

provide Australians with much needed joy through the emerging Great Depression in Australia and post-World War II recovery. Between 1929 and 1931 the racehorse Phar Lap dominated Australia's racing industry, at one stage winning fourteen races in a row.^[303] Famous victories included the 1930 Melbourne Cup, following an assassination attempt and carrying 9 stone 12 pounds weight.^[304] Phar Lap sailed for the United States in 1931, going on to win North America's richest race, the Agua Caliente Handicap in 1932. Soon after, on the cusp of US success, Phar Lap developed suspicious symptoms and died. Theories swirled that the champion race horse had been poisoned and a devoted Australian public went into shock.^[305] The 1938 British Empire Games were held in Sydney from 5–12 February, timed to coincide with Sydney's sesqui-centenary (150 years since the foundation of British settlement in Australia). Until the late 1930s, defence was not a significant issue for Australians. At the 1937 elections, both political parties advocated increased defence spending, in the context of increased Japanese aggression in China and Germany's aggression in Europe. There was a difference in opinion over how the defence spending should be allocated however. The United Australia Party government emphasised co-operation with Britain in "a policy of imperial defence." The lynchpin of this was the British naval base at Singapore and the Royal Navy battle fleet "which, it was hoped, would use it in time of need."^[306] Defence spending in the inter-war years reflected this priority. In the period 1921–1936 totalled £40 million on the Royal Australian Navy, £20 million on the Australian Army and £6 million on the Royal Australian Air Force (established in 1921, the "youngest" of the three services). In 1939, the Navy, which included two heavy cruisers and four light cruisers, was the service best equipped for war.^[307] Fearing Japanese intentions in the Pacific, Menzies established independent embassies in Tokyo and Washington to receive independent advice about developments.^[308] Gavin Long argues that the Labor opposition urged greater national self-reliance through a buildup of manufacturing and more emphasis on the Army and RAAF, as Chief of the General Staff, John Lavarack also advocated.^[309] In November 1936, Labor leader John Curtin said "The dependence of Australia upon the competence, let alone the readiness, of British statesmen to send forces to our aid is too dangerous a hazard upon which to found Australia's defence policy."^[310] According to John Robertson, "some British leaders had also realised that their country could not fight Japan and Germany at the same time." But "this was never discussed candidly at...meeting(s) of Australian and British defence planners", such as the 1937 Imperial Conference.^[311] By September 1939 the Australian Army numbered 3,000 regulars.^[312] A recruiting campaign in late 1938, led by Major-General Thomas Blamey increased the reserve militia to almost 80,000.^[313] The first division raised for war was designated the 6th Division, of the 2nd AIF, there being 5 Militia Divisions on paper and a 1st AIF in the First World War. On 3 September 1939, the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, made a national radio broadcast: "My fellow Australians. It is my melancholy duty to inform you, officially, that, in consequence of the persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her, and that, as a result, Australia is also at war." Thus began Australia's involvement in the six-year global conflict. Australians were to fight in an extraordinary variety of locations, from withstanding the advance of Hitler's Panzers in the Siege of Tobruk; to turning back the advance of the Imperial Japanese Army in the New Guinea Campaign. From bomber missions over Europe and Mediterranean naval engagements, to facing Japanese mini-sub raids on Sydney Harbour and devastating air raids on the city of Darwin.^[314] The recruitment of a volunteer military force for service at home and abroad was announced, the 2nd Australian Imperial Force and a citizen militia organised for local defence. Troubled by Britain's failure to increase defences at Singapore, Menzies was cautious in committing troops to Europe. By the end of June 1940, France, Norway, Denmark and the Low Countries had fallen to Nazi Germany. Britain stood alone with its dominions. Menzies called for "all-out war", increasing federal powers and introducing conscription. Menzies' minority government came to rely on just two independents after the 1940 election. In January 1941, Menzies flew to Britain to discuss the weakness of Singapore's defences. Arriving in London during The Blitz, Menzies was invited into Winston Churchill's British War Cabinet for the duration of his visit. Returning to Australia, with the threat of Japan imminent and with the Australian army suffering badly in the Greek and Crete campaigns, Menzies re-approached the Labor Party to form a War Cabinet. Unable to secure their support, and with an unworkable parliamentary majority, Menzies resigned as Prime Minister. The Coalition held office for another month, before the independents switched allegiance and John Curtin was sworn in as Prime Minister.