

Parliament of Victoria

The Victorian Parliament and World War II

Ben Reid & Debra Reeves

No. 3 | August 2025

• ————— • ————— • —————

Research Note

Parliamentary Library & Information Service

Table of Contents

Executive summary	1
Introduction	2
1 Prelude to the conflict	4
2 Declaration of war	5
3 The Pacific war and state-federal relations	12
4 The turning of the tide	14
5 Sitting Members who served	15
Reference List	17

Executive summary

On the 80th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific (VP) Day, which meant the end of World War II for Australia, this paper reflects on the role of, and events in, the Victorian Parliament during the war years.

While not directly responsible for defence, the Victorian Parliament played a significant role during the 1939–45 conflict. It coordinated many aspects of resource mobilisation and civil defence. The war corresponded with a unique period in the state's political history where the Country Party's (CP) Albert Dunstan became Premier. Assuming power in 1935 (with Labor's support), Dunstan oversaw pre-war preparations, completing the state's 'war book' (a plan for the conflict) in the late 1930s, and would go on to become the state's first long-running Premier.

The outbreak of hostilities in 1939 led to the Victorian Parliament passing the *National Security (Emergency Powers) Act 1939*, facilitating cooperation with the Commonwealth. It appointed a State War Advisory Committee, consisting of representatives of all parties, the ministry and the Legislative Council. These bodies engaged in extensive planning and activity centred on civil defence and economic support for the war effort. The former included planning and exercises for air raids, which was reflected in preparations undertaken in Parliament but also throughout Melbourne and the state more broadly. Several Victorian Members of Parliament also stepped away from their roles to undertake active service.

Dunstan and the CP's hold over state politics weakened slightly in the later war years, leading to a short-lived Labor government under John Cain Sr in 1943. A coalition between the CP and United Australia Party (UAP) quickly replaced it. The paper provides a summary of the key political events occurring in Victoria around the war, while also detailing the activities carried out to ensure the Parliament and the state were well prepared for the war and its aftermath.

Introduction

Victoria's Parliament played a significant role in World War II. Along with other state parliaments, it engaged in extensive cooperation with the national government, coordinating many facets of the economic dimension of the war effort, such as the mobilisation of labour and resources. Table 1 summarises the main events relevant to Victoria that occurred between the years 1938 and 1945.

The paper first outlines the prelude to the outbreak of war, including the prolonged period of instability both in Victorian politics but also in the international arena. Section two details how Victoria then reacted to the declaration of war and the Victorian Parliament's legislative and policy responses, led by Premier Albert Dunstan. A large body of work was carried out between the state and federal levels of government, and this is explored alongside a range of other initial measures that were undertaken in different sections of the public service and community, including civil defence resourcing and air raid precautions.

Section three looks more closely at the issues after 1941, with the outbreak of war in the Pacific and change in government federally, before section four examines the changes to the war response in Victoria and Australia late in the conflict. Lastly, section five provides details of some of the sitting Members of Parliament who served in the military during the war.

Table 1: Key Events and Legislation, 1938–45

Time	Event
September 1938	Premiers' Conference
October 1938	Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers on National Cooperation and Development Meeting of Loans Council
January 1939	<i>Loan Act of 1939</i> (Cth)
June 1939	National Defence Council established
mid-1939	Victorian War Book completed
August 1939	State Emergency Council for Civil Defence formed
September 1939	War with Germany declared <i>National Security Act of 1939</i> (Cth) Ministerial Statement: The British Empire at War <i>National Security (Emergency Powers) Act 1939</i> (Vic)
March 1940	Victorian state election held
May 1940	<i>Income Tax Act of 1940</i> (Cth)
June 1940	State War Advisory Council formed
July 1940	Ministerial Statement: National War Effort
September 1940	Federal election held
October 1941	Federal Curtin Labor government formed

Time	Event
December 1941	War with Japan declared
June 1942	<i>Income Tax (Wartime Arrangements) Act of 1942</i> (Cth)
July 1942	Victorian Labor support for Dunstan government withdrawn
October 1942	Constitutional Convention
August 1943	Victorian state election held
September 1943	Cain Labor ministry appointed, replaced by Dunstan ministry after five days
August 1944	Australian Post-War Reconstruction and Democratic Rights Referendum held
November 1944	<i>Electoral Districts Act of 1944</i> (Vic)
September–October 1945	Parliament votes to block supply for Dunstan government, Governor agrees to dissolution of Parliament
November 1945	Victorian state election held Cain Labor minority government elected

1 | Prelude to the conflict

While World War II formally started in September 1939, when Australia followed Britain in declaring war on Germany, it was the culmination of a long period of international conflict and volatility. The eminent international relations scholar E. H. Carr famously referred to the ‘twenty-year crisis’ that started in 1919.¹ Recurrent political, economic and military crises marked the 1920s and 1930s.

Australia’s foreign policy remained focused on its role in the British Empire, although it became increasingly centred on events in the Asia-Pacific.² With defence primarily the domain of the federal parliament, the Victorian Parliament focused more on war’s impacts on the state’s economy and international exports.

The international instability of the interwar years played a significant role in shaping state politics. A series of short-lived governments existed in the Victorian Parliament through the 1920s and continued into the early 1930s. The Nationalists initially predominated, with the support of the then-fledgling Country Party in the 1920s. Labor won government briefly in 1927 and again between 1929 and 1932.³ A coalition of the United Australia Party (a merger of ex-Labor and Nationalist politicians) and the Country Party governed nationally between 1931 and 1941.

The Great Depression (1929–32) saw Victoria’s per capita income plummet from a high of £75 per year in 1928 (AUD\$7,432.65 in 2024) to £60 by 1931 (AUD\$6,784.67 in 2024), while national unemployment jumped from 9 to 25.8 per cent.⁴

Australia followed the British ‘trade diversion’ policy after 1936, restricting textile imports from Japan.⁵ Victoria endured the effects of a subsequent trade war long before the outbreak of war.⁶

There was some mention of these issues in the state’s parliament in 1937.⁷ The Country Party (CP) Member for Lowan in the Legislative Assembly, Marcus Wettenhall, cautioned against ‘following too closely the British-led policy of trade preferences within the Empire, given that countries outside of the realm already imported 65 per cent of Australian wool’.⁸

However, as the 1930s progressed, the prolonged political instability eventually abated. The CP under Albert Dunstan came to govern with Labor’s support in 1935.⁹ Dunstan emerged as the state’s first long-term Premier, winning three elections and remaining in the post until April 1945 (apart from a five-day period in September 1943, when John Cain Sr was Premier).

