Chapter 7

A question of priorities: More rationing

As the war in the Pacific continued to move further away from Australia the demand for munitions and other war goods lessened but food requirements for the armed forces rose sharply. Unfavourable climatic conditions and a shortage of manpower combined to make increased food production difficult, and authorities were hard-pressed to find ways to meet commitments. The government encountered resistance when it attempted to transfer labour to primary production as past experiences of poor rural working conditions made men unwilling to voluntarily accept discharges from the armed services, or to give up the security of work in munitions factories. The only way to procure more meat to fulfil commitments was to ration civilians but this move met with resistance. Similarly, when the existing butter ration had to be cut, miners went on strike. Victory in Europe in May 1945 brought demands for relief from rationing, which the government was in no position to give because of on-going responsibilities. This chapter examines the most difficult era of rationing, the period between the time when invasion fears had vanished and civilians wanted rationing eased, and the end of the war when it was generally expected that rationing would automatically cease.

Arthur Fadden, the Country Party Member for Darling Downs in Queensland, succinctly summed up the position at the beginning of 1944 when he stated in Parliament:

The problem involves priorities ... the food front is of sufficient importance to claim adequate priority treatment in order to enable Australia to make an all-in war effort in the interests of not only
ourselves but also our allies.¹

The obvious key to food production was manpower. In late 1943 the War Cabinet had agreed to release a total of 40,000 men from the services and war production by mid-1944,² but this plan stalled when experienced rural workers proved reluctant to relocate to primary production work, principally because of the difference between conditions and pay in the services and in factories, and conditions and pay in the rural area. Endless time was wasted making arrangements for the transfer of labour, which in the end proved fruitless.³ The need was obvious, but the solution eluded planners. In the meantime production continued to lag, and problems accumulated.

One of the main problems was the supply of meat. Both the United States and Britain wanted more. American troops located in tropical areas were eligible for augmented rations, including a 10 per cent increase in the meat allowance. As more troops were moved to the fighting front demands for increased supplies were constant. Australian authorities negotiated with American administrators in an attempt to get the scale of rations reduced but, although ‘lengthy and delicate’ discussions took place, no mutually acceptable compromise was reached.⁴ United States authorities would not move from the point that Prime Minister John Curtin had publicly agreed that the Australian government would meet all United States food requirements while American troops were stationed in the Pacific area. In the end, the Australian War Cabinet agreed to meet United States demands.⁵ At the same time, the war in Europe

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¹ A. Fadden, 10 February 1944, C.P.D., Vol. 177, pp. 90-1.
² ibid.
³ Department of Commerce and Agriculture Report to Production Executive, 17 January 1944, A.A., Series A2866, Item XM1 Vol. 4.
⁴ Department of Commerce and Agriculture Agendum No. 1944/3, 14 June 1944, in Records of C. Boris Schedvin, A.W.M., Series 219, Item 59; The American services ration comprised 4758 calories per day, while the Australian services ration was 3844 calories per day, S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin, War Economy 1942-45, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1977, p. 529; Except for a skeleton staff, the American army had completely moved from Australia by the latter half of October 1944, Herald, 21 October 1944, in Andrew Bolt (ed.), Our Home Front 1939-45, Wilkinson Books, Melbourne, 1995, p. 239.
⁵ Butlin and Schedvin, op. cit, p. 529.
was drawing to a close and Britain was also seeking increased quantities of meat. Australia wanted to comply with British requests in order to advance on-going negotiations for long-term, post-war export contracts.6

The only way Australia could satisfy the increasing demands for meat was to ration the civilian population. Government agencies had become thoroughly daunted by the difficulties encountered administering rationing, and tended to act warily, generally delaying the imposition of additional restrictions for as long as possible. Despite the urgent need to save meat, rationing did not commence until 17 January 1944. Meat was the last item to be rationed, and with the experience gained from the rationing of other goods, it should not have caused any undue problems. However, in practice, the Rationing Commission admitted that meat caused more trouble than any other item.7 This came about because of a number of factors, including timing. By early 1944 civilians were seeking relief from the seemingly endless flow of restrictions, many of which were regarded as mere bureaucratic interference.8 The meat trade was deliberately disruptive and whether this was due to the timing of rationing or whether the industry would have resented regulation whenever it had been imposed, is uncertain.9 Meat itself, because of its very nature, was destined to be a difficult product to ration. The difference between live weight, carcass weight and over-the-counter weight alone was destined to cause problems. Then there was the way the administration was organised.

The government's decision that the administration of rationing would be shared between the Rationing Commission, the Commonwealth Controller of Meat

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7 Departmental History of Rationing of Clothing and Food 1942-1945 (as administered by the Commonwealth Rationing Commission), A.A., Series CP590/1/1, Item Bun. 1, p.184.
8 For example, Dedman's edict about Christmas advertising, and standardisation of clothing, such as short shirt tails.
9 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 184.
Supplies and the Department of Supply created inherent problems. Departmental co-ordination was never the strongest part of wartime governmental organisation, and splitting responsibility between departments always created difficulties and caused time-consuming dithering. With meat rationing the Department of Supply told the Rationing Commission the amount of meat which would be available for civilian consumption, and the Rationing Commission then had to devise an equitable meat ration scale which kept total civilian consumption within the given limit. The Controller of Meat Supplies was given the responsibility of ensuring that sufficient supplies of livestock were made available to slaughterers to meet civilian rationing requirements throughout Australia, except in certain sparsely settled areas, which were declared 'Special Meat Areas' and were exempted from meat rationing, largely because in those areas a variety of foodstuffs was not readily available. As with other rationed goods, the Rationing Commission had to ensure that supplies were available to meet the ration, and to do this the flow of meat from slaughterer to butcher had to be controlled.\(^\text{10}\)

Before formulating a ration scale the Rationing Commission sought advice from the Nutrition Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council regarding the minimum amount of meat needed to provide adequate nutrition. The committee's recommendation was that 2.2 pounds of fresh meat per person per week was sufficient for persons over 9 years of age, and that children under 9 years needed half that amount, providing other protein in the form of eggs and milk was available.\(^\text{11}\) Because of the scarcity of accurate statistics regarding consumption, the Rationing Commission had no way of knowing what quantity of meat the average civilian normally consumed each week. Taking the committee's recommendation as a

\(^{10}\) Butlin and Schedvin, op. cit., p. 307; Illustration 5:1 after page 102 shows the Special Meat Areas; To stop inhabitants of these areas sending coupons to residents in rationed areas meat coupons were removed from ration books issued to people living in unrationed areas, Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 156.

\(^{11}\) C.P.D., 17 February 1944, pp. 327-8.
guide, and adding a little extra to try to overcome objections to rationing, the Rationing Commission set the ration allowance at 2.25 pounds per week per person over 9 years of age, and 1.125 pounds for children under the age of 9 years. Because of the guesswork factor it was not known precisely what reduction of consumption this ration would achieve, but it was estimated at 30 per cent. In making this assessment authorities stated that they were well aware that the estimated savings 'may not be realised on account of the black-marketing which will be very difficult to control'.

Knowing that Australians were amongst the 'world's largest consumers of meat' the Rationing Commission realised that many would be 'inconvenienced' under rationing. To 'offset' this the Rationing Commission, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Department of Health, rushed the preparation of a booklet entitled 'Planning Meat Ration Meals' and posted a copy to every home in Australia 'within a month or so' of the start of rationing. The booklet was full of 'helpful' hints, and recipes that used the less popular cuts of meat which authorities were anxious to promote to save the better cuts for export. Trying to wean consumers from favoured choice cuts of meat, which was mainly the type of meat required for export, newspapers were asked to give prominence to recipes which used the cheaper and less sought after meat. Subsequently, readers were showered with advice. A Sydney Morning Herald cookery article told housewives to be more imaginative when planning meals, and to experiment with continental recipes which used wine and herbs and garlic, which was rather a new concept for Australian cooks at that time.

12 Rationing Commission and Inter-Departmental Committee of the Production Executive recommendation for the consumer rationing of meat to civilians, undated, A.A., Series A2866, Item XM1 Vol. 3; Illustration 7:1 following shows the anticipated savings.

13 Report and recommendations made by the Rationing Commission and Inter-Departmental Committee, undated, A.A., Series A2866, Item XM1 Vol. 3.

14 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 221. The Rationing Commission was very proud of its achievement in producing, printing and distributing the booklet within the short time frame.

15 Sydney Morning Herald, 8 January 1944 in F.K. Crowley (ed.), Modern
MEAT RATIONING is one of our contributions to Victory.

Australia's part in the South-West Pacific offensive is to supply food for her own and Allied men fighting in it! The success of this offensive depends on Australia's ability to supply these men with good food—a man can't fight if he's undernourished.

Australia's meat production has soared! But so have the calls on that production! As we are a Food Arsenal for the United Nations, it's our job to help maintain Britain's meagre rations. Meat rationing is being brought in so that we can meet these obligations, and so that you will have a fair share of the meat left for civilian consumption.

The chart above shows how Australia's meat production has increased during the war years. Where does all this extra meat go? Here is the answer:

**THE WHITE AREA**
This portion shows that we are giving Britain the help she so sorely needs. Note: The meat we send her does not increase her rations, it merely helps to maintain it.

