



# Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

VA050

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## LIFE AFTER WAR EXHIBITION OPENS AT THE SHRINE

An exhibition showing how Australia coped with the debilitating effects of the First World War on our young nation will be opened today at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin.

*Shell Shocked: Australia After Armistice* shows that while a great many Australians celebrated the end of the war, the following years brought a period of grief and unparalleled adjustment which quickly tempered the joy of victory.

"Of the more than 330,000 Australians who left our shores to serve overseas during the First World War, more than 61,000 never returned home. Up to 160,000 returned injured or ill and for many their recovery was slow or life-long," Mr Griffin said.

"In 1938, twenty years after the war, there remained more than 1,600 veterans in homes for the permanently incapacitated, and around 23,000 seeking care from repatriation hospitals.

"The human toll on a young nation is highlighted in the exhibition through records, photographs, letters and medical reports which reflect many personal stories of Australians from different walks of life.

"The exhibition shows the many ways Australia and Australians coped with the aftermath of the war. Its stories include the lasting impact on the women of the Australian Army Nursing Service, the anxiety of those at home and the introduction of the Repatriation system which fulfilled the promise to care for those who suffered from their war service and provide for the dependants of those who did not return.

"*Shell Shocked* also shows the treatment of returned Indigenous servicemen – equal as soldiers but not as civilians, the internment camps for 'enemy aliens', and the community and government response in building memorials on battlefields and here, at home, post war," Mr Griffin said.

"It is an insightful exhibition into what was a truly daunting time for our young country."

Based on files from the National Archives of Australia and funded by a grant from the Department of Veterans' Affairs, *Shell Shocked* is on a national tour and will be on display at the Shrine until 26 July, covering the 90th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919.

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