The Dunstan era had two phases: before and after the outbreak of war in 1939. In the first phase, the government legislated some reforms, including the creation of the Victorian Housing Commission.¹⁰

¹ E. H. Carr (2016) *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

² P. Hasluck (1952) *Government and the People, 1939–1941: Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 4, Civil*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, pp. 1–2.

³ N. Dyrenfurth & F. Bongiorno (2024) *A little history of the Australian Labor Party*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, pp. 72–75.

⁴ ABS (1954) *6101.0 – Labour Report*, Canberra, ABS; W. Sinclair (1996) ‘Victorian’s Economy in the Long Run’, *Australian Economic History Review*, 36, pp. 3–29.

⁵ Hasluck (1952) op. cit. pp. 6–8.

⁶ K. Tsokhas (1989) ‘The Wool Industry and the 1936 Trade Diversion Dispute Between Australia and Japan’, *Australian Historical Studies*, 23, pp. 442–461.

⁷ E. Cleary, W. Dunstone & A. McDonald (1937) ‘Governors Speech: Address in reply’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 10 September, pp. 244, 533.

⁸ M. E. Wettenhall (1932) ‘Lieutenant-Governor’s Speech: Address-in-Reply’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 16 June, p. 93.

⁹ G. Blainey (2013) *A History of Victoria*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, pp. 253–255.

¹⁰ D. S. Garden (1984) *Victoria – A history*, Melbourne, Nelson, pp. 381–383.

2 | Declaration of war

In the second phase, Dunstan first had to respond to the declaration of war. In a ministerial statement on 5 September 1939, he stated that there:

... should not, and could not, be any divided counsels on matters relating to the safety of this country and the preservation of the British Empire. Until the end of the war, be it long or short, all our energies must be directed with those considerations uppermost in our minds.¹¹

He explained his government was:

... particularly desirous of co-operating in every possible way with the Commonwealth Government. At the same time, there are certain obligations resting upon the State Government which we propose to discharge by way of legislation of an emergency character. I can assure the House that this emergency legislation will refer only to the protection and security of the civil population, and will have no bearing on military operations, which are the sole responsibility of the Commonwealth.¹²

The Leader of the Opposition, the United Australia Party's Stanley Argyle, and Labor's John Cain pledged cooperation.

Dunstan's statement outlined the architecture that had already evolved in preparation for an expected outbreak of hostilities. The premiers of all states were members of the National Defence Council, established in June 1939.¹³ In actuality, the body did not leave any records and never met again.¹⁴

State and federal cooperation

Indeed, cooperation between states and the Commonwealth over war preparation had gradually intensified over the 1930s. As noted in section 1, there was a long build-up to the outbreak in hostilities. The Department of Defence had prepared a standardised War Book to consolidate national planning, a measure adopted by the 1930 Imperial Conference.¹⁵ The War Book stipulated extensive areas of state-level responsibility, such as air-raid preparation and other civil defence matters, along with construction, law enforcement, population control, civil disturbances, utilities, fire, storage, agriculture and vital goods and services.¹⁶

Preparation intensified when the September 1938 Premiers' Conference in Canberra began formulating state infrastructure and land acquisition plans. In October, a 'conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers on national cooperation and development' took place in conjunction with the Loan Council.¹⁷ The *Loan Act of 1939* (Cth), which specified £10 million to finance defence preparation in conjunction with the states, was the result of this conference.¹⁸

Accordingly, Victoria's own state-level War Book detailed specific plans for Victoria's contributions.¹⁹ Liaison officers for each state and the Department of Defence oversaw these plans, with Victoria's (purportedly) completed by mid-1939.²⁰ It appears that while the War Book was sent to Canberra and listed as 'received' in June, it was lost in the mail.²¹ The

¹¹ A. Dunstan (1939) 'Ministerial Statement: The British Empire at War', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, September 5, p. 1173.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Hasluck (1952) *op. cit.*, p. 136.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ R. Goyne (2022) 'Australia's Blueprint for Economic Warfare in the Second World War: The war book of the Commonwealth of Australia 1939', *Sabretache*, 63, pp. 39–43.

¹⁷ Hasluck (1952) *op. cit.*, pp. 127–128.

¹⁸ *Loan Act of 1939* (Cth).

¹⁹ Dunstan (1939) *op. cit.*, p. 1173.

²⁰ Hasluck (1952) *op. cit.*, p. 135.

²¹ National Archives of Australia (1939) Prime Minister's Department; A1608, Correspondence files, multiple number series with variable alphabetical prefix and general prefix 'SC' (fourth system);

Prime Minister's Department's file does, however, include a detailed memorandum from Premier Dunstan (that mentions 'Copy No. 28 of the Provisional War Book').²² The memorandum provided considerable details of the Victorian Government's preparations across nine departments and agencies:

- police;
- lands;
- forests;
- transport;
- education;
- public health;
- mines;
- labour; and
- railways.

As part of these plans, the police would develop a register of internment camps for 'overseas aliens', as well as allowing for the establishment of a 'provost corps' and an 'auxiliary force'.²³ The Lands Department prepared for 'rapid mapping' of the state. The most detailed sections are related to forests and railways. Forests, according to the War Book, presented an 'unlimited supply' of timber for charcoal production (to 'replace petrol', if needed).²⁴

With cooperation across Parliament established and without venturing into contentious issues like conscription, Dunstan's government presented a National Security (Emergency Powers) Bill (1939). The resulting Act effectively created a framework for emergency government for 12 months, with 'Continuations' passed each year between 1940 and 1944. The legislation empowered the government to make extensive regulations about:

- a) securing public safety and order;
- b) securing and regulating the supply and distribution of food, water, fuel, light, heat, power and other necessities;
- c) maintaining, controlling and regulating the means of transit, navigation locomotion and other services;
- d) preventing profiteering and regulating and controlling the supply and prices of commodities and any purposes necessary or conducive to public safety or order or the life or health.²⁵

The Act emphasised the Victorian Government's role in complementing the Commonwealth Government's measures. It granted substantial powers to authorities—including the power to imprison individuals for up to one year—for enforcing measures associated with the war effort.