**THE GREY AREA**
This portion shows the sharp increase of meat supplies for the fighting forces. Remember! The more men we can maintain, the nearer Victory will be.

**THE BLACK AREA**
This area represents the amount of meat left for civilians after our vital obligations have been met. Note the estimated decrease in consumption over 1943 due to meat rationing.

**HOW THEY FARE ELSEWHERE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>1/2 lb. a week (average less than 1 lb.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>2 lbs. a week (approx.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1 lb. 2 oz. a week—workers in heavy trades get this ration, rest of people get less.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1/2 lb. a week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...AND SO AUSTRALIA WILL HONOUR ITS OBLIGATIONS

So when you consider meat rationing, as it affects you, think how much better off you are than the people in Britain, U.S.A., and Russia!

The Housewives' Association of New South Wales assisted the Rationing Commission to distribute leaflets containing nutritional advice, even though its secretary, Eleanor Glencross, disagreed with some of the information. For example, when the Rationing Commission suggested that the daily diet should include 4 ounces of meat, 2 large potatoes, and 6 slices of bread Glencross wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

> Considering that in about two out of every three weeks potatoes are either difficult or impossible to obtain, and that 6 slices of starchy bread would build rheumatism into the healthiest system, again we [the Housewives' Association] feel that Mr Cummings must have been badly advised.\(^{16}\)

Glencross also criticised some of the recipes recommended by the Rationing Commission, which in her opinion, were unduly long and complicated, and contained unavailable spices such as mace, cloves, cayenne pepper and other exotic flavourings which had not been seen on grocers' shelves for a long time.\(^{17}\) Advocating simpler and more commonsense recipes Glencross demanded 'How long is this muddled state of affairs going to last?'\(^{18}\) This was a barb aimed at the all-male composition of the Rationing Commission and mirrored a growing dissatisfaction that all executive positions on the Rationing Commission were held by men.

While executive positions were indeed held by men, Rationing Commission planners did try to be considerate when preparing ration scales. To make coping with meat rationing somewhat easier for the housewife and to provide a cushion against unexpected domestic catering demands, sausages, fish, and rabbits were not rationed. While the Departmental History of Rationing makes this sound worthy, in practice, it would have been difficult for the commission to formulate a suitable scale for sausages as the meat content varied between butchers, most of whom altered recipes to suit whatever meat was available. Offal was not rationed both because of its

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\(^{17}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 May 1944.

\(^{18}\) ibid.
perishable nature and the fact that quantities available varied according to export slaughtering. Other animal parts such as ox tails, ox heads, ox cheeks, pig heads, pig hocks, cow heels, and calves heads were not rationed either. Delicatessen meat was not rationed as the commission was able to limit production by controlling the amount of meat allowed to manufacturers.

Supervision of meat rationing was made difficult by the meat industry, which actively opposed rationing from the very beginning, and put every obstacle it could in the way of the Rationing Commission. The Departmental History of Rationing states:

It can be asserted without hesitation that in all its plans and in everything it has done the Rationing Commission met with more intense opposition and less co-operation from the meat trade than any other section of the trade with which it had to deal whether clothing manufacturers, retail drapers, grocers, butter factories or advertisers.

Furthermore, according to the ‘Experiences of Administering Rationing in the State of South Australia’, the Rationing Commission initiated more prosecutions against butchers than it did against traders of all the other rationed items. The South Australian administration also attributed the ‘repeated statements by the trade that meat rationing did not save meat for Britain’ as a prime cause of community dissatisfaction with meat rationing.

Admittedly, butchers found rationing complicated as meat was divided into four groups, and each group was given a different coupon rating. The adult allowance of two coupons a week gave a nominal 2.25 pounds of meat, but the division of meat into groups allowed big meat eaters to eat up to 4 pounds of meat each week, providing they were prepared to eat the cheaper and less popular cuts. Group ‘A’ meat

19 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., pp. 150-1.
20 Rationing Commission and Inter-Departmental Committee of the Production Executive recommendations for the consumer rationing of meat to civilians, undated, A.A., Series A2866, Item XM1 Vol. 3.
21 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., pp. 150-1.
22 ibid.
23 ‘Experiences of Administering Rationing in the State of South Australia’, Records of S.J. Butlin, A.W.M, Series 70, Item 171.
comprised the choicest cuts, and gave only .75 pounds of meat per coupon. Group ‘B’ meat allowed 1 pound per coupon, Group ‘C’ meat allowed 1.5 pounds per coupon, and Group ‘D’ meat gave 2 pounds per coupon. With this rating 2 coupons permitted an average purchase of 2.24 pounds of beef, 2.19 pounds of veal, 2.41 pounds of mutton, 2.29 pounds of lamb or 2 pounds of pork. The sale of pork was prohibited except in some remote areas, indeed, pork practically disappeared from civilian menus in order to meet the apparently insatiable American demands for pigmeat. Butchers were forced to display charts which showed the ratings of meat in a prominent position in their shops so that purchasers could check coupon calculations.

One factor which caused considerable work for butchers was that two coupons would not buy exactly 2.25 pounds of any type of meat, and consequently meat rarely weighed an even coupon value. A system of coupon change dockets had to be introduced, and these were issued for the unused fraction of a pound of the class of meat purchased. For example, where a customer purchased 1 pound of rump steak, which fell into Group ‘A’ meat, which allowed 12 ounces per coupon, 2 coupons would be surrendered and the customer would receive a change docket for 8 ounces of Group ‘A’ meat. The customer had to use the docket at the same butchery within 14 days of its issue. Rationing Commission inspectors educated butchers who had cost-computing scales how to use the scales to calculate coupon change, and for those who did not possess this type of scale a ready reckoner was printed. All the extra calculations that the use of coupons involved caused irksome work for the butchers,

24 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 158.
26 See Illustration 7:2 following which shows the ration scale as published in the Herald, 8 January 1944, in Bolt, op. cit, p. 206. A similar scale had to be displayed in each butchery.
27 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 177
**FULL DETAILS OF MEAT RATIONING COUPON RULES**

### COUPON SCALE IN DETAIL

**MEAT GROUPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>GROUP C</th>
<th>GROUP D</th>
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<tr>
<td>½ lb. Per COUPON</td>
<td>1 lb. Per COUPON</td>
<td>1½ lb. Per COUPON</td>
<td>2 lb. Per COUPON</td>
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<td><strong>BEEF</strong></td>
<td><strong>BEEF</strong></td>
<td><strong>BEEF</strong></td>
<td><strong>BEEF</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fillet steak</td>
<td>Prime rib (boned)</td>
<td>Forequarter (boned)</td>
<td>Sirloin (boned)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topside</td>
<td>Thick Rump</td>
<td>Breast</td>
<td>Ribeye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverside</td>
<td>Loin chops</td>
<td>Loin chops</td>
<td>Loin (best end)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>VEAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>VEAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>VEAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>VEAL</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fillet (boned)</td>
<td>Loin (boned)</td>
<td>Forequarter (boned)</td>
<td>Brisket (boned)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PORK</strong></td>
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<td><strong>PORK</strong></td>
<td><strong>PORK</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fillets</td>
<td>Loin chops</td>
<td>Loin chops</td>
<td>Leg</td>
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### INSTRUCTIONS

- G Coupons are MEAT Coupons. FOUR of these will become available every second Monday. They can be used only for a fortnight.
- Children under 9 years of age on 13th June, 1943, receive half the adult ration. Their G Coupons MUST have a diagonal line drawn through them in ink.
- Meat Coupons MUST be cut out in the butcher’s presence — either by him or you.
- Some meats sold retail are couponed under the name of the cut to which they belong, e.g., Porterhouse Steak and T-Bone Steak, both being Sirloin.

### MEAT CHANGE CHART

You need NOT buy meat of the Group or Class named on your Coupon Change Docket. You may buy meat of any other Group or Class up to the weight set out on the same line as the amount on the face of your docket. Always take the highest group — e.g., if you are entitled to 15 ozs. of Group B meat, you may buy instead 5 ozs. of Group A meat or 14 ozs. of Group C meat or 11 ozs. of Group D meat.

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<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>GROUP C</th>
<th>GROUP D</th>
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<tr>
<td>11 ozs.</td>
<td>15 ozs.</td>
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<td>23 ozs.</td>
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### NON-COUPONED MEATS

- Bacon, Ham and Smoked Meat, Canned Meat and all smallgoods, including Frankfurters, Seasoned Meat, Ham Loin and Similar Goods.

and no doubt were not only a contributing factor in the meat trade hostility to rationing, but also a source of friction with customers.

The War Cabinet decreed that no couponed meat was to be allocated for animals, which ‘probably’ numbered some 750,000 dogs and 500,000 cats throughout Australia. In practice, the Rationing Commission found it necessary to issue permits to allow the purchase of reject mutton in some cases, for example, for dogs owned by City Councils and used for rat catching, for drover’s dogs at Newmarket yards in Melbourne, and for guard dogs used by R.A.A.F. Greyhound racing was a very popular sport, and for the good of public morale, the Production Executive looked at providing meat for greyhounds, but decided against making an exception for these dogs, quaintly pointing out that ‘a greyhound in training consumes as much meat as will be allowed to a man, wife and 7 children, one of whom is over 9’. ‘Cracker’ cows, that is cows that were not suitable for human consumption because they were either too old, too poor, or for various other reasons, were slaughtered to feed greyhounds. This was contrary to rationing regulations, but the Rationing Commission found it impossible to stop the practice. Carnivorous zoo animals were normally fed horsemeat, which did not come under rationing restrictions.

