what you can do. . . . And maybe you are a little shy about going along to the National Service Office to enquire about a job. Well, it's really all quite simple. Come in to the National Service Office and talk it over with another woman. She is specially trained to judge the sort of job that each woman will be happiest to and to do the best job. If you have any home responsibilities, she will know where to find a job that will save travelling time, too. So why not get that problem of your Victory job all your mind right away. Come in and talk it over at a National Service Office.

THERE ARE MANY VICTORY JOBS

- In War Production Factories
- In Essential Goods Production
- In Australian Women's Land Army.

THE WOMEN'S SERVICES AUXILIARIES ALSO NEED RECRUITS

* * * * *

Source: A.A.Melbourne, W.W.E. 3-21

A list of provincial newspapers selected for use in the campaign included both Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* and Bundaberg *News-Mail* in Central Queensland. An earlier letter from the Deputy-Controller of Advertising to the Director-General of Manpower on 8 February 1943 set out the objects of the campaign. The primary objective was to persuade women to offer themselves voluntarily for enrolment in the AWLA or employment in essential war industries.⁶⁹ This approach disguised the intention of the state to exert its powers to coerce women

⁶⁹ Correspondence, Dept. of Information to the Director-General of Manpower, op. cit.,

to come under its control if they failed to respond favourably to calls for their participation in the war effort. It was also proposed to appeal to women by making approaches to married women who were the mothers, wives, and sisters of the men in the fighting forces and request that they at least participate in part-time work, while single women or married women without children employed in non-essential industries would be asked to offer themselves for full-time work,

It was also recommended that “National Service Bulletins” be used as occasions warranted. These Bulletins would deal with labour needs local to a particular state or city. The campaign was also extended to include advertisement on radio, poster and film. The following table shows the anticipated expenditure for the campaign.

(Table 1.4)

Table 1.4: Allocation of Funds for Advertising Campaign (in pounds)

Radio	2,000
Press	9,400
Posters	600
Film	500
Total	12,500

Source: A.A. Melbourne Series B551/0, Item 42/110/1529.

The necessity to spend this amount of money, a large sum in the 1940s, on an advertising campaign points to disinterest by many women to participate in the work force. It led to a meeting of the Publicity Committee, held at the Sydney office of the Director-General of Manpower on 1 December 1942. At this meeting discussion took place on a number of issues directed at persuading women to join the Services or work in vital war industries. The Controller of Advertising was of the opinion that a patriotic appeal would not produce results, although as remarked by the Director-General of Manpower this sort of appeal had been successful in food processing factories. He pointed out however, that in this

instance patriotism was combined with personal interest and emotional appeal.⁷⁰

According to the philosophy of Foucault, and given the patriarchal nature of Australian society, this approach, can be likened to “a form of surveillance, of control which is as watchful as that of the head of a family over his household and his goods”.⁷¹

The authorities saw the need for women power as urgent, and while many women voluntarily responded to calls to assist in the war effort, others had to be persuaded or coerced. Documentary evidence records that early in 1944 single women and married women without children who were aged between 16 and 34 and who were not gainfully employed were called on to report to the nearest Manpower office.⁷² Policies developed by the Manpower Authority came from the south, but according to Taylor they were adjusted to meet the needs of the decentralised structure of industry in Queensland.⁷³

As Taylor has demonstrated, women were required to complete questionnaires regarding their employment and other commitments, and obliged to submit to interviews. If they tried to evade compliance with directions to work at hospitals and institutions, they were prosecuted.⁷⁴ She further records that in Queensland, “raids” were planned in Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville to search for women who tried to evade presenting themselves for employment as directed. It was also reported by

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Foucault as cited in B. Smart, *Foucault, Marxism and Critique*, London, Routledge, 1983, p. 118.

⁷² Circular dated 19 April, 1943. Director-General of Manpower, AA, MP 24/2, 43/27//4396.

⁷³ H. Taylor, (a), *op. cit.*, p.78.

⁷⁴ H. Taylor, (b), *op. cit.*, p.74.

Taylor that women who were employed in the retail industry, who were under 45 years of age and thought suitable for “more essential” work, were redirected accordingly.