In Victoria, the State Emergency Council for Civil Defence (State Emergency Council) was officially appointed by the Victorian Government on 9 October 1939 by an Order in Council under the *National Security (Emergency Powers) Act 1939*. Sir John Harris, who served as Minister of Public Instruction and Minister of Public Health, chaired the Council, which included the Chief Commissioner of Police, the Secretary of Public Works, as well as senior representatives from health, transport, engineering, water, and power supply agencies.²⁶

As the War Book memorandum detailed, the State Emergency Council developed 'plans for the evacuation of cities ...; transport arrangements; lighting restrictions; and the protection

O27/1/9, *State War Book* – Victoria, p. 3. The NAA file includes a letter written by F. A. McLaughlan of the Prime Minister's Department to the defence department seeking its help to 'throw any light on the mystery' of what happened to the *War Book* draft (marked 'secret' in pencil).

²² *ibid.*, p. 5.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 7. Dunstan's comments may be an allusion to the widespread bushfires of 1939.

²⁵ *National Security (Emergency Powers) Act 1939*, s 3.

²⁶ (1939) 'A.R.P. Air Raid Precautions: State Emergency Council for Civil Defence', *The Age*, 22 December, p. 8.

of public utilities' and 'a complete system of air raid warnings'.²⁷ The Council subsequently divided its tasks into four sub-committees, with air raid warning systems and drills becoming the most prominent activity.²⁸

A suite of regulations accompanied the Victorian legislation, including emergency transport, police auxiliary forces and measures for prices, railways and reservoirs. During debate in the Legislative Assembly, Minister Harris said that 'many plans have been placed in operation. For instance, a plan has been drawn up safeguarding the civil population against the consequences of enemy attack, particularly from the air'.²⁹

The Victorian Government appointed a State War Advisory Committee in mid-1940 consisting of representatives of all parties, the ministry and the Legislative Council. Dunstan argued, in a ministerial statement on 30 July 1940, that the committee would 'investigate every avenue by which Victoria can further assist in the national war effort'.³⁰ Some tension existed over which issues would be deliberated upon by the State Emergency Council versus the Parliament.

Parliament took on a background role, although Dunstan emphasised that the State Emergency Council would be 'no more taking the place of Parliament than would the municipal councils'.³¹ The March 1940 election returned Dunstan's government (the CP increased its representation from 20 to 22 of the Legislative Assembly's 65 seats with 14.16 per cent of the vote).³²

On 11 November 1940, under powers conferred by the *National Security (Emergency Powers) Act 1939* and the *National Security (Emergency Powers) Continuation Act 1940*, an Order in Council proclaimed the National Security (Air Raid Precautions) Regulations 1940. The first Air Raid Precautions (ARP) scheme emerged on 10 June 1941. In addition, it established an Air Raid Precautions Shelter Committee when it seemed that Australia was in imminent danger of attack or invasion by Japan. It operated in close association with the State Emergency Council.

Melbourne—after hosting the federal parliament from 1901 until 1927—was still home to a substantial proportion of the Commonwealth public service, who had not yet migrated to Canberra.³³ A significant expansion of armaments production and agriculture also considerably transformed the state's industry.³⁴

Civil defence: Victorian organisation

The Commonwealth War Book largely handed responsibility for wartime civil defence to the state governments. They continued with their plans—using their own funds and guided by overseas publications and instructions provided by the Commonwealth Government—once Australia was at war in September 1939.³⁵ The 'English model' was followed for most ARP arrangements and training, with wardens in charge of 'posts' in places such as railway stations or schools.³⁶ The federal Department of Defence Coordination aimed for uniformity,

²⁷ Dunstan (1939) op. cit., p. 1174.

²⁸ Premier's Office (1940) *First Interim Report of the State Emergency Council for Civil Defence*, Melbourne, Premier's Office.

²⁹ J. Harris, Minister of Public Instruction (1939) 'National Security (Emergency Powers) Bill', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 5 September, p. 1282.

³⁰ A. Dunstan (1940) 'Ministerial Statement: National War Effort', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 30 July, pp. 212–213.

³¹ Dunstan (1939) op. cit., p. 1183.

³² C. A. Hughes & A. D. Graham (1968) *A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics 1890–1964*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, pp. 487–488.

³³ Hasluck (1952) op. cit., p. 478.

³⁴ Garden (1984) op. cit., p. 387.

³⁵ J. Fisher (1970) 'Appendix 1: Civil defence organisation', in P. Hasluck (1970) *Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series 4, Civil (Volume II) The Government and the People, 1942–1945*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, p. 636.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 639.

but each state chose its own names for ARP officials, used local protocols for sound warning signals and used different colour warning codes.³⁷

Melbourne and Geelong were quickly listed as potentially ‘vulnerable’ areas, with the Yallourn power station added to the list by 1941.³⁸ Melbourne had significant munitions and aircraft industries, along with vital port facilities that could present targets for bombing attacks.³⁹

In June 1941, the federal government sought to head off issues with funding and control of domestic wartime readiness by creating the Department of Home Security. It took over civilian defence and state cooperation functions. It was one of five new departments created at that time, the others being the departments of aircraft production, transport, war organisation of industry, and external territories.⁴⁰ Commonwealth financial assistance for Victoria’s ARP efforts was eventually granted in August 1941 for up to £500,000 based on a £1-for-£1 subsidy towards agreed civil defence priorities.⁴¹ Greater federal expenditure for state civil defences was authorised after Japan entered the war in December 1941.⁴²

In a major reorganisation, seven executive committees replaced the Victorian State Emergency Council in January 1942.⁴³ Minister Harris objected to the changes and resigned from both the State Emergency Council and the Dunstan ministry.⁴⁴ The new committees were divided into emergency services personnel, transport, works, evacuation, medical and hospital services, power and fuel supplies, and rural firefighting services.⁴⁵ Russell Street police headquarters was given the job of managing communication and warning systems, and an alternative state control centre was put in place as backup.⁴⁶ Melbourne was divided into 11 sectors, with each administered by an area warden and supported by a first aid post, a mobile first aid unit and squads for bomb decontamination and rescue work.⁴⁷