The Rationing Commission found the compilation of the documentation required to supervise the meat industry under rationing tedious, time-consuming and troublesome. To start with, the commission had to establish a register of all slaughtering establishments, so that all slaughtering could be documented and

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28 Rationing Commission and Inter-Departmental Committee of the Production Executive recommendations for consumer rationing of meat to civilians, undated, A.A., Series A2866, Item XM1 Vol. 3.
29 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 197.
30 Rationing Commission and Inter-Departmental Committee of the Production Executive recommendations for consumer rationing of meat to civilians, undated, A.A., Series A2866, Item XM1 Vol. 3.
31 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 198.
32 Rationing Commission and Inter-Departmental Committee of the Production Executive recommendations for consumer rationing of meat to civilians, undated, A.A., Series A2866, Item XM1 Vol. 3.
carcasses traced from slaughterer to butcher. Only by doing this could the Rationing Commission keep track of meat from source to consumption, and ascertain precisely the amount of meat being consumed by civilians. Close monitoring was also necessary to detect leakages of meat to the black market. The commission found that slaughtering was very haphazard in 1944, and it had to re-organise many existing practices, generally against opposition to change. At the time Municipal and private abattoirs hired ‘pens’ to individual slaughterers, and in country areas it was common practice for butchers to do their own slaughtering, which left a wide area for evasion in the lodging of returns. All slaughterers were required periodically to forward details and weights of all animals slaughtered, together with particulars of wholesale and retail sales, and coupons collected to cover sales, to the deputy directors in each State, who were responsible for ensuring that returns were lodged. This information was then passed on to the Rationing Commission to enable statistics to be collated.33

After slaughterers were documented it was found that weighing facilities were inadequate, even at Municipal abattoirs. Carcasses varied in weight, and as accurate weights were essential if rationing was to succeed, the Rationing Commission arranged for a rationing regulation to be promulgated requiring proprietors of abattoirs to install scales. The compulsory provision of scales, however, did not stop slaughterers from being recalcitrant about lodging accurate returns, and in the end, the Rationing Commission realised that the only way to obtain precise reportage was to place inspectors at abattoirs to either supervise stock slaughtering and weighing, or as happened eventually, to actually do the work of weighing and reporting.34 While this was a solution in city abattoirs, it was impractical in the country where butchers did their own slaughtering. Departmental records show that haphazard country practices were ‘particularly difficult to effectively control and police’.35 The Rationing

34 ibid, pp. 179-80.
35 'Experiences of Administering Rationing in the State of South Australia', Records of S.J. Butlin, A.W.M., Series 70, Item 171.
Commission appointed special Inspectors to check country butchers’ slaughtering against sales, and reconciliations often disclosed ‘light weight’ recording of carcasses.\textsuperscript{36} Obviously, where ‘light weight’ was recorded butchers then had the additional weight of meat to sell either coupon-free, or on the black market. The very fact that slaughtering could be carried out, unsupervised, led to incidents such as one recalled by Maurie Jones, who said that his mother:

\begin{quote}
Had an arrangement by which every two weeks on a Saturday afternoon a stranger would turn up on a bicycle and hand over a parcel. Mum had four bob ready for it. And it was \textit{always} a piece of freshly slaughtered pork.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

Even where slaughtering was controlled and carcass weights recorded, there was still room for butchers to obtain extra meat from a carcass by various methods of cutting. This led to a major confrontation between the Rationing Commission and the meat industry over how much meat should be recovered from each carcass. When rationing started each State used a different method of cutting up a carcass for sale, and as a result, each State obtained different weights of saleable meat from a carcass. To achieve a uniform carcass recovery weight as a basis to work from the Rationing Commission took what was regarded as a ‘bold’ step by producing a standard cutting chart to be used by butchers in all States. This common basis of meat recovery had to be organised so that a rating scale could be calculated for use when butchers obtained bulk meat from wholesalers, who in turn used the coupons to procure meat from slaughterers.\textsuperscript{38}

Even with uniform cutting the meat trade continued to dispute the weight of meat that should be recovered from each carcass. The commission then appointed inspectors to educate butchers about how to obtain the optimum weight of meat from

\begin{footnotes}
\item[36] Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 183.
\item[37] Maurie Jones quoted in Joanna Penglase and David Horner, \textit{When the War Came to Australia}, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1992, p. 199. A ‘bob’ was one shilling.
\item[38] Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., pp. 167-8.
\end{footnotes}
each carcass. The Rationing Commission at that point engaged an experienced butcher to carry out recovery tests, which returned 69.04 per cent of useable meat from every 100 pounds of beef carcass weight. The meat trade disagreed with the finding, and attempting to find some mutually acceptable compromise, the Rationing Commission agreed that the Meat and Allied Trades’ Federation should carry out tests in each State. These tests showed returns of 54.95 per cent for every 100 pounds of beef carcass weight in South Australia, 47.785 per cent in New South Wales and 51.3 per cent in Queensland, which was a far cry from the Rationing Commission expert’s finding. The Departmental History of Rationing stated that the difference in recovery rates showed that the butchery trade was trimming meat to an extravagant degree, which was ‘quite unallowable under the conditions which necessitated rationing’. It could well have been that the meat trade was giving itself a generous margin which was very useful under rationing. A compromise was eventually agreed upon, and the wholesale coupon rating was set at 61 coupons for every 100 pounds of beef carcass weight. Similar tests were carried out for lamb, mutton and pork and compromise recovery weights agreed upon.

Despite the many concessions the Rationing Commission made to the meat trade to gain its co-operation the trade continually undermined meat rationing. The Departmental History of Rationing declared that the meat trade so ‘strenuously opposed the Government’s declared policy of reducing consumption’ that the Rationing Commission was forced to institute prosecutions for ‘conspiracy and for attempting to sabotage plans for meat rationing’ against the President and Secretary of the Meat and Allied Trades’ Federation. Deliberate attempts were made to embarrass authorities by flouting regulations regarding trading hours, for example, butchers in South Australia closed on Wednesday afternoons. Blatant breaches

39 ibid, p. 183.
40 ibid, pp. 163-5.
41 ibid.
42 ibid, p. 184.
43 ‘Experiences of Administering Rationing in South Australia’, Records of S.J.
included butchers advertising coupon-free meat for sale when it was on the verge of spoiling to avoid financial losses.44

Hattil Foll, a United Australia Party Senator from Queensland, claimed that the Master Butchers' Association was running a campaign to undermine rationing by making allegations that meat being supplied to butchers was insufficient to meet demand, and that butchers would be forced to devise their own plans to ration customers, regardless of what coupons they tendered.45 Herbert Hays, a United Australia Party Senator from Tasmania, commented that there was a belief abroad that butchers were selling more meat since rationing was introduced, and that rationing itself was causing shortages because:

Those who had coupons were always spending the whole of them, and thought it right and proper to do so, whereas in the ordinary course many of them would not purchase anything like the same quantity of meat.46

Foll questioned whether meat rationing had actually cut consumption,47 and Hays wanted to know whether rationing justified the cost of administration, as Rationing Commission staff numbers had been increased considerably to cope with meat rationing.48 The Minister for Trade and Customs, who was also the Minister for Rationing, admitted:

The position in regard to meat is alarming. The saving anticipated has not been made, the deficiency totalling many thousands of tons. Various reasons can be assigned. More meat is being used in

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45 H.S. Foll brought the claim before Parliament on 27 and 28 September 1944, C.P.D., Vol. 180, pp. 1543-4. The time noted at the commencement of Foll's statement was 4.52 a.m., which explains the multiple date.
46 H. Hays, ibid, p. 1544.
47 H.S. Foll, ibid.
48 H. Hays, ibid; Staff numbers increased from 609 at 30 June 1943 to 909 in June 1944, Departmental History of Rationing, p. 6; Salaries paid to Rationing Commission employees amounted to £124,000 for the 1942-43 financial year, to £202,000 for the 1943-44 year, and estimated cost for the 1944-45 financial year was £262,000, C.P.D., Vol. 179, p. 980.
the form of sausages, for which coupons are not required, and there is some leakage at the slaughtering base.49

It was very difficult for authorities to stop the leakage when dishonest truck drivers contrived devious ways to conceal sides of beef under the bonnet of their vehicles to get past guards at abattoirs.50

Authorities were in a quandary. Because of the disruption created by the meat trade and the general opposition to meat rationing, they did not know how to make the necessary reduction in consumption to cope with continually increasing demands. As well, long-term contracts were still being negotiated with Britain, but before they could be concluded the government had to be sure that the meat would be available.51

When the anticipated demand for Australian meat during 1945 amounted to 1,190,000 tons, and the estimated production was only 965,000 tons,52 civilian consumption simply had to be cut to meet the shortfall whatever the outcome. The decision was painful, and resolution was lacking. It was not until 11 January 1945 that the Production Executive instructed the Director of Rationing, the Minister for War Organisation of Industry and the Meat Controller to find some way to achieve the required cutback. The Rationing Commission was against making a general cut to the current ration, pointing out that if the ration was reduced below 2.5 pounds per week for adults, it would be necessary to make special allowances for workers in heavy industries, which would complicate rationing generally, as the general principle was that no such allowances were to be made for any rationed item.53

