

**August to ANZAC: popular responses to the outbreak of the
Great War in Australia, 1914-1915**

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by

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I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.



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Signature

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Abstract

This thesis is an examination of Australian popular responses during the first nine months of the Great War. Previously having received little examination, this period has traditionally been defined by Australian historians as a time of unbridled harmony combined with an all-embracing patriotic desire to serve the Empire. According to this view, there was something special and unique about this period of supposed solidarity; indeed, the first few months of the war have often been held up in startling comparison to the rowdy divisive years seen during the conscription debates of 1916 and 1917. This thesis offers an alternative interpretation. Using a wide selection of city and country newspapers — as well as diaries from soldiers who served in the Australian Imperial Force, memoirs from those that lived through the war and various business, union and governmental records — this thesis proposes that some Australians were not as enthusiastic about the war as many historians have suggested. There was, of course, considerable patriotic effervescence throughout this period. The tremendous initial burst of excitement faded quickly, however, to be replaced by a ‘business as usual’ approach; a practise promoting stability and ‘normalcy’ as behaviour more desirable and patriotic than that of enthusiastic jingoism. Indeed, government figures, business leaders and unions quickly embraced the principle of ‘business as usual’ and encouraged the general community to do the same. As early as September 1914, however, some commentators had grown concerned that this approach had been taken to extreme. They argued that such things as the significant drop in enlistment in late 1914 and early 1915 had been caused by an increasing level of apathy or indifference towards the war. Comments such as these led to a more comprehensive public discourse on the nature and extent of Australia’s commitment to ‘Britain’s war’, the true nature of patriotism and the nation’s duties and responsibilities as a member of the Empire. Overall, this thesis argues that the popular response between August 1914 and the ANZAC landings in April 1915 suggests that Australians were less committed to the war in Europe than has been previously recognised.

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List of Abbreviations

ABTEF	Australian Boot Trade Employees' Federation
ACC	Adelaide Chamber of Commerce
Ad Steam	Adelaide Steamship Company
<i>AHS</i>	<i>Australian Historical Studies</i>
APSC	Australian Progressive Society of Carpenters
ASC	Amalgamated Society of Carpenters
<i>ASJ</i>	<i>Australian Sugar Journal</i>
ASOF	Australian Steamship Owners Federation
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
<i>AJPH</i>	<i>Australian Journal of Politics and History</i>
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AWM	Australian War Memorial
CCAE	Central Council of Australian Employers
<i>HER</i>	<i>History of Education Review</i>
<i>HMAS</i>	<i>His Majesty's Australian Ship</i>
<i>JAS</i>	<i>Journal of Australian Studies</i>
<i>JAWM</i>	<i>Journal of the Australian War Memorial</i>
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
LCNSW	Labor Council of New South Wales
LHR	Australian Light Horse Regiment
NBAC	Noel Butlin Archives Centre
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
OMS/SA	Operative Masons Society of South Australia
OSSA/VIC	Operative Stonemasons Society of Australia — Victorian Branch

PU/NSW	Pastoralists Union of New South Wales
PRLMC	Peel River and Land and Mineral Company
PROV	Public Record Office Victoria
SCC	Sydney Chamber of Commerce
VCC	Victorian Chamber of Commerce
<i>VHR</i>	<i>Victorian Historical Review</i>
<i>W & S</i>	<i>War and Society</i>
WLU	Wharf Labourer's Union
WSL	White Star Line