

## = Tanks in the Australian Army =

The Australian Army has used tanks from after the First World War , through the interwar period , the Second World War , the Cold War and to the present day . Throughout this period the Army has primarily been a light infantry force , with its tanks mainly being used in the direct support role . The Australian Army 's tanks have seen combat during the Second World War and the Vietnam War , where they proved successful despite some of the designs employed being considered obsolete . The first Australian tanks were a small number of British light tanks which were operated mainly for training purposes during the 1920s and 1930s .

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 led to a significant expansion of Australia 's armoured force . From 1942 large numbers of American light and medium tanks were delivered to Australia , along with British Matilda IIs . In addition , a small number of Australian @-@ designed Sentinel tanks were delivered to the Army during 1942 and 1943 , but the type was never issued to combat units . Three armoured divisions capable of independent operations were formed during the Second World War , but none were deployed outside Australia . Many individual units later fought against the Japanese in the Pacific , although only in regimental strength .

With few modern tanks at the time of the Korean War , the Australian Army had to rely on British and US tank support . During the 1950s the Army standardised on the British Centurion tank , which saw action in Vietnam and remained in service until it was replaced with the German Leopard 1 in the mid @-@ 1970s . After an internal debate on whether the Army should continue to operate tanks as part of its force structure , the Australian Government replaced the Leopards with a small fleet of American M1A1 Abrams tanks in 2007 , which are now the Army 's only tanks . In addition to these types , the Army has operated small numbers of other tank designs for training and evaluation purposes .

## = Overview =

The operational use of tanks during the latter part of the First World War established the validity of the tank concept . After the war , many nations recognised the importance of tanks , but only a few had the industrial resources to design and build them . During and after the First World War , Britain and France were the intellectual leaders in tank design , while other countries generally followed , adopting their designs . The Australian Army , which had initially had bad experiences operating with British tanks during the early stages of their employment during the war , had come to realise their utility after the battles of 1918 , and in the post @-@ war period sought to build its own armoured force . Initially , the Australian Army procured a number of British @-@ made Vickers tanks , and American M3 Grant and M3 Stuart tanks , but it later went on to build and design some of its own during the Second World War . Since then Australia 's armoured forces have fought in a number of battles during key conflicts , such as those in the Second World War and the Vietnam War . Primarily a light infantry force for most of its history , the Australian Army has used tanks mainly in the direct support role as opposed to engaging in sweeping manoeuvre against other tanks .

## = Inter @-@ war period =

After the First World War , many European countries attempted to mechanise their cavalry . In parallel , Australian cavalry also shifted to military armoured units . The Australian Army ( like the US , French , British and Russian armies ) tried various methods to integrate modern armour into their traditional horse cavalry formations , as part of a gradual process of mechanisation between 1920 and 1940 . Experiences during the final year of the war , such as the Battle of Hamel in July 1918 and later during the Battle of Amiens in August where the Australians had fought as part of an attack by 10 Allied divisions ? including Canadian , British and French forces ? supported by more than 500 British tanks , had shown the impact that tanks could have on the battlefield . As a result , the Australian Army sought to obtain tanks of its own ; however , due to post @-@ war economic measures this was slow in occurring . Four British Vickers Medium Mark II tanks were procured in

1927 to build its force , with the formation of the Australian Tank Corps gazetted on 15 December 1927 . The 1st Tank Section was subsequently was formed as a part @-@ time Militia unit in 1930 . The unit was based at Randwick , New South Wales , and training was initially undertaken at Greenhills , which was part of the Liverpool Military Area , in Sydney .

Despite these initial developments the Depression in the early 1930s largely halted the development of armour in Australia , although a limited capability was maintained by the regular tank cadre which operated mainly in an instructional role . The 1st Tank Section was disbanded in November 1937 with the men and equipment transferred to the newly created 1st Light Tank Company based at Randwick . It was not the Australian Army 's only armoured unit as the Second World War approached . The 2nd Light Tank Company was formed as a Militia unit at Caulfield , Victoria in March 1939 and was also equipped with Vickers Medium Mark II medium tanks . The light tank companies were then equipped with the Light Tank Mark VIa , 10 of which had been acquired to replace the ageing Mark IIs . In addition , the 1st Royal New South Wales Lancers , which had been serving as a Light Horse regiment , having converted from horses to armoured vehicles to become a light cavalry ( reconnaissance ) regiment and took on the role of a motorised machine @-@ gun regiment during the inter @-@ war years . It subsequently saw action in the Second World War as the 1st Armoured Regiment equipped with Matilda infantry tanks .