Nevertheless it became apparent in the oral history survey conducted for the thesis that women in smaller rural settlements were bypassed in the Manpower operation. The testimony of interviewees indicated that although women in both Rockhampton and Bundaberg received letters instructing them to seek employment in the AWLA, women in Gladstone did not. Even in larger provincial towns in Queensland, with the exception of Townsville and Cairns, it seems that Manpower operations were limited. Of the women interviewed in Rockhampton only one was instructed to report for work to a specified employer. In this case it was the American Red Cross.⁷⁵ Another was instructed to seek work in industry. She had gone to the Employment Exchange of her own volition to look for work and was instructed to report to the Lakes Creek Meatworks for selection as an employee.⁷⁶ The testimony of this interviewee also stated that other women seeking work at the time who went to the Labour Exchange, were also directed to the Meatworks. She pointed out that there was nothing else offering for unskilled females seeking employment.⁷⁷

This interviewee’s inability to find alternative employment is important as it highlights the fact that unemployment for women was still a feature of the economy in Central Queensland at that time. This evidence endorses Taylor’s argument that it was because of the close proximity of Queensland to the war zone during the Second

⁷⁵ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with V.S. on 23 April, 1998.

⁵⁶ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with B.S. at Rockhampton on 15 June, 1998.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

World War, that strategic considerations took precedence over other wartime exigencies, and thus strict manpower controls were not enforced.

An area where the social impinged on the power of management, and therefore the Manpower Authority as an instrumentality of state power, was that of absenteeism.

An analysis of the causes of absenteeism published by the Industrial Welfare Division points to a number of causes.⁷⁸ Firstly, that the ordinary worker has always believed that he was free to work or not, according to his needs. Secondly, that there was more absenteeism among young and lower paid workers. Thirdly, that it was due to a practically irreducible minimum of sickness and accidents, and this was the greatest single cause,

The report concluded that in the case of women absenteeism was a problem of numerous absences rather than long absences.⁷⁹ Other contributing causes were seen to be poor working conditions, and dislike of working on Saturdays. In the case of married women, who in the terminology of the time had been “manpowered”, absenteeism resulted from the strain of running a household, which entailed doing all shopping personally due to the cessation of the practice of store deliveries. Yet another cause was management-employee relationships. Additionally, there can be no doubt that dissatisfaction with pay rates for women sent by the Manpower Authority to work in the clothing and textile trades was also a contributing cause of absenteeism in these industries.

⁷⁸ *Women at Work*, AAES Bulletin, Vol.6, No.3, 9 October, 1944, pp.9-11.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.10.

Unknown to women at the time, not only in Central Queensland, but in Australia as a whole, and in most of the western world, the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 was to be the catalyst which initiated changes in their culture and life style. As stated some of the changes were brought about by state control, but underlying the impact of such social modification, existing campaigns by women in the earlier decades of the twentieth century to improve their status in society also advanced this process. Exemplifying this was the “equal pay for women” movement which gained in strength during wartime, and as recorded by Jocelyne Scutt, continued to move forward in the post war period.⁸⁰

Equal Pay

The “equal pay campaign” had its origin in the nineteenth century. The advent of war, and the necessity for women to take men’s jobs in some areas, was the catalyst that added a fillip to this campaign, and despite the fact that in the post-war period some advantages were lost, the setback was only temporary. During the economic depression years in the interwar period minor gains made by women during World War One were lost. For many women, who had only worked within the limitations of traditional women’s work which had been available to them in the 1930s, war work brought the realisation of their work potential. Together with the greater numbers of women in paid employment, this has contributed to the assumption that the war years were a watershed in the history of women’s work. Women also realised that they had performed work efficiently in areas of employment in which previously they had been untried, and therefore should receive an equal rate of pay to that of men. This had been advocated in 1940 in a circular letter from Jessie Street, President of the

⁸⁰ J. Scutt, Abstract *Into the light: Reclaiming women’s 1950s activism*, 6th Women and Labour Conference, Deakin University, November, 1997. (pages unnumbered).

United Associations of Women, which contained the following statement:

In order that the rate of wages and standard of living obtained by male employees may not be undermined as a result of war, the United Associations of Women recommends that when women are taken on for any work hitherto performed by men, either because of the enlistment of male employees or because of the shortage of men, resulting from war time needs, that women shall be engaged under the same conditions and awards as govern such work at the time, and that the policy of equal pay and equal opportunity for men and women shall be generally adopted throughout these occupations. We request all women's organisations, patriotic, philanthropic, and social to support this policy.⁸¹