The Rationing Commission believed that appreciable savings could be made, without actually reducing the existing ration scale, by bringing bacon, ham and

51 Department of Commerce and Agriculture Agendum 1944/38, regarding long-term contracts for meat and dairy products, 28 April 1944, A.A., Series A2866, Item XM1 Vol. 6.
52 Department of Commerce and Agriculture, Agendum 1944/73 regarding meat production and allocation 1945, 6 November 1944, ibid.
53 Production Executive Agendum No. 112/1944, Supplement 1, 11 January 1945, ibid.
smallgoods under rationing. The Production Executive agreed that these goods should be rationed, and on 11 January 1945 instructed the commission to commence rationing the items on 12 February 1945. The commission had made all the necessary arrangements, such as printing notices and reserving space in newspapers to announce the rationing of these goods, when on 23 January the Meat Controller stated that there were 'some difficulties to him in fixing his quotas in the various States' 54 and wanted the proposed rationing postponed. The Rationing Commission baulked, stating that it had been given definite instructions to go ahead with the rationing of these goods, and it was not prepared to halt simply 'to meet the wishes of the Controller of Meat Supplies'. However, the Meat Controller pulled departmental strings and on 25 January the Rationing Commission was told by the Production Executive to 'suspend' action until further instructions were given. The question of whether to go ahead with the rationing of ham, bacon and smallgoods was then sent to Cabinet for it to decide whether the original plan should be implemented or the basic ration cut. 55 This is a graphic example of the lack of communication and planning between the various departments, and the waste of effort that occurred because of the dearth of co-ordination.

Cabinet scrapped the plan to ration ham, bacon and smallgoods and resolved that the fresh meat ration should be cut. 56 Starting from 25 February 1945 the adult ration was reduced to 2.098 pounds per person over 9 years of age, which was estimated to give an overall saving of 8.62 per cent. The various group ratings were shuffled, and another two categories were added to the scale. Prime cuts of beef were given heavier ratings to deter consumers from buying the portions of carcasses that were favoured for export. 57 This reduction still did not curtail consumption sufficiently and the ration had to be cut again on 7 May 1945, when adults and

55 ibid.
56 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 151.
57 ibid, pp. 159-60.
commercial manufacturers had their rations reduced by 12.5 per cent. Catering establishment allowances were reduced by 25 per cent, which made life difficult for restaurant and cafe proprietors.58 Children’s rations were not changed, although differently coloured ration books had been issued to children under 5 years of age for the purpose of cutting the ration to this age group.59

Announcing the May decrease the Acting Prime Minister, J.B. Chifley, stated:

The choice facing Australia is either to reduce the present rate of meat consumption or to cut down on meat exports to Britain. To reduce supplies to Britain in the existing circumstances would be unthinkable. Every Australian will share that opinion. Cabinet had no hesitation in reaching its decision. Factors responsible for Cabinet’s decision were - the severity of the drought, which has caused, and is still causing, meat supplies to diminish over a large part of Australia; the world shortage of meat, which may restrict supplies to Britain from elsewhere; [and] the urgency of Australia’s meat allocations, which Australia has honorably undertaken to fulfil.60

Trying to make the announcement more palatable and to dampen general hostility to the cuts, Chifley promised that periodical reviews would be made, and the ration would be increased if and when supplies permitted.61

As talk of this cut in meat allowances coincided with the end of the war in Europe, when reports of concentration camp atrocities were just being released, the ultimate destination of the meat exported to Britain came under question. C.V. Wilson of Mosman in Sydney demanded that Percy Spender, the United Australia Party Member for his electorate of Warringah, find out whether ‘a large proportion’ of the exports were being used ‘to fatten the murderous Nazi prisoners of war in Great Britain’, or whether food was being stockpiled to feed the population of Germany

58 Sun News-Pictorial, 12 May 1945, in Bolt, op. cit., p. 266. Cafe and restaurant proprietors were limited to serving no more than three courses at any meal, and to charging no more than 4/- for luncheon, 5/- for dinner, and no more than 3/- for any other meals from the austerity days of 1942, ibid, p. 151.
59 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 160.
60 Press statement by Acting Prime Minister J.B. Chifley, A.A., Series A461/7, Item K325/6/2.
61 ibid.
when it was defeated. Wilson stated that he believed he had a public-spirited duty to ask Spender to get an assurance from Britain’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill that:

None of the meat, butter or other foodstuffs which are rationed in Australia and which are being shipped to Great Britain are being withheld from the British public with the object of feeding it to the German or Italian prisoners-of-war or being stored for the purpose of feeding German or Italian civilians.

When asked to comment the Director of Rationing, attempting to keep the Rationing Commission at arms length from any such arguments, said:

The allocation of food in Great Britain was a purely domestic matter. The U.K. Government acquaints us with its requirements from Australia, and we do our best to fulfil them without any proviso as to the ultimate use to which the food is to be put.

The cut in the meat ration caused rumours that the butter ration was also going to be cut further. The butter ration had been trimmed in June 1944 from the initial ration of 8 ounces per week to 6 ounces per week. When that reduction was made miners demanded that their ration remain unaltered, and at Pelaw Main and Richmond Main collieries on the northern fields of New South Wales 1500 miners went on strike against the cutback. The Northern Collieries Proprietors’ Association protested that the miners’ excuses for strikes were ‘reaching a new height of absurdity’. The secretary of the association declared ‘the coal miner is contributing less than his share to the war effort, and at the same time is continually making demands on the Commonwealth for special food and clothing concessions.’ The Sydney Morning Herald editorialised:

Food is now one of Australia’s major contributions to the Allied
cause but our butter production has failed to keep pace with our various commitments ... the whole scheme of consumer rationing would be broken down if any group were to succeed in using its bargaining strength or political influence to seek favoured treatment.67

Undeterred by industrial unrest, Acting Prime Minister Frank Forde announced that the curtailed ration would apply from 5 June 1944. Aware of the growing civilian dissatisfaction with rationing, and knowing the decrease would be poorly received, Forde implied that the cut was only temporary, saying:

I appeal to all patriotic Australians to accept this temporary inconvenience and ignore the attempts to make them discontented. There is nothing at all to be alarmed about, and the full 8 ounce ration will be restored as soon as the supply position justifies such action. I especially appeal to workers to observe the Government’s decision loyally ... I especially appeal to miners to go back to work and concentrate on their job of producing coal.68

Forde stressed that the reduction in the butter ration was necessary in order to ‘adequately feed the fighting forces’, and to ‘make our contribution to food supplies for Britain’.69 Appeals for patriotism, however, were losing their gloss with the general public, and the government’s irritation and frustration towards the growing resistance to rationing surfaced in Forde’s concluding words: ‘Australians are well fed and must get on with their work’.70 Forde’s exhortations to grumble less and to produce more were reinforced by coloured propaganda posters which were liberally plastered in public places.71

No amount of official appeals or admonishments could stop rumours of further rationing if rationed goods showed any signs of being in short supply. When butter became scarce in shops early in 1945 the Rationing Commission consistently denied that further butter rationing was planned, but the rumour persisted. The Sydney

67 Sydney Morning Herald, 2 June 1944.
68 Acting-Prime Minister Frank Forde, 2 June 1944, A.A., Series A5954, Item 705/27.
69 ibid.
70 ibid.
71 Illustrations 7:3 and 7:4 following are examples of these propaganda posters.
We must share our food 1944.

Artist: Unknown
photolithograph
75.2 x 47.5cm
Australian War Memorial (V2960)

Illustration 7:3

Don't grumble about rationing, Australians were told. Less meat, butter and sugar for civilians meant more for our troops, as well as for Britain and Allied forces in the Pacific.

Illustration 7:4

Come, come, Corporal. I also have priorities.

Dairy Farmers, too, have a victory to win

The short, brilliant end of the food front today is greater milk production. Of all the foods we provide for our own people, for the United Kingdom, and for American, British and Allied forces, preserved milk, cheese and butter are the most vital. To meet even the barest requirements it is necessary that milk production should be increased in every dairy farm.

The Government is providing every possible assistance to increase production. The butter, cheese and preserved milk subsidy has been increased to £550,000 and will not decrease latter year, unless production falls. Further subsidies, machinery pools, and marketing agencies were also taken practical and helpful measures. The dairy industry has been allocated FIRST PRIORITY in man-power, machinery and materials.

Dairy Farmers! The war is up to you. For more information, advice or help in increasing production, apply to your local War Agricultural Committee or Better Farming Manager.