= = Second World War = =

= = = Armoured formations and campaigns = = =

The outbreak of war in 1939 led to a significant expansion of Australia 's armoured force . At the start of the war , due to the limitations of the Defence Act ( 1903 ) , which prevented the government from sending the Militia to fight outside Australian territory , it was decided to raise an all @-@ volunteer force to serve overseas . This force was known as the Second Australian Imperial Force ( 2nd AIF ) , and many of the 1st Light Horse ( Machine Gun ) Regiment 's members volunteered and were assigned to the 2 / 2nd Machine Gun Battalion , they took part in the fighting in the Mediterranean theatre . With the Australian Army only possessing a total of fourteen tanks ? 10 Mark VIs and four Mark IIs ? orders for modern types were quickly placed in Britain and the United States . Thirteen M3 light tanks arrived in September 1941 , while another 400 more were soon delivered . However , 140 British Matilda tanks would not begin to arrive until July 1942 . Meanwhile , as steps were made to form the 1st Armoured Division in 1941 the armoured vehicles of the 1st and 2nd Light Tank Companies had been withdrawn to equip the newly formed AFV School at Puckapunyal , Victoria . The 1st Light Tank Company was subsequently expanded to form the 3rd Armoured Regiment , while the 2nd Light Tank Company was disbanded .

At the same time each of the four divisions in the 2nd AIF was authorised a cavalry reconnaissance regiment equipped with light tanks and scout carriers . While all four divisions were authorised a divisional cavalry regiment , only three regiments were eventually formed as it was believed that the 8th Division did not need armoured support in Malaya due to concerns about operating tanks in the jungle . The cavalry regiments of the 2nd AIF divisions operating in Mediterranean theatre against Italian and German forces were initially equipped with the Universal Carrier and unarmoured trucks before being progressively mechanised using British Army equipment , while carriers were also operated by the infantry battalions . A light armoured tracked vehicle they were armed with Bren light machine guns and Boys anti @-@ tank rifles and were widely used by British Commonwealth forces during the World War II . Meanwhile , the Australian Tank Corps was superseded following the formation of the Australian Armoured Corps in July 1941 . In October 1941 two independent light tank squadrons had been formed for service in Malaya ; however , neither was deployed due to a lack of vehicles to equip them .

In North Africa in 1941 , Australian troops were part of the force which captured Tobruk on 22 January as part of Operation Compass , yielding over 25 @,@ 000 prisoners along with 236 field and medium guns , 23 medium tanks and more than 200 other vehicles . During the capture of the

town Australians from the 6th Division Cavalry Regiment had used a number of captured Italian M11 tanks which had been pressed into service due to a lack of their own tanks , painting kangaroos on the side so they would not be attacked by their own side . The regiment 's use of tanks in this fighting was significant , representing the first time that Australian forces had operated tanks in action . The 6th Division Cavalry Regiment later saw service in Syria against the Vichy French . Meanwhile , the 7th Division Cavalry Regiment had been sent to Cyprus in May 1941 , before relieving the 6th Division Cavalry Regiment in July . The regiment subsequently fought a number of actions using a variety of armoured personnel carriers , light tanks , and 2 @-@ pounder anti @-@ tank guns before returning to Australia in March 1942 . The 9th Division Cavalry Regiment later also served in Syria and was the first Australian armoured unit to be equipped with modern vehicles , receiving British Crusader Mark II medium tanks and M3 Stuart light tanks . A number of captured French Renault R35 tanks were also used . The regiment returned to Australia in early 1943 . Between mid @-@ 1942 and early 1944 the Divisional Cavalry Regiments were converted to commando units and subsequently fought in the Pacific against the Japanese as dismounted infantry .

The Australian 1st Armoured Division was raised in 1941 as part of the 2nd AIF . While the division was originally to be deployed to North Africa in late 1941 , it was retained in Australia following the outbreak of the Pacific War . Universal Carriers were issued to the armoured regiments in 1941 and early 1942 for training purposes and to provide the Army with a minimal armoured capability as an emergency measure until the arrival of tanks ordered from the United States . The 1st Armoured Division 's armoured regiments subsequently began re @-@ equipping with M3 Grant medium tanks and M3 Stuart light tanks in April and May 1942 . Following this , the division was concentrated in northern New South Wales where it completed its training with a series of large exercises around Narrabri . The 2 / 6th Armoured Regiment was the first unit of the division to see action , deploying to Port Moresby and Milne Bay in New Guinea in September . In December two of its squadrons were subsequently shipped to Buna on the north coast of Papua to help break the deadlock in the Battle of Buna ? Gona and although the lightly armoured M3 Stuart tanks proved to be unsuited to jungle warfare and suffered heavy casualties , the regiment played an important role in the eventual Australian victory at Buna during fighting between December 1942 and January 1943 . Meanwhile , in January 1943 the remainder of the division was moved to the area between Perth and Geraldton , Western Australia , where it formed part of III Corps , which was tasked to counter the perceived threat of a Japanese invasion of Western Australia . The 1st Armoured Division formed a key element of Australia 's mainland defences , but after that threat passed it was disbanded in Western Australia in September 1943 .