^[309] Eight weeks later, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. From 1940 to 1941, Australian forces played prominent roles in the fighting in the Mediterranean theatre, including Operation Compass, the Siege of Tobruk, the Greek campaign, the Battle of Crete, the Syria-Lebanon Campaign and the Second Battle of El Alamein. A garrison of around 14,000 Australian soldiers, commanded by Lieutenant General Leslie Morshead was besieged in Tobruk, Libya by the German-Italian army of General Erwin Rommel between April and August 1941. The Nazi propagandist Lord Haw Haw derided the defenders as 'rats', a term the soldiers adopted as an ironic compliment: "The Rats of Tobruk".^[317] Vital in the defence of Egypt and the Suez Canal, the Siege saw the advance of the German army halted for the first time and provided a morale boost for the British Commonwealth, which was then standing alone against Hitler.^[318] The war came closer to home when HMAS *Sydney* was lost with all hands in battle with the German raider *Kormoran* in November 1941. With most of Australia's best forces committed to fight against Hitler in the Middle East, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, the US naval base in Hawaii, on 8 December 1941 (eastern Australia time). The British battleship HMS *Prince of Wales* and battlecruiser HMS *Repulse* sent to defend Singapore were sunk soon afterwards. Australia was ill-prepared for an attack, lacking armaments, modern fighter aircraft, heavy bombers, and aircraft carriers. While demanding reinforcements from Churchill, on 27 December 1941 Curtin published an historic announcement:^[318] "The Australian Government... regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the democracies' fighting plan. Without inhibitions of any kind, I make it clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom." British Malaya quickly collapsed, shocking the Australian nation. British, Indian and Australian troops made a disorganised last stand at Singapore, before surrendering on 15 February 1942. Around 15,000 Australian soldiers became prisoners of war. Curtin predicted that the "battle for Australia" would now follow. On 19 February, Darwin suffered a devastating air raid, the first time the Australian mainland had ever been attacked by enemy forces. Over the following 19 months, Australia was attacked from the air almost 100 times. Two battle-hardened Australian divisions were already steaming from the Middle East for Singapore. Churchill wanted them diverted to Burma, but Curtin refused, and anxiously awaited their return to Australia. US President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered his commander in the Philippines, General Douglas MacArthur, to formulate a Pacific defence plan with Australia in March 1942. Curtin agreed to place Australian forces under the command of General MacArthur, who became "Supreme Commander of the South West Pacific". Curtin had thus presided over a fundamental shift in Australia's foreign policy. MacArthur moved his headquarters to Melbourne in March 1942 and American troops began massing in Australia. In late May 1942, Japanese midget submarines sank an accommodation vessel in a daring raid on Sydney Harbour. On 8 June 1942, two Japanese submarines briefly shelled Sydney's eastern suburbs and the city of Newcastle in an effort to isolate Australia, the Japanese planned a seaborne invasion of Port Moresby, in the Australian Territory of New Guinea. In May 1942, the US Navy engaged the Japanese in the Battle of the Coral Sea and halted the attack. The Battle of Midway in June effectively defeated the Japanese navy and the Japanese army launched a land assault on Moresby from the north.^[376] Between July and November 1942, Australian forces repulsed Japanese attempts on the city by way of the Kokoda Track, in the highlands of New Guinea. The Battle of Milne Bay in August 1942 was the first Allied defeat of Japanese land forces. Meanwhile, in North Africa, the Axis Powers had driven Allies back into Egypt. A turning point came between July and November 1942, when Australia's 9th Division played a crucial role in some of the heaviest fighting of the First and