Now for THE EXTRA EFFORT FOR THE EXTRA MILK WE NEED

Morning Herald investigated the shortages, and found they were caused by the incompetence of grocers when handling coupons.\textsuperscript{72} Trade representatives claimed that many grocers were ‘coupon bankrupt’, and for this reason were unable to obtain sufficient supplies. This was despite many grocers resorting to placing cut-up paper in envelopes which certified that used coupons were enclosed, in order to obtain stocks of butter.\textsuperscript{73}

According to the Departmental History of Rationing the Rationing Commission was uncertain whether the shortage of coupons was because of carelessness by traders in the collection of coupons, or because of black market activities, but because rumours about the shortage were creating uncertainty it decided to make a special concession to the butter trade. It allowed wholesalers and retailers to buy butter without coupons between 9 and 22 April 1945 so that they could build up their coupon banks. To stop any ‘extravagant’ purchases during this period the amount of butter that could be purchased was limited to one-half of the purchases made during February 1945.\textsuperscript{74}

The coupon-free concession period did not benefit all traders, however, as all coupons in traders’ hands were recalled at the start of the coupon-free period, and ‘careful traders’ ended up, in many cases, worse off for coupons at the end of the period than they were at the start.\textsuperscript{75} At the same time the Rationing Commission withdrew the labour-saving privilege of putting used coupons in certified envelopes from the butter trade as it was estimated that at least 3,000 tons of butter had been obtained annually by fraudulent certification.\textsuperscript{76} This practice of falsifying certification of coupon envelopes was not confined to the butter trade. Butchers were warned that

\textsuperscript{72} Sydney Morning Herald, 7 April 1945.
\textsuperscript{73} Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 133.
\textsuperscript{74} Sydney Morning Herald, 7 April 1945 and Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 133.
\textsuperscript{75} ibid, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{76} ibid, p. 133.
the enveloping privilege would be withdrawn from that trade also if abuses continued.\textsuperscript{77}

In September 1944 it had been stated in Parliament that the whole question of rationing had caused ‘much anxious thought’ because it had been ‘received with much dissatisfaction by the public’.\textsuperscript{78} By May 1945 the position had worsened and rationing was under pressure. Additional meat restrictions had just been enforced; the butter trade was feeling the pinch with coupons; and then the war against Germany ended. Britain wanted more Australian primary products so that the British people could have some relief from the harsh rationing they had endured during the war. Australia still had heavy commitments in the Pacific, commitments which increased as more troops were diverted to fight the war against Japan. The defeat of Germany assured the ultimate defeat of Japan, although informed sources believed that victory would not be achieved until at least well into 1946.\textsuperscript{79} Inevitably though, thoughts turned to the post-war economy, and how to get industries that had been affected by the war back to a profitable peace time basis. Additionally, the Australian people were starting to look for escape from the restraints that fighting a war had imposed.\textsuperscript{80}

Taking the wool industry as an example of a combination of looking to the future and seeking relief from wartime restrictions, Donald Mountjoy, the Labor Party Member for Swan in Western Australia, sought the release of knitting wool from rationing, stating that with other clothing still rationed wool would be popularised, which would help the industry after the war.\textsuperscript{81} Subsequently, the coupon rating of knitting wool was reduced by 50 per cent from 4 June 1945.\textsuperscript{82} When calls were made

\textsuperscript{77} Stated in \textit{Meat Bulletin} No. 2 issued by the Rationing Commission, undated, but issued in conjunction with the revised retail meat coupon scale which commenced from 26 February 1945, A.A., Series 3300/7, Item 299.
\textsuperscript{79} Butlin and Schedvin, op. cit., p. 774.
\textsuperscript{80} Editorial comment in Bolt, op. cit., p. 247.
\textsuperscript{82} J. Beasley, 1 June 1945, ibid, p. 2450.

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to have knitting wool removed entirely from coupon rationing the Minister for Trade and Customs said that the chances of this happening were remote, as the lowering of coupon values for knitting wool had dramatically increased the demand for knitting needles, which were in desperately short supply. He explained that knitting needles were imported, and despite urgent efforts to obtain needles from the United States and the United Kingdom no immediate supplies were available. The shortage of this very humble commodity highlights how fragile the whole rationing system was, and how one action could unknowingly create a new problem. This simple example typifies what the Departmental History of Rationing describes as 'problems that arose, often unexpectedly and with urgent insistence'.

The granting of the concession for knitting wool led to a spate of demands for the easing of clothes rationing. Allan MacDonald, a Liberal Senator from Western Australia, tried to get an overall reduction of the coupon rating of clothing made from wool in mid-1945 Foll suggested that coupon ratings for all clothing should be lowered because in Queensland there was an excessive accumulation of manufactured clothing. He claimed to know of four warehouses where goods with a coupon value of 500,000 were held which could not be sold because of a shortage of coupons in the hands of purchasers. Foll asserted that manufacturers were producing goods in quantities beyond the coupon purchasing capacity of people, and that unless rationing of clothing was loosened manufacturers would either have to lay staff off, or sell on the black market. Not long after Foll made these allegations Frederick Stewart, the United Australia Party Member for Parramatta in New South Wales, contended that a number of textile mills in New South Wales were over-stocked to the extent that production had to be reduced. Stewart wanted rationing either substantially eased or

84 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 2.
85 A. MacDonald, 20 June 1945, C.P.D., Vol. 183, p. 3290. MacDonald was a United Australia Party member until 1944, when he joined the newly formed Liberal Party.
86 H. Foll, 28 June 1945, ibid, p. 3913.
abandoned entirely, so that civilians could buy more, thus clearing stock, and permitting the resumption of full-time manufacturing.\textsuperscript{87}

Existing stocks of standardised clothing were causing problems for manufacturers who were worried that the unpopular austerity-styled garments would not sell when all styling restrictions were lifted, and more fashionable and appealing clothes were produced. Speaking on behalf of manufacturers, William Conelan, the Labor Party Member for Griffiths in Queensland, suggested that austerity clothing should either be released from rationing entirely, or the ratings reduced considerably, so that the apparel would sell quickly.\textsuperscript{88} The demands for the easing of clothes rationing by responsible members of Parliament at a time when there was a serious manpower shortage for the production of food, and when the end of the war against Japan was still in the distant future, reveals clearly the attitudes being exhibited towards rationing at the time.

It was ironic that at a time when food production was hindered by lack of manpower the clothing industry was over-producing, and even threatening that unemployment would result if clothing restrictions were not substantially loosened or completely removed so stocks could be cleared and output maintained. It was ironic also that the over-production of clothing occurred despite John Dedman, the Minister for Rationing, claiming late in 1944 that the Rationing Commission, after two years' experience of clothes rationing, could gauge civilian clothing requirements reasonably accurately and removed some restrictions.\textsuperscript{89} Dedman stated at that time that over-production of clothing could be avoided by coupon limitations which controlled supplies of materials to manufacturers, and by the Manpower Directorate, which, in his opinion, had labour effectively controlled to prevent unnecessary production.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{87} F. Stewart, 24 July 1945, C.P.D., Vol. 184, p. 4420.
\textsuperscript{88} W. Conelan, ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} Production Executive Agendum No. 85/1944, 5 August 1944, A.A., Series A2866, Item XM1 Vol. 6.
\textsuperscript{90} ibid.
Clearly, Dedman’s belief that the controls exercised by the Rationing Commission and the Manpower Directorate could prevent over-production was found wanting.

Planning had obviously gone awry somewhere and over-production played into the hands of those who wanted clothes rationing abandoned. Manifestly, the various authorities were only too aware of the groundswell against rationing but the plain facts were that restrictions were still needed. All indications were that the government had no intention of relinquishing a mechanism which had proved very useful, not only to equitably distribute resources which were insufficient to meet all needs, but also to reduce civilian consumption in order to make savings when goods were required to meet other commitments.
Chapter 8

Unprepared for peace: The ragged end of rationing

The sudden and unexpected cessation of the war against Japan on 15 August 1945 found the government with no plans in hand for an orderly end to rationing. Industry and consumers who wanted, and indeed expected, an early end to rationing were disappointed, as the government proved generally unwilling to release goods from rationing. Public pressure alone was not enough to force the issue, and it was court action that decided the fate of rationing. An examination of the ragged way coupon rationing of the different goods ended and the diverse contexts in which decisions were made reveals that the bungling and lack of direction and commitment, which were features of the whole era of rationing, continued until the very end.

Coupon rationing ended haphazardly with different circumstances influencing the end of restrictions on each item. As it happened, sugar was the first item to be released. Initially sugar had been rationed because of disruption to supply caused by fears of invasion. Throughout the war shortages were caused by impressment of tractors by the Allied Works Council which hindered production, by transport and shipping problems, by trouble on the waterfront, by miners' strikes which affected power for processing, and by labour problems in refineries. Towards the end of the war drought hindered production just when extra supplies were needed by the armed services, by domestic users and for export.¹

¹ S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin, War Economy, 1942-45, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1977, p. 20. Equipment used in sugar production was designed for use with tractors; horses could not be substituted, even if they had been available, ibid; Departmental History of Rationing of Clothing and Food 1942-1950 (as administered by the commonwealth Rationing Commission), A.A., Series CP590/1/1, Item Bun. 1, pp. 115-25.
When the war ended the government wanted to retain sugar rationing in order to promote exports, but entrepreneurs, influenced by some of the cuisine concepts that the American influx had introduced into Australia, were anxious to develop new foodstuffs and wanted rationing terminated. Thomas Sheehan, the Labor Party Member for Cook in New South Wales, wasted no time calling for an end to sugar rationing so that Australian manufacturing industries could develop unhindered by restrictions.\(^2\) The government view, as supported by Francis Forde, the Labor Party Member for Capricornia in Queensland, where sugar-growing was the main industry, was that if Australia made sacrifices for the benefit of Britain, where sugar was needed, the chances were that Britain would enter into long-term contracts for sugar. Forde maintained that this would lead to greater benefits than would be achieved by making sugar available immediately to local industries.\(^3\) The government viewpoint prevailed and sugar rationing continued.