The 1st Light Horse ( Machine Gun ) Regiment ( Royal New South Wales Lancers ) was renamed the 1st Machine Gun Regiment in December 1941 . In March 1942 , the regiment was again renamed , being converted to the 1st Motor Regiment . This change was short lived however , and it was changed again in May to the 1st Tank Battalion , becoming part of the Australian 3rd Army Tank Brigade , equipped with Matilda tanks . In 1943 the unit became part of the 4th Armoured Brigade and was designated as an AIF unit , thus allowing it to be deployed to any theatre of the conflict , and it deployed to New Guinea in August 1943 and fought against the Japanese in the Battles of Sattelberg and Lakona . The unit was then withdrawn to Australia in mid @-@ 1944 . On 1 June 1944 , the unit was renamed the 1st Armoured Regiment , and in May 1945 , it took part in the amphibious landings at Balikpapan in support of the 7th Division , being involved in one of the final Australian campaigns of the war in Borneo .

The Australian 2nd Armoured Division was established on 21 February 1942 by redesignating and reorganising the 2nd Motor Division ( which was previously the 2nd Cavalry Division ) . As an armoured division , it consisted of one armoured brigade of three armoured regiments , and one motor brigade consisting of three motor regiments , supported by an armoured car regiment . It was equipped with M3 Grant medium tanks and M3 Stuart light tanks . The 2nd Armoured Division was disbanded in Queensland on 19 February 1943 . Similarly , the Australian 3rd Armoured Division was established on 15 November 1942 by redesignating the 1st Motor Division ( which was previously the 1st Cavalry Division ) . As an armoured division the 3rd Armoured was equipped with

M3 Grant medium tanks and M3 Stuart light tanks . The division 's 3rd Motor Brigade was gradually disbanded between March to August 1943 and the 3rd Armoured Division was disbanded in Queensland on 19 October 1943 as a result of manpower shortages in the Australian Army .

The Australian 4th Armoured Brigade was formed in January 1943 to provide armoured support for Australian Army units operating in the South West Pacific Area . The brigade was never intended to serve as a single formation , rather its role was to provide a pool of armoured units from which units and sub @-@ units could be provided to augment infantry forces . The brigade was also responsible for developing doctrine and specialised armoured vehicles for armoured warfare in tropical terrain . In keeping with the brigade 's task of providing armoured units to other formations , its armoured regiments were organised into self @-@ supporting regimental groups and the brigade did not possess the reconnaissance , infantry and other supporting elements which were common in World War II @-@ era armoured brigades . Elements of the brigade saw action in the Huon Peninsula campaign of 1943 ? 44 and attached to the Australian 6th Division during the Aitape ? Wewak campaign from October 1944 until the end of the war .

Australian tanks also played a role in the Borneo Campaign of 1945 . In a series of amphibious assaults between 1 May and 21 July , the Australian I Corps , under Lieutenant General Leslie Morshead , attacked Japanese forces occupying the island . The Matilda tanks of C Squadron , 2 / 9th Armoured Regiment were attached to the 26th Brigade Group during the campaign which opened with Oboe 1 , with a landing on the small island of Tarakan , off the north east coast on 1 May 1945 , with the fighting continuing into June with the tanks taking part in the advance along the Anzac and Bourke Highways , helping to secure the airfield and the oilfields . This was followed by Oboe 6 , in which the remainder of the 2 / 9th Armoured Regiment was attached to the 9th Division , on 10 June 1945 with simultaneous assaults on the island of Labuan and the coast of Brunei , in the north west of Borneo . B Squadron took part in the landing at Labuan supporting the 24th Brigade 's advance , assisting in the capture of the airfield , and various positions along the MacArthur Road . At the same time , A Squadron landed on the Borneo peninsula , securing the town before being used in a defensive role due to the impenetrable terrain further inland , which was only passable on foot .

