

Local information sources about Australians at war

Public library service

If you have a bibliography or reading list, librarians at your local public library will be able to advise you on available material and assist you to obtain material on inter-library loan.

Database services may be available, which enable you to identify material on your topic. Many libraries now provide access to online databases such as APAIS (indexing Australian periodicals, newspapers, books, conference proceedings, in the field of social science) or MIHILIST (indexing Australian military history in books, journals, conference proceedings and newspapers).

In capital cities, Australian collections in the state libraries will have relevant information. Many public libraries also maintain a local history collection, which may contain relevant material.

Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL)

Some RSLs have collections of material which they may make available. All RSLs should be able to put you in touch with ex-servicemen and women who would be willing to talk about their experiences.

The RSL can also advise you about ex-service associations. Many associations have published a unit history. These associations may also assist with contacting former members of an individual's unit or allow relatives to attend reunions.

Historical and genealogical societies

Most local historical or genealogical societies will have information about the people listed on local war memorials: some have libraries and collections of other historical material they would be willing to make available.

Newspaper offices

Many local newspaper offices retain back files of their newspapers which may be made available. Newspapers are good sources of biographical information about service personnel. Newspaper research, however, is very time consuming. It is advisable to start with known dates of service. Many historical local newspapers are now accessible online via Trove, the National Library of Australia discovery database.

Memorials

Most towns and cities will have a war memorial, usually occupying a prominent place. Those will often have a list of individuals from that locality who served with the armed forces. Honour boards and plaques can also be found in schools, local government offices, major employers, clubs and churches.

National Archives of Australia

There are regional offices of the National Archives of Australia in each state, the Australian Capital Territory, and the Northern Territory. These offices hold records of Commonwealth government departments and agencies. Particularly relevant are those of the departments of Defence, Army, Navy, Air, Transport, Supply, External (or Foreign) Affairs, Labour and National Service, and Attorney-General. The RecordSearch database [www.naa.gov.au/collection/search/] lists the details of official records held by the Australian War Memorial and National Archives of Australia offices.

Trove

Trove [<http://trove.nla.gov.au>] is a free, online discovery service developed by the National Library of Australia. It provides a repository for Australian material, and includes books, theses, journals, articles, pictures, photographs, archival material, digitised historic newspapers, music and more. Some material is available for viewing online, and locations are provided for print and paper-based material.