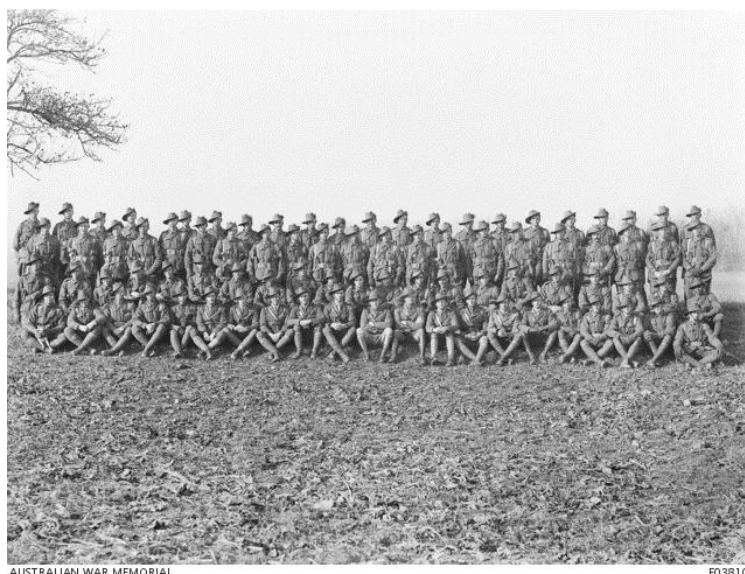


### *Memorial Box 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wartime Service*

#### *Private Daniel Hodgekiss*



*Private Daniel Hodgekiss is pictured in the second row in this portrait of D Company, 59th Battalion, c. 1918*

Born in Port Willunga, South Australia, Daniel Hodgekiss grew up on the Point McLeay mission station. A member of the Ngarrindjeri tribe, Hodgekiss was the eldest of six children and moved to the Riverland district as an adult once he left the mission. He worked as a labourer and spent some time living with his only surviving sister in Berri. By this time Hodgekiss' father, mother, and his other siblings had all died.

In February 1916 Hodgekiss volunteered for service in the Australian Imperial Force across the border in Mildura, and less than two months later he was on board HMAT *Euripides* bound for the Western Front. As 1916 drew to an end, the major battles along this line of trenches, which stretched from the Belgian coast to the Swiss border, came to a grinding halt. Both the allies and the Germans had become bogged down in the mud, while respiratory diseases, rheumatism, and frostbite became commonplace once winter set in.

In December Hodgekiss was admitted to hospital with trench foot and evacuated to England for treatment. He returned to training some three months later, and in October 1917 found himself once again holding the front line in the cold of winter.

In March 1918 the German army launched the first of a series of attacks along the Western Front. The British reeled back in disarray as the Germans advanced towards Amiens, and the Australians were rushed forward to help stem the tide near Villers-

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Bretonneux. When night fell on 24 April, nearly three years to the day after the landing on Gallipoli, the Australians counter-attacked and recaptured Villers-Bretonneux.

After capturing its objective, Hodgekiss' battalion came under heavy machine-gun fire. Without any consideration for his own safety, and with only a flare to light his way, he rushed towards the machine-gun post and silenced the gunner. His action was recognised in the official history of Australia's involvement in the First World War, but no medal was awarded.

A month after this battle, Hodgekiss was wounded when a high-explosive artillery shell fell near his position. He spent several months recovering in England, where he celebrated the end of the war in November 1918. While waiting for his return to Australia, Hodgekiss undertook a training course in sheep shearing, and was repatriated to Australia in June.

Hodgekiss had difficulties adapting to civilian life, and died in 1924 from war-related wounds. He was buried in an unmarked grave in Mildura, but in 2012 his resting place was uncovered by a local researcher. His remains were granted a new headstone with an epitaph that read: "His duty nobly done." That same year, former Minister for Veterans' Affairs Warren Snowden shared Hodgekiss' story as part of the Anzac Day service at the Australian National Memorial in Villers-Bretonneux.

*Activities for research and classroom discussion*

1. This was the first time Hodgekiss had ever travelled outside Australia. How do you think he would have felt as he boarded HMAT *Euripides*?
2. The winter of 1916–17 was one of the worst on record, and illnesses were widespread. The soldier in the foreground has covered his feet with sandbags. Why?



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

E00233

*Soldiers reporting sick to their officers, c. 1917*

3. Painted by official war artist Will Longstaff, this work of art depicts the battle of Villers-Bretonneux. What kind of atmosphere has Longstaff attempted to create? What techniques has he used to achieve this?



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART03028

*Will Longstaff, "Night attack by 13th Brigade on Villers-Bretonneux", c. 1919, oil on canvas, 131 x 208 cm*

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4. The words “N’oublions jamais l’Australie” [Let us never forget Australia] still appear today in the classrooms of the school in Villers-Bretonneux. Do you think it is important to remember what happened in 1918? Why or why not?



*View of the ruined church at Villers-Bretonneux, c. 1918*

5. Many Aboriginal servicemen recalled that their time spent serving in the AIF was the first time they felt they had been treated as equals. Why do you think this was the case? What are some challenges they may have faced upon returning to Australia?