A week later , the Australians followed up with attacks on Japanese positions around Weston on the north @-@ eastern part of Brunei Bay . The 1st Armoured Regiment and Armoured Squadron ( Special Equipment ) operating Matilda II tanks were attached to the Australian 7th Division and took part in the Battle of Balikpapan which was the concluding stage of the Operation Oboe . The landings took place on 1 July 1945 and had been preceded by heavy bombing and shelling by Australian and US air and naval forces . Landing with the infantry , the tanks ? including Matilda tank dozers , newly modified Matilda Frog flamethrower tanks , and a Coventanter bridge @-@ layer ? mainly operated in small detachments in close support of the troops , even though the terrain offered the opportunity for more mobile tactics to be employed . Although the Australians were ultimately successful , casualties among the infantry were heavy and during this time the regiment was involved in some hard fighting , with the Japanese able to make effective use of strong natural defences in conjunction with minefields and anti @-@ tank ditches to compensate for their lack of anti @-@ tank guns . With the fighting coming to a conclusion however , tank operations ceased on 24 July .

Overall , while the armoured units that were involved in operations overseas acquitted themselves well , despite significant investment in the development of tank forces , they ultimately played a limited role in the Australian war effort . Three armoured divisions capable of independent operations were formed during World War II , but none were deployed outside Australia . Many individual units later fought against the Japanese in the Pacific , although only in regimental strength . Despite initial delays in receiving adequate equipment a considerable force had subsequently been developed , although it was not until late 1942 that the first units saw action in support of the infantry in New Guinea . Yet the need to quickly deploy units following the rapid Japanese advance and the nature of the terrain in the South West Pacific Area in which the bulk of Australian forces would fight meant they were unable to be deployed as a formation . Meanwhile , as the threat of invasion passed the need for large armoured formations had lessened , and the divisions had been broken

up between mid 1943 and 1944 with only one operational brigade remaining by the end of the war . However , despite using tanks that were obsolete by the standards of the war in Europe the contribution of the Australian Armoured Corps to the success of later campaigns was significant , lessening casualties among the infantry and demonstrating the role of tanks in jungle operations . The Matilda proved the most successful tank used in jungle fighting by the Australian Army , achieving immediate success following its deployment to New Guinea in 1943 due to its heavy armour , manoeuvrability in close terrain , and the effectiveness of its 2 pounder against Japanese bunkers .

= = = Australian tank program and development = = =

Following Japan 's entry into the war in late 1941 , the Australian government initially feared they might invade the Australian mainland , and with the United Kingdom unable to spare tank production for Australia , a program to produce an indigenous tank was initiated . The Australian tank program designed and developed a cruiser tank called the Sentinel tank , which was the first tank to be built with a hull cast as a single piece , and the only tank to be produced in quantity in Australia . The few Sentinels that were built never saw action as Australia 's armoured divisions had been equipped by that time with British and American tanks . Due to a lack of experience in tank design a mission was sent to the US to examine the M3 design and a British officer with many years tank design experience was provided by the United Kingdom . The design used existing parts where available from the M3 , simplified where necessary to match the machining capacity present in Australia . The hull was cast as a single piece , as was the turret ; a technique not used on the hull of any other tanks of the era .

By the beginning of 1943 the Australian Armoured Corps was at its peak with 1 ,460 tanks on strength , the majority of them Matildas and light and medium M3s . Meanwhile , 65 production AC1 vehicles and one AC3 had been completed by June 1943 . That year , the 3rd Army Tank Battalion was equipped with a squadron of AC1 tanks , which were modified to resemble German tanks and used in the filming of the movie , The Rats of Tobruk . This appears to have been the only time a squadron of Sentinels was used for any purpose . Nevertheless , the completed Sentinel tanks were used for evaluation purposes only and were not issued to operational armoured units , as the Australian Cruiser tank program was terminated in July 1943 . By this time the Japanese threat had lessened , and US and British M3 Grant and Matilda tanks were being supplied to Australia from the Middle East , and it was felt that Australia 's manufacturing resources would be better spent on railway locomotive production .

Experience during operations later led to the development of specialised armoured equipment by Australian industry for use in jungle operations in the South West Pacific Area . A range of modifications were subsequently developed for the Matilda , including the fitting of wire mesh screens or metal tracking over the engine and air louvres to protect it against magnetic mines , an armoured shield on top of the hull to protect the turret ring , a microphone and headset attached to the rear to act as a telephone for infantry co operation , waterproofing equipment for deep wading , a tank dozer , a flamethrowing tank called the Matilda Frog , and one capable of firing a salvo of naval mortar bombs , known as the Matilda Hedgehog . Trials were also undertaken to fit air conditioning to the Matildas to improve the endurance of crews in tropical conditions . Limited modifications were also undertaken on the M3 Grant medium tanks , including the fitting of a small number of dozer variants and trials to waterproof the vehicles for wading .