Despite early opposition from the Trade Unions to women's employment in the male domain, the concept was subsequently accepted as necessary when the need for men to become members of the fighting forces became more pressing.. However to make sure that this wartime measure would indeed be "for the duration" only, the Trade Unions approached the government to request that it take action to ensure that a female intrusion into male space would not be permanent. Furthermore in a turn about face, as a measure to ensure that men would not suffer reductions of pay and conditions on their return in the post war period, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, ACTU, insisted that women should be paid at the male rate.⁸²

Nevertheless, as indicated by Lake, employers believed that they should be able to follow their usual practice of hiring female labour at cheaper rates. In an attempt to placate both sides a "special temporary tribunal", the Women's Employment Board, WEB, was established.⁸³ It was formed in **1942** and was closely aligned with the

⁸¹ J. Street, K. Daniels and M. Murnane, *Uphill All the Way*, St. Lucia, UQP, 1980, p.197.

⁸² M. Lake, "The war over women's work", Burgman & Lee, *A most valuable acquisition*, Fitzroy, McPhee Gribble, 1988, p.206.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p.207.

office of the Director-General of Manpower.⁸⁴ The tasks of this organisation were to fix wages, set down maximum working hours, both daily and weekly, and formulate conditions for safety, health and welfare for women doing men's work.

Commenting on the equal pay issue the Chairman of the Board, Judge Foster, said that at that time men received a "social wage", fixed by the courts as a minimum wage sufficient for the support of a man and his family. However, he said he subscribed to the notion that in time a "wage for a job" might be paid, but pointed out that to give a woman the same wage as a man was to assume that she had an equal number of dependants, and that was not usually the case.⁸⁵ Although the employment of women in the field of male expertise very seldom resulted in equal pay with men, it did involve comparatively high remuneration. Certainly this was a step forward from the low-paid work in, for example, the textile industry where women were only paid 54 per cent of the male rate.⁸⁶

Under the chairmanship of Judge Foster, the Board had the power to regulate the hours and conditions for women taking over what was usually regarded as men's work, and set their pay rates at between 60 and 100 per cent of the ruling male rate.⁸⁷ There were a number of criteria on which the Board based its decision on pay rates. In the metal trades these were fixed at 90 per cent of the male rate paid to men doing similar work. The rate in this case was based on productivity as it was

⁸⁴ Report of the Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and equal status for women in Australia, Canberra, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, April 1942, p.7.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ M. Bayne, (Ed.), *Australian Women at War*, Melbourne, Research Group of the Left Book Club of Victoria, 1943, p.5.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

determined that women were not as strong as men, “they tired more easily, were more liable to illness, and had a higher absentee rate”.⁸⁸ In other cases it was the standard of a woman’s efficiency in the job which was the criterion on which the pay rate was based. However, the higher wages paid to women working in areas defined as “men’s work” only affected some ten per cent of the female work force.” In keeping with the notion that a social wage was paid to men, as Judge Foster maintained wages for the majority of female workers, most of whom were employed in women’s traditional work, remained much lower. Naturally this led to resentment on the part of many women and dissatisfaction was further reinforced when they were employed in an industry that was classified as essential, and therefore could not seek other employment as manpower regulations stipulated that a move from such industries was not permissible. It also needs to be noted that women serving in the armed forces were only paid two-thirds of the male rates.⁹⁰ However servicewomen had an adequate clothing issue and many lived in camps where all meals were provided. They were also paid a meal allowance while on leave or if they lived at home.

Women who had been employed in the meat industry in Rockhampton and Gladstone were all of the opinion that they were well paid. However it needs to be taken into account that their opinion was based on a comparison with retail or domestic work, which were the other main areas of employment in Central Queensland at the time. These facts lead to questions as to whether women were adequately rewarded for their labour, and if the higher rates paid to the ten per cent of women employed in

⁸⁸ *Women at work*, op.cit., p.7.

⁸⁹ P. Grimshaw et. al., *Creating a Nation*, Ringwood, Penguin, 1994, p.260.

⁹⁰ Australian Women’s **Army** Services, **AWM 54**[88/2/2], pp.3-11.

“men’s work” were significant in the equal pay campaign. The thesis argues that it was meaningful as even though the goal of equal pay for equal work in all spheres of employment has still not been achieved, it set a precedent on which later equal pay for equal work claims could be made.