The fall of Singapore to Japanese forces in February 1942 and the first attacks on the Australian mainland with the bombing of Darwin (killing 243 people, with at least another 300 wounded) reinforced the urgency of local war efforts.⁴⁸ It was widely believed at the time that the bombings were a precursor to an invasion. Further south, a Japanese midget submarine attack in Sydney Harbour on 31 May 1942 resulted in the deaths of 21 Allied sailors.⁴⁹

Air Raid Precautions work

On 22 December 1939, *The Age* newspaper carried a notice ‘issued with the approval of the Commonwealth War Cabinet and the Premier of Victoria’ that—while there was no immediate reason to fear an attack on Australia—prudence demanded ‘that plans for the protection of the civil population should be prepared calmly and effectively to meet any emergency that may arise’.⁵⁰ The article assured readers that planning for many eventualities had been ongoing since March, such as the evacuation of children from dangerous locations, black-outs and street lighting, air raid warnings, medical aid and police

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 640.

³⁸ K. Darian-Smith (2009) *On the home front: Melbourne in wartime: 1939–1945* (2nd edition), Carlton, Melbourne University Press, p. 17.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ (1941) ‘Cabinet divided into sections’, *The Age*, 27 June, p. 8.

⁴¹ Fisher (1970) *op. cit.*, p. 644.

⁴² Fisher (1970) *op. cit.*, p. 648; (1941) ‘Lighting and shelters: More money for A.R.P. work’, *The Age*, 22 December, p. 4.

⁴³ Fisher (1970) *op. cit.*, p. 653.

⁴⁴ (1942) ‘Sir J. Harris resigns: Civil defence dispute’, *The Age*, 2 January, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Fisher (1970) *op. cit.*, p. 653.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Darian-Smith (2009) *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁴⁸ Old Treasury Building (2020) *Women work for Victory in World War II Exhibition: Civil defence*, Old Treasury Building website; National Archives of Australia (undated) ‘The bombing of Darwin’, NAA website.

⁴⁹ Royal Australian Navy (undated) ‘Japanese midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour’, RAN website.

⁵⁰ (1939) ‘A.R.P. Air Raid Precautions: State Emergency Council for Civil Defence’, *op. cit.*

control. It also urged the populace to do its duty and take part in the plans of the Chief Wardens under the scheme.⁵¹

An amended Local Government Act, which passed in December 1940, enabled municipal councils to borrow money to build and provide air raid shelters, air raid wardens' posts, first aid posts and other structures and equipment needed to protect against air raids.⁵² In Parliament, the Member for Nunawading, Ivy Weber, said she was 'aware of the great amount of training that has been done by citizens in air raid precautions, not only in large cities, but generally throughout the state'.⁵³ She noted that a report on the previous year's operations said that 10,000 people had undertaken training in first aid, air raid precautions and firefighting—and stated that the 'fullest preparations should be taken now'.⁵⁴

ARP wardens capitalised on an initial wave of enthusiasm by training volunteers in first aid classes and understanding firefighting equipment.⁵⁵ Although engagement with ARP work fluctuated over time, more than 60,000 people engaged in civilian defence work when the war reached a crisis point in 1942.⁵⁶

Lights out

In July 1940, following a State Emergency Council decision, several Victorian public bodies also began the process of shading street, tramway and railway lights in Melbourne, Geelong, and other coastal towns. All exposed lights were to be fitted with special dimming hoods designed by the Electricity Commission.⁵⁷

A significant amount of energy was invested in exercises that restricted night-time lighting in Melbourne. While tests were carried out both at night and during the day, the general assumption (based on the British experience) was that bombing raids were more likely at night.⁵⁸ An ARP black-out test at Wattle Park in February 1941 was deemed 'satisfactory'—it showed that 'no more light could be used on trams or in the streets than in the previous tests conducted at Werribee and elsewhere'.⁵⁹

A national conference on ARP work was held at Parliament House in Melbourne in late August 1941, attended by ministers and departmental representatives of various states, representatives of municipal bodies and officers of the Commonwealth fighting services.⁶⁰ Attendees learned that the latest ARP methods used in England were being introduced to Australia, with efforts underway to obtain ARP equipment—including respirators and steel helmets—from overseas. As part of a full agenda, lighting was discussed, along with warning systems, firefighting readiness, petrol supplies, camouflage, telephones, hospitals, evacuation, shelters, and the availability of suitable black-out material for the public.⁶¹

A black-out trial in the city in September 1941 was reasonably successful—vehicle headlights were dimmed, and all advertising and display signs were dark. Parliament House was mentioned by a news report as part of a list of city landmarks that had effectively 'let the side down' during the September 1941 black-out test, with light being visible from windows on the northern side of the building.⁶²

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² N. A. Martin (1940) 'Local Government Bill', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 4 December, p. 1947.

⁵³ I. Weber (1940) 'Local Government Bill', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 4 December, p. 2062.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Darian-Smith (2009) *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 16. ARP officers were often women—see the Parliamentary Library publication on women in the war in Victoria for more information: E. Florence & A. Wright (2025) *'We just did our best': Victorian women and Parliament during World War II*, Parliamentary Library & Information Service, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria.

⁵⁷ (1940) 'News of the day: Air raid precautions', *The Age*, 19 July, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Fisher (1970) *op cit.*, p. 639; (1941) 'If Black-out order came to Melbourne', *The Herald*, 15 February, p. 12.

⁵⁹ (1941) 'Request for "secret" A.R.P. Plans: Emergency Council Acts', *The Herald*, 19 February, p. 3.

⁶⁰ (1941) 'A.R.P. Plans: Searching tests ahead', *The Age*, 26 August, p. 6.

⁶¹ *ibid.*; Fisher (1970) *op cit.*, p. 645.

⁶² (1941) 'City's hour of darkness: Officials satisfied with blackout test', *The Argus*, 24 September, p. 5.