= = Post 1945 = =

Following the end of the Second World War the Australian Army was demobilised and the 1st Armoured Regiment was reconstituted as a reserve formation in the Citizen Military Forces ( CMF ) on 1 April 1948 , adopting the designation of the 1st Armoured Regiment ( Royal New South Wales Lancers ) , in recognition of its previous history . During this time the regiment continued to operate Matilda tanks and was based at Lancer Barracks in Parramatta , in New South Wales . However , in

1949 the regiment was renamed the 1st Royal New South Wales Lancers and its battle honours and history were perpetuated by this unit , to reallocate the former name to the tank regiment that was to be established in the new Australian Regular Army .

The 1st Armoured Regiment was formed as a tank unit in the new Australian Regular Army on 7 July 1949 . Initially , the new regiment was equipped with Churchill tanks , although this was only a temporary measure until Centurion tanks could be acquired . However , due to the perceived unsuitability of the Churchill and the late arrival of the new platform , the regiment was not deployed as part of Australia 's commitment to the Korean War , although a number of officers served on exchange with British and US formations and the unit provided machine @-@ gunners and signallers to Australian infantry battalions as reinforcements . Meanwhile , the infantry had to rely on US and British tanks for armoured support . The first Centurions finally began arriving in June 1952 , with the regiment receiving 39 tanks . By this time though British and Canadian armoured units were operating in sufficient strength in Korea and there was no scope for the deployment of Australian forces .

A number of other CMF units operated M3 Grant medium tanks in the immediate post ? war period , including the 8th / 13th Victorian Mounted Rifles ( 8th / 13th VMR ) and the 4th / 19th Prince of Wales 's Light Horse ( 4th / 19th PWLH ) , before converting to Centurions . Meanwhile , the last of the Matildas were withdrawn from service with the CMF in 1955 . Later , in 1956 the 1st Royal New South Wales Lancers merged with the 15th Northern River Lancers to form the 1st / 15th Royal New South Wales Lancers ( 1st / 15th RNSWL ) , which was also equipped with a small number of Centurion tanks . The CMF armoured units were rationalised in 1957 and consequently the change to the pentropic structure in the 1960s mostly resulted in a change in role only , with the 4th / 19th PWLH changing from an armoured unit to a reconnaissance regiment . However , the two CMF armoured brigade headquarters were disbanded . Following additional orders , a total of 127 Centurions had been acquired by 1961 , including 117 tanks , four bridgelayers and six Armoured Recovery Vehicles .

= = Vietnam War = =

In May 1965 the 1st Battalion , Royal Australian Regiment had been deployed on active service to South Vietnam , with armoured mobility support initially provided by 1 Troop , A Squadron , 4th / 19th Prince of Wales Light Horse equipped with the new M113A1 Armoured Personnel Carrier . The Australian government subsequently increased its commitment to a two @-@ battalion brigade , known as the 1st Australian Task Force ( 1 ATF ) , in March 1966 . Based at Nui Dat in Phuoc Tuy Province the force included an APC squadron but no tanks . However , in October 1967 it was announced that 1 ATF would be expanded to three infantry battalions , while additional supporting arms , including a tank squadron , would also be added to the force . As such in February 1968 , C Squadron , 1st Armoured Regiment was sent to Vietnam , with a total strength of 20 Centurion tanks . However , two of the four tank troops were initially held back until the Centurions had proved themselves capable of operating in the conditions . The tank squadron reached full strength on 5 September 1968 .

Over the next four years all three of the regiment 's operational squadrons eventually served in Vietnam , providing invaluable close support to the infantry , particularly during the clearance of Viet Cong bunker systems . Although their value in Vietnam was originally questioned by some , they proved a powerful weapon in both offence and defence , and were responsible for limiting infantry casualties . The Centurions were able to move through the countryside more easily than expected and although they were vulnerable to anti @-@ tank weapons and mines , their firepower and shock action had a decisive effect on the battlefield . The tanks played a significant role in the Battle of Coral ? Balmoral in May and June 1968 .