Unpaid Voluntary Work

As the thesis will disclose in greater detail in Chapter Two, many Australian women voluntarily undertook a heavy load of unpaid work during the Second World War to assist the national war effort. Prior to World War Two voluntary work was often performed by members of benevolent societies who mainly came from a middle class background. However during the Second World War there were very few women from all walks of life who did not participate in these activities to some extent. Not only was their work a valuable adjunct to the war effort, it gave women the chance to form networks with other women who were facing the same hardships resulting from a country at war and the absence of their menfolk. This army of unpaid workers has been explored by Melanie Oppenheimer in an article in a recent issue of *Queensland Review*.⁹¹ She points out that this voluntary work “was extensive, crossed class and cultural boundaries,” and was widely supported by the community. This assertion will be examined further in Chapter Two where it will be compared with the issue raised by Erica Fisher in a discussion paper presented to the National Council of Women c.1980.⁹²

Oppenheimer has estimated, after extensive archival research, that there were at least

⁹¹ M.Oppenheimer, “‘Working for the Duration?’ Aspects of Voluntary Work in Queensland during World War Two” *Queensland Review*, Vol.3, No. 1, April, 1996, pp.73-81.

⁹² E. Fisher, *Women’s Voluntary Work*, Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia, 1983, p.23

8,000 patriotic funds in existence during the period of the Second World War. As she points out the Australian Red Cross Society and the Australian Comforts Fund were formed during the First World War. The latter ceased operations at the end of this conflict but was reformed after the outbreak of the Second World War. The former continued after the cessation of hostilities and is still very active. It was the only organisation authorised to deal directly with Australian Prisoners of War in both the European and Pacific POW camps, Women's organisations which are well known and were very active in all States of Australia, including Queensland, during World War Two were the Australian Country Women's Association and the Young Women's Christian Association.

As Oppenheimer has demonstrated, fund raising for the war effort was a major task, not only to supply assistance for Australia's own troops, but also to support such organisations as the Malta Relief Fund and the Greek Relief Fund. In Rockhampton employees of the Australian Meatworks Industry Employees Union (AMIEU) formed *The Lakes Creek Cannery Revue Show*. Regular concerts at various city venues, for an admission fee of a silver coin, were held on Sunday nights after the conclusion of church services, to raise money for the war effort.⁹³ They also participated in the Australian Council of Trade Unions' agreement with the Australian Red Cross (ARC) whereby all its members would donate sixpence a week to this organisation.⁹⁴ (Illustration 1.4).

⁹³ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with A.R. at Rockhampton, 9 April, 1998

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p.74.

Illustration 1.4: *The Lakes Creek Cannery Revue Show.*



Source: Photograph Courtesy A. Reynolds.

In regional Queensland there were many similarities to voluntary work performed by women on a national level, but there is evidence that the efforts of volunteers in country towns were in some respects different to voluntary output in metropolitan areas. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Two, an interview conducted with Hope in Gladstone pointed to dissimilarities between work performed by the Gladstone Branch of the ARC and Brisbane branches.” This was mostly a matter of geography and the different social conditions that existed in Gladstone, which was then little more than a village with a population of less than 7000. Similarly the wartime agenda of the Bundaberg Branch of the Queensland Country Women’s Association, (QCWA), was both similar to and different from both metropolitan and other country branches, as will also be instanced in Chapter Two. Again this was a matter of situation and the social structure of the community.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with H.P. at Gladstone on 1 November, 1997

⁹⁶ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with ES & JB, 11 May, 1998.

War and the Housewife

Family life where the man was seen as head of the family was a flow on from the pre-war period. It was still a very important part of the social structure in regional Queensland, as in all parts of the state, in the 1940s and 1950s. Thus family life during the period of the Second World War suffered from hardships caused by separation and disruption within family units.” Difficulties sometimes stemmed from financial problems. The allotment received by the wife of a serviceman was very low, especially if he was enlisted in the lowest rank. Consequently, so as to make better provision for the family, women often sought paid employment to subsidise their allowances. In these cases older relatives often cared for children while the mother was at work. This dependency on social networks was also instanced in cases of sickness or other family emergencies.

Child endowment to be paid on behalf of every child after the first, introduced by the United Australia Party led by Robert Menzies in January 1941, was of very little assistance.⁹⁸ It was offered “as a foretaste and pledge of the full reconstruction that will be possible when we can again turn our surplus productive forces to the purposes of peace” by the then Minister for Labour and National Service, Harold Holt.⁹⁹ The promise implied by this rhetoric did not, however, make up for the decline in family income caused by men’s enlistment.” Nor did it appreciably relieve financial difficulty faced by women left to bring up a family alone during the war years.