In the same month, as part of an ARP demonstration, a first aid party of parliamentary staff had been photographed lowering a bandaged dummy from the roof to a prepared casualty room.⁶³ They also rehearsed extinguishing ‘incendiary bombs’, with three spotter posts established and four firefighting parties dealing with ‘magnesium bombs’.⁶⁴ This marked significant progress after the situation noted by Ivy Weber MP in December 1940, when she said of Parliament House that ‘none of the attendants has been trained in the work he should do in an emergency’.⁶⁵

A permanent ‘brown-out’ commenced in Melbourne in December 1941, affecting streetlights and vehicle headlights and requiring blackout curtains or coverings to be used over windows in every household.⁶⁶ Shops closed early, cinema hours were reduced and public transport was delayed once the brown-out was in force.⁶⁷ The lighting restrictions contributed to numerous traffic and pedestrian accidents.⁶⁸

A special Australia-wide black-out test was ordered by the Commonwealth Government in February 1942. In Victoria, it applied to all areas within 100 miles of the coastline, major inland towns and strategic centres.⁶⁹ News reports noted widespread public cooperation, although some people (despite earlier tests and warnings) were still ‘caught unprepared’.⁷⁰ Trams stopped mid-route for an hour until the ‘all-clear’ was given. Overall, the test was described as ‘very satisfactory’.⁷¹

Regional Victorian centres and towns made their own preparations. A Ballarat council meeting in April 1942 heard a complaint from Cr Jones that, while Melbourne and Geelong were receiving money for ARP work, other centres such as Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine and Mildura were excluded because they were not classed as ‘active areas’.⁷² The meeting resolved to band together with other localities to gain recognition and assistance for their ARP endeavours.

Take shelter

The State Emergency Council distributed a 35-page booklet in April 1941 that provided advice to householders about air raid precautions. The booklet gave instruction about the different air raid signals, what action should be taken during an air raid, lighting restrictions, road vehicles, refuge rooms and plans for constructing home-made garden shelters.⁷³ While the content of the booklet was alarming, a calming note was struck with reassurance that the government ‘will tell you when, if ever, you should take the precautions recommended in this booklet’.⁷⁴

During an Address-in-Reply speech in the Legislative Council in July 1941, Member for Ballarat Alfred Pittard stated that there was an air-raid shelter in Spring Street, Melbourne. This was in response to remarks by the Member for Dootta Galla, Paul Jones, who expressed concern about casualties in the case of air raids. He said that ‘if we were visited by bombers tomorrow, absolute chaos would result, for I do not know of one air-raid shelter, either in the city or suburbs, in which protection could be afforded’.⁷⁵

⁶³ (1941) ‘ARP at Parliament House’, *The Argus*, 4 September, p. 3.

⁶⁴ (1941) ‘Fire chiefs confer on ARP’, *The Argus*, 4 September, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Weber (1940) op. cit., p. 2062.

⁶⁶ Old Treasury Building (2020) op. cit.

⁶⁷ Darian-Smith (2009) op. cit., p. 19.

⁶⁸ (1942) ‘News of the day: Air-Raid Precautions’, *The Age*, 21 July, p. 2.

⁶⁹ (1942) ‘Blackout test: “Very satisfactory” reports’, *The Age*, 12 February, p. 3.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² (1942) ‘Country news: Ballarat’, *The Age*, 21 April, p. 4.

⁷³ State Emergency Council for Civil Defence Victoria (1941) *Air raid precautions: Advice to householders*, Melbourne, State of Victoria. (State Library Victoria Digital Collections)

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁵ A. J. Pittard & P. Jones (1941) ‘Address-in-Reply’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Council, 29 July, p. 437.

After Japan attacked Pearl Harbour in December 1941, the threat of war began to feel much closer to home.⁷⁶ Emergency preparations were expanded to include the construction of air raid shelters and instructions issued for how to deal with fires and explosions.

A municipal conference in December 1941 discussed the digging of air raid shelters.⁷⁷ The Premier said regulations would be removed to allow trench shelters to be dug on vacant land without the permission of the owner. Word had come from Canberra that deep trenches were unsuitable and slit trenches were favoured. The Public Works Department employed 60 men to dig trenches around the state government offices in Treasury Gardens and near the Exhibition Buildings.⁷⁸ State government grants were made available to support councils' construction of '40 miles of slit trenches' in February 1942.⁷⁹

In January 1942, Service chiefs urged all Victorian householders to prepare air raid shelters for themselves and their families, with trench digging recommended as a first step.⁸⁰ The State Shelters Committee suggested that people who could not build their own trenches should choose the most suitable room in the house 'as a refuge from bomb blasts and splinters', with a cellar or basement option recommended.⁸¹

With a system of warning sirens in place (over 800 around the state, including 134 country towns), the State Shelters Committee and Melbourne City Council discussed air raid protection in January 1942 for shoppers, employees and others in the city centre.⁸² It was estimated that about 500 buildings in the CBD would (with necessary adaptations) be able to protect about 70,000 people, if required. A map of approved city air raid shelters was published in *The Sun News-Pictorial* on 10 March.⁸³ The first air raid test in daylight hours on 12 March 1942 was a success, with people rapidly deserting streets, workplaces and shops to take refuge in recognised shelters and basements around the city.⁸⁴

The second daylight air raid test also went well; despite some issues with overcrowding, it was described by Premier Dunstan as an unqualified success.⁸⁵ Along with everyone in the city, over 1,000 public servants, marshalled by wardens, evacuated their offices and filed into the nearest trenches, which were in the Treasury Gardens. At Parliament House, the evacuation sub-committee, led by Ivy Weber, ushered Members in the building and parliamentary staff into trenches dug in the Parliamentary Gardens.⁸⁶ These trenches were later described as being 'constructed most elaborately; even a miner would have approved of the way they were timbered'.⁸⁷

⁷⁶ State Emergency Council for Civil Defence Victoria (1941) op. cit.

⁷⁷ (1941) 'Protection in air raids: Red tape to be cut in shelter digging', *The Herald*, 30 December, p. 3.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ (1942) 'Councils to dig 40 miles of trenches', *The Herald*, 4 February, p. 3.

⁸⁰ (1942) "'Build shelters now" – Public warned', *The Herald*, 24 January, p. 3.

⁸¹ (1942) 'Trenches and shelters', *The Age*, 6 January, p. 2.

⁸² (1942) 'Air raid protection in city', *The Argus*, 13 January, p. 3; (1940) 'Air raid sirens shriek in city', *The Herald*, 8 August, p. 3; Fisher (1970) op. cit., p. 653.