In February 1969 , C Squadron was relieved by B Squadron . On 6 ? 7 June , B Squadron was involved in a fierce action during the Battle of Binh Ba , a village 5 kilometres ( 3 @.@ 1 mi ) north of Nui Dat . One Australian was killed and 10 wounded , while Viet Cong and North Vietnamese losses included at least 107 killed , six wounded and eight captured . By late @-@ 1970 Australia was

beginning to reduce its commitment to the war and the size of 1ATF was again reduced from three infantry battalions to two . The tanks , however , continued operations and were involved in heavy fighting at Long Khanh on 6 ? 7 June 1971 , as well as numerous smaller actions . The last elements of the regiment were subsequently withdrawn from Vietnam in September 1971 . A total of 58 Centurions had served in Vietnam ; 42 had suffered battle damage , of which six were beyond repair , while two crewmen had been killed in action .

= = Post Cold War to the present = =

There were changes for the 1st Armoured Regiment , and for the Australian Army , with the abolition of National Service after the end of Australian involvement in Vietnam depleting its strength to the point where training was severely restricted until it was reinforced during 1974 . Meanwhile , the reserve 1st / 15th RNSWL and 8th / 13th VMR had both continued to operate as small number of Centurions in the early 1970s ; however , they were both later re @-@ roled and equipped with M113s , while the later was eventually disbanded . The last CMF armoured regiment gave up its tanks in 1971 , leaving the regular 1st Armoured Regiment as the only tank unit in the Australian Army . Meanwhile , the Centurions were mechanically worn @-@ out , and although additional vehicles had been acquired from New Zealand and British Army stocks , by 1972 the fleet was in need of replacement .

During 1973 , B Squadron , 1st Armoured Regiment ? designated the Medium Tank Trials Unit ( MTTU ) ? evaluated the German Leopard 1 against the American M60A1 Patton as a replacement for the obsolete Centurions . The Leopard was judged the superior tank , and 90 gun tanks , eight Leopard 1 Armoured Recovery Vehicles Medium and five Leopard 1 bridge layer tanks were ordered . The Australian tanks were designated the Leopard AS1 , and were based on the Leopard 1A3 which had been built for the German Army . The main difference between the Australian and German tanks was the inclusion of a SABCA fire control system , equipment to allow the tank to better operate in the tropics , additional storage boxes on the sides of the tank as well as improved trunnion bearings and combustion cleaners . These tanks were delivered to Australia in batches between 1976 and 1978 . During the Leopard 's service very little in the way of upgrades were undertaken , and by the 1990s they had become obsolete .

After an internal debate on whether the Army should continue to operate tanks as part of its force structure , in 2004 the Australian Government decided to replace the Leopards with a small fleet of American M1A1 Abrams tanks to provide close support for infantry when operating in jungle or urban areas . After 31 years of service the Leopards were subsequently replaced by 59 M1A1 Abrams AIM , which began entering service in 2007 . Seven M88A2 Hercules Armoured Recovery Vehicles ( ARVs ) were also acquired . The Leopards never saw operational service , although during the 1999 East Timor crisis the regiment was placed on standby to deploy in the event the conflict escalated , while it was not deployed during Australia 's involvement in the 2003 invasion of Iraq . By this time the Leopards were considered unsuitable for deployment in a high threat environment .

Today , the 1st Armoured Regiment is based in Darwin as part of the mechanised 1st Brigade , and is the only armoured unit in the Australian Army to be equipped with main battle tanks , operating the M1A1 Abrams AIM . A small number of M1A1s are also operated by the School of Armour at Puckapunyal for training purposes . However , as part of the Plan Beersheba reorganisation the tanks currently operated by the 1st Armoured Regiment will be split across each of the three armoured cavalry regiments assigned to the Army 's multirole combat brigades located in Brisbane , Darwin and Townsville . It has been reported that this plan may require the acquisition of an additional 10 ? 12 M1A1 Abrams and six M88A2 Hercules ARVs in order to allow the formation of three tank squadrons . Obstacle breaching and bridgelaying variants may also be acquired at a later date .

= = List of tanks used by the Australian Army = =

The following tanks have been used by the Australian Army :

Vickers Medium Mark II

Vickers Light Tank Mark VIA

M3 Stuart

M3 Lee ? Grant and Lee variants , some used post @-@ war to 1955 , others converted to Yeramba self @-@ propelled artillery

Matilda II

Australian Cruiser Tank Mk1 ? Sentinel

Sherman Tank ? three for trials purposes only

Churchill

Centurion

Leopard 1 Main Battle Tank

M1A1 Abrams AIM Main Battle Tank

= = Gallery = =