A year later Allan McDonald, the Liberal Member from Corangamite in Victoria, again took up the cudgel on behalf of local manufacturers, asserting that Britain no longer required sugar for its own use. McDonald claiming that sugar exported to Britain during 1946 had gone through British control to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association for distribution in Europe.\(^4\) When it became public knowledge that sugar going to Britain was not being used by the British people Australian manufacturers started to embarrass the government by pressing for concessions. Grocers even started to campaign to be recompensed for the time they had to spend handling coupons.\(^5\) It all became too much and towards the middle of 1947 authorities started to seriously consider ending sugar rationing. In a typically irresolute way it was proposed that sugar rationing should cease during the winter months, when domestic consumption normally fell, and recommence during

\(^2\) T. Sheehan, 18 September 1945, C.P.D., Vol. 185, P. 5489.

\(^3\) F. Forde, 18 September 1945, ibid.


the summer months when most jam-making and fruit-preserving took place. The Rationing Commission, realising that considerable difficulties could arise from this procedure, recommended that it would be better to end sugar rationing 'earlier rather than later'.\textsuperscript{6} The various relevant authorities eventually agreed and sugar rationing ceased on 4 July 1947.

Clothing and meat were the next items to be released, and both ended on 22 June 1948. Meat had proved such a problem area for the Rationing Commission that there is no doubt it was relieved when rationing was abandoned. In addition to the difficulties encountered in administering rationing, meat had provided an irresistible attraction to black marketeers. The Rationing Commission attempted in vain to wipe out the practice, and resorted to entrapment to get evidence against black marketeers. Rather remarkably, considering the way the black market was disrupting meat rationing, politicians condemned entrapment, calling it 'contemptible',\textsuperscript{7} and 'gross and indecent'.\textsuperscript{8} Winton Turnbull, Country Party Member for Wimmera in Victoria, complaining that a butcher in his electorate had been caught by an inspector who used trickery to get meat without handing over coupons, righteously asked the Prime Minister whether he approved of the tactics being used by departmental officers. Turnbull demanded that 'good Australians' (as he described the defaulting butcher) should be protected from 'underhand' methods of crime detection.\textsuperscript{9} The general defence of black marketeers by politicians was a curious feature throughout the whole era of rationing.

\textsuperscript{6} Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 125.
\textsuperscript{7} James Fraser, Minister for Trade and Customs, 9 August 1946, defending allegations that 'contemptible' methods were being used to catch black marketeers, C.P.D., Vol. 188, pp. 4162-3.
\textsuperscript{8} G. Rankin, Member for Bendigo, 1 March 1945, expressing disgust that a butcher was prosecuted after giving meat, without obtaining coupons, to an inspector who claimed that it was needed for a soldier just returned from New Guinea, C.P.D., Vol. 181, pp. 232-3.
\textsuperscript{9} W. Turnbull, 'Question without Notice', 2 June 1948, A.A., Series A461/7, Item L325/6/2.
Justifying the use of entrapment the Rationing Commission stated in its fortnightly _Consumers Bulletin_: 

Proof against crafty, cunning black marketers is not always easy to obtain. Invariably the police or officers of the Rationing Commission are in possession of complaints or other substantial information, before moves are made to obtain proof satisfactory to a court. Therefore, when accepted and necessary methods of crime detection run down racketeers, every decent citizen will agree they deserve the most drastic punishment.\(^{10}\)

The Rationing Commission claimed that there was 'unreserved condemnation of black markets, and those undesirables who profit from them among all reputable sections of the community'.\(^{11}\) The evidence, however, shows otherwise, and the dishonesty of the black market seemed to have been generally disregarded. Indeed, the _Herald_ called blackmarketeering 'the best paying line in crime' and the patronage of black marketeers 'a kink in the public conscience'.\(^{12}\)

The black market was undeniably making the continuance of rationing difficult when another factor intervened. The government's power to continue rationing so long after the end of the war was challenged in the High Court, and while this was not officially given as a reason for the decision to end meat rationing it surfaced later in a communication between the Director of Rationing and the Prime Minister. Kenneth Bell, of Seaford in Victoria, questioned why rationing ended when, in Bell's view, 'the underfed condition not only of the U.K. but also of Germany' required the continuation of rationing for as long as shortages existed in other parts of the world.\(^{13}\) The Director of Rationing was asked by the Prime Minister to draft a reply to Bell's letter and he openly stated:

\(^{10}\) _Consumers Bulletin_, a fortnightly review published by the Commonwealth Rationing Commission, Undated, but issued to operate in conjunction with revised meat scale which operated from 26 February 1945, A.A., Series 3300/7, Item 299.

\(^{11}\) ibid.


\(^{13}\) K. Bell Prime Minister, 23 June 1948, A.A., Series A461/7, Item L325/6/2.
Under the Constitution the Commonwealth’s powers are very limited. Rationing of meat has been carried on under the National Security Act and the Defence (Transitional Provisions) Act. These acts are dependent on the ‘Defence’ power in Section 51 of the Constitution, and the continued application of restrictions under these Acts so long after the termination of the war is at present under challenge in the High Court of Australia.\textsuperscript{14}

The Prime Minister J.B. Chifley returned the memorandum to the Director of Rationing with a hand-written notation saying ‘this does not seem to have been mentioned publicly in relation to the abolition of meat rationing’\textsuperscript{15} and that for the present the Attorney General’s Department thought it ‘undesirable’ to publicise the High Court action.\textsuperscript{16}

According to the Minister for Trade and Customs, meat rationing was abandoned ‘largely on the advice of meat industry officials’ who consistently stated that ‘butchers were not complying with regulations, and that rationing was saving very little additional meat for Britain’.\textsuperscript{17} A wry comment made by a spokesman for the meat trade at the time was that ‘the only people who would suffer [from the ending of meat rationing] would be black-marketeers in meat’.\textsuperscript{18} Despite all the effort that was put into meat rationing the Minister acknowledged that it never achieved the aim of cutting consumption.\textsuperscript{19} Certainly the Rationing Commission found it a trial from beginning to end.

Fears about the outcome of the High Court action directly influenced the end of clothes rationing. It had been necessary to retain clothes rationing after the war ended because of decreased supplies when the United States stopped supplying goods under Lend Lease within a few days of victory. Australia had ample wool, but as all textiles were imported, in the short term, the only rationing relief the government was able to give was to remove most of the remaining standardisation controls. In

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\textsuperscript{14} Director of Rationing to Prime Minister, 9 July 1948, ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{15} ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{16} ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 23 June 1948.  \\
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 22 June 1948.  \\
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 23 June 1948.
\end{flushright}
November 1945 machine knitted goods, headwear, footwear and a few other minor items were released from rationing. After that clothes rationing continued at more or less the same level until mid-1947 when there was a general easing of approximately 28 per cent in the ration scale.\(^\text{20}\)

This moderation came about because early in 1947 major changes occurred to the system under which Australia had obtained clothing and textiles from the United Kingdom from 1943 onwards. Under the scheme Australia received a quota of clothing and textiles from Britain, and within the quota Australia was able to order the required mix of goods. India was the only other major supplier of cotton and textile piece-goods, and these were regulated by import licences. Because of these controls the government was able to keep the Rationing Commission cognisant with the types, quantities and expected delivery dates of the goods, and the commission was then able to adjust ratings in line with supplies.

In 1947 the United Kingdom changed the system and stopped allowing the Australian government to place specific orders, although it still retained quotas. Australian importers were able to place orders direct, but the Australian government was no longer aware of what was actually ordered. At the same time, American export restrictions were relaxed and Australian traders were able to order direct, although the dollar factor influenced the granting of import licences. Textiles also became available from re-established industries in France, Holland, Belgium and Italy. Imports from these countries were also subject to the granting of import licences. The problem that the government faced was that it no longer had detailed knowledge about the type, quantities or delivery dates of imported clothing and textiles, and consequently Rationing Commission planning became impossible.