⁸³ A. Bolt (ed) (1995) *Our Home Front*, Melbourne, Wilkinson Books, p. 127.

⁸⁴ (1942) 'Melbourne's first daylight air raid test', *The Argus*, 13 March, p. 8.

⁸⁵ (1942) 'Air raid test clears streets', *The Argus*, 1 April, p. 5.

⁸⁶ (1942) 'Big improvement in today's raid test', *The Herald*, 31 March, p. 3.

⁸⁷ (1944) 'Protecting buildings', *Gippsland Times*, 20 January, p. 4.

3 | The Pacific war and state-federal relations

Two subsequent events in late 1941 had considerable implications for the Victorian Parliament.

First, Labor returned to power federally under the Prime Ministership of John Curtin. The long-running Lyons-led coalition government had initiated most of the early preparations for the war, establishing a Commonwealth-level War Advisory Council. Labor, however, was unwilling to join an all-party coalition government proposed by Robert Menzies (who became Prime Minister after Lyons's death).⁸⁸ Menzies had managed to form a government with the support of two independents after the 1940 election. These independents eventually crossed the floor, bringing Labor to power.

Second, two months later, Japan attacked the United States' fleet in Hawaii before rapidly occupying much of South-East Asia, including capturing the significant Anglo-Australian military base of Singapore. The emergence of a more imminent threat increased the need for more rapid war mobilisation.

Australia's initial entry into the war—automatic with Britain's declaration of hostilities—was justified in terms of the defence of the Empire. Maintaining Britain's existence was central to Australia's survival: the country conducted most of its defence planning and foreign policy in a framework of cooperation with other members of the British Empire.⁸⁹ The primary debate in Victoria centred on whether to focus more on providing supplies for Britain—with Australia being a key player in the Indian-based Eastern Group Supply Council—or taking a more direct military role.⁹⁰ The emergence of Japan as a direct threat to the Empire and to Australia resolved the issue in favour of a more direct military role.

Nevertheless, the entry of the United States into the war and the re-focusing of Australia's military resources on the Pacific theatre meant the sense of immediate threat declined quite quickly. By 1942, policy debates federally and in the Victorian Parliament focused on institutional reforms for the duration of the war and how these might shape the post-war reconstruction period.⁹¹ The issues of federal and state relationships permeated these discussions.

Tax reform and power struggles

There were two main areas of debate. The first of these, income tax reform, was more immediate and longer-lasting.⁹² Each state had inherited separate income-tax systems from the era of individual colonies. The first federal income taxes—that coexisted with state-based taxes—implemented after 1915 were modest in size, although they persisted after the end of the 1914–18 conflict. The resulting system of parallel state and federal income taxes was cumbersome, and various attempts at reform occurred.⁹³

Inevitably, Federal Government income taxation increased in light of the increasing cost of the war effort. Income tax accounted for 44 per cent of total federal revenue in 1942 (up from 16 per cent in 1938).⁹⁴ The *Income Tax (Wartime Arrangements) Act of 1942* (Cth) meant the states effectively ceased to levy their income taxes.⁹⁵ These uniform taxation

⁸⁸ Hasluck (1952) op. cit., pp. 501–503.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 62–63.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 561–562.

⁹¹ S. Macintyre (2025) *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s*, Sydney, UNSW Publishers.

⁹² P. Hasluck (1970) *Government and the People, 1942–1945: Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 4, Civil*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, p. 316.

⁹³ S. Reinhardt & L. Steel (2006) 'A Brief History of Australia's Tax System', Commonwealth Treasury website.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Income Tax (War-Time Arrangements) Act of 1942* (Cth)

arrangements were initially meant only to apply for the duration of the war, but they remained in place.

The second and more far-reaching debate surrounded expanding the Federal Government's powers. The Federal Government convened a Constitutional Convention in October 1942 that proposed extensive increases in the Federal Government's powers.⁹⁶ While state-based opposition to the changes was not partisanly aligned, Dunstan's CP government in Victoria presented some of the staunchest resistance. Victoria joined the failed attempt by some states to challenge the uniform tax measures in the High Court in 1942.⁹⁷

Dunstan also opposed expanding other federal powers. Curtin's Labor government took 14 proposals to a failed referendum in 1944.⁹⁸ Dunstan argued that 'experience, even in recent years, discloses that Victoria may get very scant justice from a Parliament in which she is represented by a minority of members'.⁹⁹

Matters of confidence

Dunstan's hostility to the Federal Government further alienated Labor from the Victorian CP-led government.¹⁰⁰ The Victorian Labor executive eventually instructed Cain to withdraw support for Dunstan's government in July 1942. Dunstan responded by negotiating a short-term agreement with UAP leader, Thomas Hollway.¹⁰¹

Dunstan's CP picked up an additional three seats—now holding 25 of 65 divisions—despite only scoring 14.39 per cent of the vote in the subsequent 1943 state election.¹⁰² Hollway had envisioned forming a government with Labor's support to enact overdue redistributive reforms to the state's malapportioned electoral system. Yet the Governor unexpectedly invited Cain to form government in September 1943. Hollway approached Dunstan and offered to support a CP-led government if it undertook electoral reform. Dunstan, in turn, moved a no-confidence motion in Cain five days after he established a Labor ministry.¹⁰³

Having regained government following the no-confidence motion, Premier Dunstan's 1944 electoral reforms proved to be a disappointment. Despite a lengthy debate in the Legislative Assembly over 'electoral justice', the *Electoral Districts Act 1944* retained the weighted zonal base system of allocating electoral districts. Country seats averaged just 13,800 voters compared to 25,000 in metropolitan districts.¹⁰⁴

Dunstan continued as Premier until after the war's end in Europe. His opposition to the federal Labor government's 1944 referendum on 'post-war reconstruction and democratic rights' contributed to Victoria's narrow rejection (50.7 per cent no and 49.3 per cent yes).¹⁰⁵ Just as the war ended, in September 1945 a combination of five dissident Liberal Members (the newly reformed Liberal Party of Australia had absorbed the UAP), two expelled CP Members and three Independent Members voted to block supply.¹⁰⁶ Having sought the advice of the Governor, Dunstan was granted his request of a dissolution of Parliament in late

⁹⁶ Hasluck (1970) op. cit., pp. 524–540.