⁹¹ L.J.Aspin, *The Family: an Australian Focus*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1994, p..iii.

⁹⁸ P. Grimshaw, et. al., op. cit., p.257

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ B. Williams, “Wages and Families” *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol.XIII, No.2, June, 1941, pp.79-89.

Notwithstanding that during World War Two many more women entered the work force or participated in voluntary work, it did not alter the fact that they were still expected to care for their home and family. Some older women became self-employed as carers for young children, and in some cases did a limited amount of domestic work. This relieved the situation for working mothers who had no relatives living in close proximity who could assist them. In some instances, women's organisations, such as the **QCWA**, developed child minding centres where young children could be cared for while the mother worked. Child minding centres provided by employers or the State were not mooted at this time. Moreover the provision of care for their children during working hours still left women with the task of housekeeping, shopping and care of the children after their hours of paid work ended for the day.

In the 1940s few women drove cars. Moreover during the war years and for some time afterwards their use was restricted by petrol rationing. As a result housewives usually had to rely on public transport. They may have been able to travel by bus, tram or train, at least part of the way to and from home in city areas and larger country towns, to visit the shops to purchase household supplies, but in smaller rural centres such as Gladstone, it was usually a case of having to walk.¹⁰¹ Sometimes this entailed pushing a pram and/or making slow progress because they were accompanied by young children. If a woman was lucky she might have a bicycle on which to ride to and from the shops. In these instances, if she had a small child it would be seated on the luggage rack, while the mother managed the shopping bags as best she could as she held on to the handlebars.

¹⁰¹ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with V.D. at Gladstone, 28 April, 1998.

Further difficulties related to shopping were shortages of required items, combined with controls put into force by the Rationing Commission. Clothing and some food items were rationed partly because of shortages of the raw products and partly to divert labour from what was deemed to be unnecessary buying. In the case of items which were not rationed, but were nevertheless in short supply, it either meant going from shop to shop, and in some cases a trip to another town, or making do with the next best thing. In the case of rationed goods it meant juggling coupons to supply the family with nourishing meals and to keep them well clothed. Instructions to consumers about their sugar coupons were comprehensive and demonstrate that every contingency was covered.¹⁰²

The sugar allowance was two pounds (approx. 1 kg) per person per fortnight. For household purchases the ration books for all members of the family could be presented by one person to a supplier and coupons would be detached whenever goods were purchased, or alternatively the leaf of coupons could be detached from the book, and the name, address, and book number of the owner entered in the space provided and a receipt placed on the back cover of the book.¹⁰³ According to an interview conducted by the author with the owners of a drapery store in Gladstone, store owners had to be very careful in the handling of all coupons as the Rationing Regulations were very explicit about the submission of the supplier's returns.¹⁰⁴ Civilians were also issued with identity cards during World War Two. These had to be presented, together with the old ration book, in order to obtain a new one. Parents of children aged under fourteen years were responsible for obtaining new books for

¹⁰² Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin*, 31 August, 1942, p.6.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with K. & G. M., at Gladstone, 15 April, 1998.

them, and the child's old ration book together with the parent's identity card had to be presented to receive a new book. Rationing thus presented an added burden to be carried by women, as the responsibility of making do on the allotted rations usually fell on their shoulders. The problems of managing the housekeeping budget, rationing, and the many other difficulties associated with living in war time were mostly the lot of the married women.

Gender differences, which were a continuity prior to World War Two, were to some degree overcome by the shortage of manpower during the war years, and notwithstanding an initial set-back after the cessation of hostilities, were a precedent for changes in attitudes to women's work in the 1960s and 1970s nationally. However in regional Queensland, under the ruling rural economy which was orientated towards the dominance of men in most fields of available employment, changes to the social system were slower to be accepted because of the lack of work opportunities for women.

The question of female patriotism in war time needed to be addressed not only to correct the assumption that it was the sole reason for women's active participation in the war effort, but also to acknowledge their contribution to the defeat of the Axis powers. Consideration of the areas of paid work, the operation of the Manpower authority and the Women's Employment Board, and the equal pay campaign paves the way for the thesis to place the differences and similarities, which are features of regional Queensland, in a state wide perspective. Women's unpaid work and the role of housewives in the family are closely linked. Nationally much of their work was similar, but given the circumstances in regional Queensland also accounted for

differences. The effects of wartime events on women's place in society brought about changes to their role in society and these changes continued after the cessation of hostilities.