The Rationing Commission recommended in February 1948 that clothes rationing should be abolished, but the government declined the advice because supplies of both cotton and rayons were limited by dollar restrictions. When the

\(^{20}\) Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., pp. 9 and 74.
commission again tendered the advice following the defeat of a referendum which asked the Australian people to give the government certain permanent control powers the government again declined to end rationing, \(^{21}\) even though it was evident that wartime restrictions could not be kept in place indefinitely. However, on 21 June 1948 Chifley made the ‘surprise’ announcement that both meat and clothes rationing was to end the following day. The government’s reason for the abrupt end was, Chifley stated, because if warning had been given people ‘would have been likely to engage in unnecessary panic buying if a deadline date was announced’. \(^{22}\) Chifley claimed that there were ample stocks to meet normal demand, but not panic buying. \(^{23}\) This harked back to the Rationing Commission concept that goods had to be available to meet coupons. Once rationing ended the government could no longer be blamed if goods were in short supply. Clothes rationing, as Eleanor Glencross, the Chairman of the Housewives’ Association stated ‘had outlived its usefulness’ and none mourned its passing. \(^{24}\) Nevertheless, the abrupt ending of rationing was criticised because it enabled the ‘wealthy’ to rush to buy existing stocks of clothing before the price rose after subsidies were removed \(^{25}\) from wool on 31 July, and from imported textiles, yarn and raw cotton shortly after. \(^{26}\) When rationing of meat and clothing were unexpectedly abandoned expectations were that all coupon rationing was set to end. Such hopes were doomed to disappointment. The fundamental problems remained. Australia still obtained the bulk of petrol supplies from dollar areas and Britain still expected Australia to limit petrol usage to save dollars to help reduce Britain’s outstanding dollar debt. A

\(^{21}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 22 June 1948. The Departmental History of Rationing gives two dates for the end of clothes rationing. On page 9 the date is given as 24 June 1948, while page 19 states that clothes rationing terminated on 22 June 1948.

\(^{22}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 22 June 1948.

\(^{23}\) ibid.

\(^{24}\) ibid.

\(^{25}\) ibid.

\(^{26}\) Argus, 22 June 1948.
combination of loyalty to traditional ties with Britain and governmental indecisiveness led to a great deal of muddling before petrol rationing was eventually abandoned. The very size of Australia, its spread of population, and the scarcity of public transport infrastructure meant that petrol rationing caused considerable problems for industry and the motoring public alike. Even before the war ended the government was under pressure to relax petrol restrictions, and was accused of not being sufficiently ‘active’ in seeking increased supplies.27 Defending the government the Minister for Supply and Shipping claimed that at times Australian authorities were so forceful when seeking increased allocations that the representations were actually ‘discourteous’. He explained that whatever happened with petrol a ‘wool and knitting needles’ situation existed, as any relaxation of petrol rationing would exacerbate the ‘rubber problem’. Without making any promises, and saying ‘the government is doing its best under the circumstances’ he went on to state confidently that ‘the time was not far distant when the position will be improved’28 which as it turned out showed that the government really did not know what the future held in relation to petrol rationing.

Victory over Japan raised expectations that rationing would end, but such hopes were in vain. The end of the war created new demands for shipping space, and tanker movements became even more uncertain. At the same time the cessation of Lend Lease brought new dollar and sterling exchange problems.29 These difficulties were remote from everyday life, and industry and motorists looked for other scapegoats. It was not long before the bureaucracy was blamed for the continuation of petrol rationing. Hattil Foll, a United Australia Party Senator from Queensland, argued that the Liquid Fuel Control Board was ‘an authority which the government could

28 Minister for Supply and Shipping, C.P.D., Vol. 183, p. 3663. The ‘rubber problem’ referred to tyres which were in very short supply as the war had thrown the rubber industry into chaos.
very well eliminate', somewhat cynically observing that 'many departmental controls are being retained simply because those who administer them like controlling people. Many of those administrations will die hard'.\(^{30}\) This comment held more than a grain of truth.

While there was some substance in the claim that entrenched wartime departments were reluctant to lose the powers they held, a fundamental reason for the continuation of petrol rationing was to be found elsewhere. Because of traditional and economic ties with Britain there was no questioning that Australia would save every dollar possible to help Britain pay its debts to the United States. This closed the door to unlimited purchases of petrol from American sources, even though theoretically Australia could obtain petrol from the United States as American petroleum products and tanker allocations had been freed post-war from governmental controls. By complying with British demands and relying on United Kingdom allocations of petrol from sterling sources Australia was virtually forced to comply with United Kingdom stipulations about rationing. Australian authorities were unable to relax restrictions while petrol rationing was still in force in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, as they feared that the Overseas Control Committee might respond by reducing the Australian allocation.\(^{31}\)

The British government continued to urge Australian authorities to save petrol even though the ration for private motorists in Australia was 50 per cent less than private motorists received in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The Minister for Supply and Shipping reasoned that the British government could not retaliate if Australian motorists were given the same ration and arranged for the Treasury to make sufficient dollars available to obtain enough petrol to permit an increase to 180 miles per month in February 1946. Industries received no relief.\(^{32}\) Petrol rationing was

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31 Minister for Shipping and Supply, Memorandum prepared for Cabinet marked 'Petrol Rationing', 11 January 1946, A.A., Series A5954, Item 710/1.
32 ibid.
maintained at that level until rationing ended. But industry wanted to move on, and petrol rationing stifled many of the emerging enterprises.

While the Australian Government was prepared to go along with the United Kingdom regarding petrol restrictions entrepreneurs were not, and the government's authority to extend the Defence (Transitional Provisions) Act, which provided the power to keep rationing in force, was challenged in the High Court in the *Wagner v Gall* matter. The judgement handed down in June 1949 in this matter was that the Act was invalid 'insofar as it purported to extend the operation of the National Security (Liquid Fuel) Regulations'. According to the Departmental History of Rationing the judgement of the High Court stated:

>The effects of the past war will continue for centuries. If it were held that the defence power would justify any legislation at any time which dealt with any matter the character of which had been changed by war, or with any problem which had been created or aggravated by the war, then the Commonwealth Parliament would have a general power of making laws for the peace, order and good government of Australia with respect to almost every subject. Nearly all the limitations imposed on a Commonwealth by a carefully framed Constitution would disappear.

The effect of this judgement was that petrol rationing was abandoned.

Chaos followed. People hoarded, and petrol supplies became so scarce that primary production was seriously hindered, businesses were at a standstill, and industries were disrupted. The government blamed the oil companies, and the oil companies blamed the government, claiming that the government's demand that 50,000,000 gallons be held in reserve for defence purposes was unreasonable. Hubert Anthony, the Country Party Member for Richmond in New South Wales asked 'against what have we to defend ourselves in the next two or three months? Is there an

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34 ibid.

enemy or any war in sight within that period?" He wanted the government to release part of the stock required to be held for defence to ameliorate the shortage. The government made much of the fact that its hands were tied because of the High Court decision. John Dedman, the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction, pointed out that rationing could be reintroduced if State Governments would co-operate by introducing legislation to enable rationing to be recommenced. Eventually this was done, and rationing resumed in November 1949. A Federal election took place in December 1949 and the Labor Party was defeated. The Liberal-Country Party Coalition, under Prime Minister Robert Menzies, keeping a pre-election undertaking to abolish petrol rationing, finally declared petrol rationing at an end on 8 February 1950, even though 'sharp differences of opinion' between 'London and Canberra' occurred before rationing ended.

The Wagner v Gall judgement affected rationing of the remaining two items, butter and tea. Butter rationing in particular became more difficult to control. It had been challenged in the courts prior to the Wagner v Gall case, in the matter of Sloan v Pollard, at which time the court had upheld that butter rationing was necessary to enable the government to meet a contract it undertook to supply Britain with 'essential commodities', specifically butter and cheese, for a period which had not expired when the war ended. The Wagner v Gall case opened new doors and forced a review of the position. By early 1950 local butter production had improved, and by then New Zealand had increased butter production for export to Britain. As well, Britain was able to obtain butter from Denmark, Holland and other European countries. The government was well aware that all connected with the butter trade were 'becoming

36 ibid.
37 Minister for Post-War Reconstruction, ibid, p.1457.
38 Editorial Sydney Morning Herald, 2 February 1950.
40 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 146.
41 ibid, p. 147.
restive', and that housewives' patience was 'drawn out to a very thin thread'. Authorities decided that in view of the increased production it could no longer justify butter rationing, and restrictions ceased on 16 June 1950.

Tea rationing dragged on a little longer. The reasons tea rationing lasted so long are complex and have little to do with shortages. According to historians S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin, supplies of tea became 'embarrassingly abundant' soon after rationing was introduced on 6 June 1942, and by the end of that year Australia held five months' civilian supply. As the storage life of tea is limited Australian authorities suggested to the United Kingdom that the quota should be reduced. The United Kingdom rejected the suggestion, stating that if it did not take all the tea that India and Ceylon could produce these countries would not maintain full production, and when demand increased after the war supplies would not be available. By late 1944 Australian wholesalers held good reserves of tea and were tending to evade restrictions. The government was pressured to either increase the ration or abolish rationing altogether, but the United Kingdom, still concerned about the sufficiency of supplies to meet post-war demands, opposed suggestions about 'de-rationing'.