⁹⁷ (1942) 'Uniform Tax' *The Age*, 22 May, p. 3; Garden (1984) op. cit., p. 384.

⁹⁸ W. J. Waters (1969) 'The Opposition and the 'Powers' Referendum, 1944', *Politics*, 4(1), pp. 42–56.

⁹⁹ (1944) 'Referendum Forum: A Case for 'No'', *The Argus*, 21 July, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Hasluck (1970) op. cit., p. 321.

¹⁰¹ R. Wright (1992) *A People's Counsel: A history of the Parliament of Victoria, 1856–1990*, South Melbourne, Oxford University Press, pp. 166–167.

¹⁰² The Liberal Country Party's candidates—a split away from the CP that resulted from the expulsion of federal politician John McEwan in 1938—contested the poll as part of the unified Country Party. The combined LCP and CP share of the vote fell from 16 to 14.39 per cent between 1940 and 1943. See: Hughes & Graham (1968) op. cit., pp. 488–489.

¹⁰³ Wright (1992) op. cit., p. 168.

¹⁰⁴ B. Reid (2025) *From 'rotten boroughs' to independent scrutiny: A history of electoral boundaries in Victoria*, Parliamentary Library & Information Service, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria.

¹⁰⁵ Parliamentary Library of Australia (2014) 'Part 5 - Referendums and Plebiscites - Referendum results', *Handbook of the 44th Parliament*, Parliament of Australia website. Otherwise known as the '14 powers' referendum, it proposed amending the constitution to grant the federal government more powers for five years.

¹⁰⁶ (1945) 'DUNSTAN MINISTRY DEFEATED', *The Age*, 26 September, p. 1.

September 1945.¹⁰⁷ Following an election, Labor assumed office under Premier John Cain Sr in November 1945 after winning 31 of 65 Legislative Assembly seats, though it could not pass much legislation without a majority in either House.¹⁰⁸

4 | The turning of the tide

Although Australia and the Allies still had to defend against the Japanese advance across Papua New Guinea, the naval battles between the United States and Japan in the Coral Sea and the battle of Midway (in May and June 1942) increased confidence that ‘there would be no enemy landing in Australia’ and began the process of pushing the Japanese back across the Pacific.¹⁰⁹

The Commonwealth largely lifted brown-out restrictions in early July 1943. An order issued by Premier Dunstan on 15 July gave these changes local effect, lifting restrictions on vehicle, street and private lighting in Victoria, except within ten miles of the ocean coastline.¹¹⁰

During 1944, although tests were still conducted, ARP work became less crucial in the wake of developments overseas.¹¹¹ Late that year, the Commonwealth Defence Committee no longer saw a need to maintain an active civil defence organisation, preferring to place it on a ‘reserve basis’.¹¹² The Victorian civil defences were eventually disbanded on 31 December 1944.¹¹³

At the Victorian Parliament, the Parliamentary Library made a different type of contribution to the war effort. It provided research and loans services to about 30 wartime organisations, including ‘the Army, the Departments of War Organisation of Industry, Labour and National Service, Aircraft Production, Supply and Shipping, Information, the Victorian Prices Branch, Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction and Netherlands Forces Intelligence Services’.¹¹⁴ The SW Pacific Area of the Allied Geographic Section used the Library’s map collections and compiled a bibliography of works on the Pacific, which later led to the Library receiving ‘a commendation for its work from the American headquarters in the Pacific Area’.¹¹⁵

Germany’s surrender was marked by Victory in Europe (VE) Day on 8 May 1945; a public holiday was declared in Victoria. Premier Dunstan was clear that the end of hostilities in Europe did not mean the end of the war for Australia ‘until the Allies have completed the task confronting them in the Pacific’.¹¹⁶

Victory in the Pacific Day (VP Day) was celebrated on 15 August after the announcement that Japan had accepted the demand for unconditional surrender on 14 August; Japan formally surrendered to the Allies in a ceremony on 2 September 1945.¹¹⁷ It took some time before there was widespread understanding of the new age of atomic warfare and the horrors of Nagasaki, Hiroshima and the European concentration camps.¹¹⁸

At last, the war was over. Jubilation broke out all around Victoria and Australia. Churches were packed, and people thronged to the streets to celebrate.¹¹⁹ Premier Dunstan said that

¹⁰⁷ A. Dunstan (1945) ‘The political situation: dissolution of Parliament’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 27 September, p. 4330.

¹⁰⁸ Hughes & Graham (1968) op. cit., pp. 489–490.

¹⁰⁹ S. Macintyre (2009) *A concise history of Australia*, Port Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, p. 193; Garden (1984) op. cit., p. 386.

¹¹⁰ (1943) ‘Brownout ended officially’, *The Sun News-Pictorial*, 16 July, p. 3.

¹¹¹ Fisher (1970) op. cit., p. 665.

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p. 666.

¹¹⁴ P. Gregory (2001) *Speaking volumes: The Victorian Parliamentary Library 1851–2001*, Melbourne, Parliamentary Library, p. 106.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 106–107.

¹¹⁶ (1945) ‘V-E Day in Victoria’, *The Age*, 8 May, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ Australian War Memorial (2025) ‘[Victory in the Pacific \(VP\) Day](#)’, AWM website; Anzac Portal (2020) ‘Victory (8 May 1945/15 August 1945)’, Department of Veterans’ Affairs website.

¹¹⁸ Garden (1984) op. cit., pp. 388–389.

¹¹⁹ Darian-Smith (2009) op. cit., p. 235.

‘it was the desire of the Government ... that the celebration should be one of thanksgiving and genuine jollity, and that nothing should be done to mar the great occasion’.¹²⁰

An adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 14 August agreed to a motion granting permission to the Melbourne City Council to use the steps of Parliament House as part of city-wide celebrations, which also included a solemn ceremony at the Shrine of Remembrance.¹²¹ The Speaker, Sir George Knox, said that the lavish program for the peace celebrations would ‘endure as a lasting memory to all the citizens of Melbourne’.¹²²

5 | Sitting Members who served

Victorian Members of Parliament participated in a wide range of work related to the war effort. A number of sitting Victorian MPs also sought a leave of absence to serve during World War II. Some of their service stories are outlined below.¹²³

Thomas Tuke Hollway was elected to the seat of Ballarat in 1932 for the UAP. He rose through senior positions in the party and became leader in 1940, leading the Opposition in 1940–42 when Dunstan’s minority Country Party governed with ALP support.¹²⁴ While still an MP, he enlisted in the RAAF in February 1942 and trained as an intelligence officer, serving in Papua with No. 100 Squadron before being transferred to the Reserve in July 1943 with the rank of Flying Officer.¹²⁵ Hollway went on to become, after a series of party alliances, Premier and Treasurer in 1947, leading the Liberal-Country Party coalition—a position he held for over two years. In 1952, representing the electorate of Glen Iris, he served as Premier for a brief period of four days, heading the Electoral Reform Party.