The post-war position in Australia, when adequate stocks were available to meet any demands, was complicated further by the subsidy which the government introduced in 1943 to keep the price of tea as low as possible to avoid inflating the cost of living. The dilemma the government faced was that if tea was released from rationing without a price rise, consumption would rise, and the subsidy paid by the government would increase. The choices were to end rationing while retaining the

42 ibid, p. 148.
43 Housewives Association of New South Wales to Prime Minister, 14 September 1949, A.A., Series A461/7, Item D325/1/14.
44 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., p. 148.
46 As noted in an earlier chapter the United Kingdom controlled the supply of tea to Empire countries.
48 ibid.
49 Departmental History of Rationing, op. cit., pp. 105-6.
subsidy, but to raise the price from the current 2/9d per pound to about 4/6d per pound on the assumption that the price increase would restrain consumption, or to end rationing and remove the subsidy which it was estimated would result in the price rising to between 6/- and 7/- per pound. Either choice would result in consumer complaints, and worse still, a rise in the cost of living, which would lead to undesirable demands for wage rises.\(^{50}\)

Despite lengthy and unproductive deliberations the government could not decide upon a solution. As had happened throughout the history of rationing, events took over and forced action. After the *Wagner v Gall* decision trade representations became insistent, and concession after concession was sought. As well, grocers suffered the wrath of customers as they became belligerent about the continuing rationing.\(^{51}\) Worse still for the Rationing Commission was the fact that following the *Wagner v Gall* case the commission was instructed to suspend all current prosecutions for breaches of rationing restrictions, and not to institute any new cases, because the government was aware that prosecutions would fail.\(^ {52}\) Traders were conscious of the instruction, and took advantage of the situation. Unprecedented breaches of the regulations occurred thereafter, and the black market took on a new life.\(^{53}\) Without the power to impose any punishments the Rationing Commission found rationing uncontrollable, and on 9 June 1950 the Director of Rationing recommended the ‘adviseableness’ of terminating tea rationing.\(^ {54}\) Cabinet realised the impossible position the Rationing Commission was in once disciplinary powers were removed, and endorsed the recommendation that tea rationing end. Despite all the problems the Rationing Commission was enduring trying to keep rationing going, and the hostility

\(^{50}\) ibid. The cost of subsidy in 1943-44 amounted to £2,460,612; 1944-45 £2,188,292; 1945-46 £2,356,176; 1946-47 £4,413,702; 1947-48 £6,840,000; 1948-49 £4,667,000; 1949-50 £5,500,000 (est.), p. 105.

\(^{51}\) ibid, p. 104.

\(^{52}\) ibid, p. 217.

\(^{53}\) ibid.

\(^ {54}\) ibid, pp. 106-7.
traders were suffering from consumers, Cabinet pointlessly ordered that rationing should continue until the current issue of ration coupons terminated on 3 July 1950.\textsuperscript{55} Rationing of other items ended immediately after the announcement was made, and there was no logical reason, or indeed any particular reason given, for delaying the end of tea rationing. However, as it happened, tea rationing was abandoned almost eight years to the day from its introduction. Ironically it lasted longer in peace than in war.

The eighty-third meeting of the Rationing Commission, held on 9 June 1950 when the recommendation that tea rationing should cease was made, was the last meeting of the commission.\textsuperscript{56} When tea rationing ended the Rationing Commission’s work also ended and the commission was dissolved.

Rationing ended as it began; unstructured, unwanted and unloved. When it became evident, as the war progressed, that various items would have to be coupon rationed the government had postponed rationing until various disparate factors forced action. Rationing ended in much the same way, with the government showing a marked reluctance to release the rationed items, even when the need to ration no longer existed. The old Empire ties of tradition and trade, which allowed the United Kingdom to dictate Australia’s actions in several spheres of rationing were a very real factor in authorities’ decision-making both during the war and well afterwards. In the end it took determined action in the courts, and a new government, which had campaigned on a platform of abolishing rationing, to bring rationing to an unlamented end.

\textsuperscript{55} ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} ibid, p. 106.
Conclusion

Certain conclusions are obvious. The Australian government’s preconceived notion that another war would be a re-run of World War I and remain far-off, and that supply would not present undue problems, led to the lack of planning for restricting civilian consumption. As no rationing schemes were included in plans made for war the muddling that ensued was inevitable. Rationing was eventually imposed on a population which had no prior experience of having to manage coupons, by an administration that was ill-equipped for the task. It was also done in a haphazard manner as various authorities competed for specific priorities. On-going problems were not anticipated and planning was largely driven by events. To add to administrative problems politicians were influenced by lobbying from various sectional interests, and civilians showed reluctance to accept rationing as a necessary part of the war effort.

While the war was far away, and total war an unknown concept, action to set Australia on a war footing had been leisurely, and the general public had been untouched by genuine wartime hardships. While supplies existed civilians, who in many cases had profited by the employment that emergent wartime industries had created, bought freely. Supplies of clothing and textiles, most of which were imported, deteriorated to an alarming level. The government was not unaware of this, but kept hoping that it would not be necessary to impose restrictions which could have led to political unpleasantness. Various individuals within the administration knew that the position was becoming desperate and attempted to motivate departments to plan for rationing. But for every person who advocated rationing there were others who disputed that it was necessary. The Japanese advance towards Australia, and the fear of invasion, eventually precipitated frenzied action.
Even then, there was disagreement between departments about what should be done to control resources. In the meantime, the population indulged in panic shopping and hoarded disgracefully. For many, the thought of missing out on what was in the shops, or even going without, was just as frightening as the thought of invasion. Problems compounded as time was wasted when supply departments failed to meet deadlines to devise practical schemes for rationing, either because they were occupied with other important projects or were simply not persuaded that rationing had to be given priority. The main difficulty was that each department tended to have tunnel-vision and saw rationing only in the light of how it affected their particular interests. Whether the fundamental reason for rationing was to save resources for diversion to other uses, to save labour for war projects, to limit spending, or to equitably distribute scarce goods so that morale did not falter does not seem to have ever been resolved. When crisis point was reached the Prime Minister finally took action and over-rode Cabinet and the various departments that were prevaricating by appointing a Director of Rationing and a Rationing Commission from outside the bureaucracy.

Rationing systems were unwieldy and needed constant tinkering and fine tuning. To be sure, having to contrive systems which would reduce consumption without adequate statistics regarding average demand was a near impossible task. While the Rationing Commission was, over time, given the responsibility for controlling the rationing of clothing, tea, sugar, butter and meat, and the Liquid Fuel Control Board handled the rationing of petrol, they were merely the administrative bodies that carried out the dictates of the various departments which controlled supply. Decision-making about what was to be rationed and the overall quantities of goods that were to be made available to civilians was invariably spread between inter-departmental committees.

While this spread the blame when things went wrong, committees invariably caused delays, muddling, bungling and persistent disputation. Admittedly, no department seems to have given rationing top priority, no doubt because there were
always other more demanding wartime concerns to distract authorities from what was seen as fundamentally a domestic matter. Be this as it may, rationing was essential to facilitate Australia's war effort in supplying basic goods to the armed forces and to send needed food supplies to the United Kingdom.

Fundamentally, on the homefront, coupon rationing did provide civilians with the assurance that essential needs would be available, when and where required. Certainly coupons limited consumption and it required concerted juggling to make ends meet, but on the other hand it was morale-boosting to know that everybody was being treated equally, even though equability was often disputed. It also brought home to the public the realities of war and the necessity for all to make sacrifices if the war was to be won. If the unseemly scramble and hoarding of goods that occurred before rationing was introduced had continued, the whole war effort would have been threatened by loss of confidence in the government; by uncontrolled price rises which would have led to demands for increased wages and a resultant rise in the cost of waging the war; and to a breakdown of morale which would have had grave consequences for the overall war effort.

Although civilians were aware that rationing was a wartime necessity, and did accept rationing without undue complaints while the invasion emergency existed, the extreme tolerance exhibited by all sections of the community towards black marketeers was paradoxical. The black market had the potential to completely disrupt rationing as those 'in the know', and with the necessary financial resources, could always obtain more than their share. Even so, courts were unwilling to impose penalties for breaches of rationing restrictions that were sufficient to deter offenders, and politicians continually championed black marketeers against reasonable punishment.

When the war ended the government showed the same lack of resolution about dismantling rationing as it had about implementing it and rationing continued well into the peace. To be sure, political, financial and emotional ties with Britain did influence the continuation of rationing. Admittedly, Britain's need for some foods was
desperate after the war, and the Australian government’s desire to re-establish export contracts, and to negotiate new ones, was legitimate. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom government did exert an extraordinary degree of authority over the Australian government and compliance with demands that dollars be saved to help Britain with its post-war exchange problem contributed to petrol rationing continuing for so long.

By concentrating on the administrative aspects of rationing rather than a wider, all-encompassing study, and by chronologically following events, a very clear picture of the uncertainties that plagued the administration emerged. This study has given breadth and depth to the homefront in Australia during the war years and has revealed hitherto unsuspected facts about coupon rationing during World War II in Australia. Important facts revealed by this research are not only the lack of dedication displayed initially by the administration towards rationing but the incredible amount of muddling that arose because of the conflicting opinions of inter-departmental committees that were initially assembled to formulate and consider proposals.

Previously untouched archival sources revealed secrets that were well-kept during the war years. The considerable controversy about when, what and how to ration, and the disputes between computing interests, clearly reveals that authorities had no idea how to manage resources as the wartime crisis developed. Furthermore, civilian complaints to authorities disclose more about attitudes towards rationing than newspaper reports at the time indicated. The ‘big picture’ portrayed by authorities through propaganda both during and after the war was that the government knew what it was doing and did it competently, and that the civilian population patriotically and willingly complied with restrictions. This research has exposed that rationing was indeed a contentious subject. It shows plainly that departmental co-operation was conspicuous by its absence when decision-making about rationing was critical; that politicians showed no dedication towards rationing; and that the black market was certainly not universally condemned. These aspects have not been critically addressed previously.
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