Frank Field, the ALP Member for Dandenong (1937–47), enlisted in the RAAF in April 1942, controlling units of the Voluntary Air Observer Corps before being transferred to the RAAF Reserve in November 1943 with the rank of Flying Officer.¹²⁶ He was briefly the Minister of Public Instruction in 1943 and again from 1945 to 1947, and Deputy Premier to John Cain Sr from 1945 to 1947.

Sir William Crawford Haworth was the Member for Albert Park, for the UAP and then the Liberal Party, from 1937 to 1945. He enlisted in the Army in 1940, serving with the 2/23 Infantry Battalion in Palestine, Syria and Tobruk. He was discharged in January 1944 with the rank of Captain. He served as Minister of Health and Housing for a brief period in 1945. In 1949, he stood for election to the Federal House of Representatives in the seat of Isaacs, where he served for almost 20 years. He was knighted in 1969.

Sir Wilfred Kent-Hughes had served with distinction in World War I and stood for the seat of Kew (as a Progressive Nationalist) in 1927, which he held until 1949. He held several ministries in the 1930s and 1940s, served as Deputy Premier twice, and briefly held the position of Chief Secretary in 1948. He was appointed a Major in the Militia and seconded to the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in June 1940. With the 8th Division, he served as Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General in Malaya and was mentioned in dispatches. He was captured at the fall of Singapore in February 1942 and was a prisoner of war in Changi for three years until his release, with the rank of Colonel, in August 1945. The electors of Kew had returned him, uncontested, in the state elections during the war.¹²⁷ He was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1947. In 1949, he was elected to the House of Representatives for the seat of Chisholm, a position he held until his death in 1970. He

¹²⁰ (1945) ‘Victory Day observance’, *The Age*, 13 August, p. 3.

¹²¹ T. T. Hollway (1945) ‘Adjournment’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Council, 14 August, p. 3701.

¹²² G. Knox (1945) ‘Adjournment’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Council, 14 August, p. 3702.

¹²³ See also the online resource prepared by the Parliamentary Library listing all Victorian Members who served during the war.

¹²⁴ B. O. Jones (1996) ‘[Thomas Tuke \(Tom\) Hollway \(1906–1871\)](#)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography website.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*; Wright (1992) *op cit.*, p. 168.

¹²⁶ B. J. Costar & A. Harkness (2007) ‘[Francis \(Frank\) Field \(1904–1985\)](#)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography website.

¹²⁷ Wright (1992) *op. cit.*

was part of Prime Minister Menzies' ministry in the early 1950s and chairman of the organising committee for the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. He was knighted in 1957.¹²⁸

Allan McDonald was the Country Party Member for South-Western Province from 1940 to 1952. He served as the Minister of Labour and State Development from 1948 to 1950. He enlisted in March 1942, serving with the 33rd Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery in New Guinea until his discharge, completing his war service as a Lance Sergeant in December 1943.

Harold Cohen represented the seats of Melbourne South Province (1929–35) for the Nationalists and Caulfield (1935–43) for the UAP. He held several ministries, including Assistant Treasurer, in the 1930s. He was a decorated WWI veteran who remained engaged with the military between the wars. In 1940–41, he went to the Middle East as an honorary Red Cross Commissioner and served with the AIF as Director of Amenities at Land Headquarters from July 1942. In February 1943 he was appointed Adjutant-General with the rank of Brigadier. In 1944, he was put on the reserve of officers with the rank of honorary Brigadier.¹²⁹

(George) Hamilton Lamb represented the seat of Lowan for the Country Party from 1935 to 1943. He enlisted in June 1940 and served as a Lieutenant with 2/2 Pioneer Battalion. He served in the Middle East and Java, where he was taken prisoner of war (POW). He died as a POW on the Burma-Thailand railway in December 1943. A condolence motion was held in the Victorian Parliament on 5 September 1944 to honour his passing. The memorial hall in his hometown of Horsham was named in his honour.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ I. R. Hancock (2000) 'Sir Wilfred Selwyn (Billy) Kent Hughes (1985–1970)', Australian Dictionary of Biography website; D. Babbage (1995) *The Parliament of Victoria remembers: A commemorative listing of Victorian Parliamentarians who served in World War II to mark the 50th anniversary of V-P Day, 15 August 1945*, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria, p. 50.

¹²⁹ B. Falk (1981) 'Harold Edward Cohen (1881–1946)', Australian Dictionary of Biography website.

¹³⁰ (1944) 'Death of Lieutenant G. H. Lamb, MLA', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 5 September, pp. 713–16; Australian War Memorial (2025) 'Lieutenant George Hamilton Lamb', AWM website.

Reference List

Legislation

- *National Security (Emergency Powers) Act 1939* (Vic)
- *Loan Act of 1939* (Cth)
- *Local Government Act 1940* (Vic)
- *Income Tax (Wartime Arrangements) Act of 1942* (Cth)
- *Electoral Districts Act of 1944* (Vic)

References

- (1939) 'A.R.P. Air Raid Precautions: State Emergency Council for Civil Defence', *The Age*, 22 December.
- (1940) 'Air raid sirens shriek in city', *The Herald*, 8 August.
- (1940) 'News of the day: Air raid precautions', *The Age*, 19 July.
- (1941) 'A.R.P. Plans: Searching tests ahead', *The Age*, 26 August.
- (1941) 'ARP at Parliament House', *The Argus*, 4 September.
- (1941) 'Cabinet divided into sections', *The Age*, 27 June.
- (1941) 'City's hour of darkness: Officials satisfied with blackout test', *The Argus*, 24 September.
- (1941) 'Fire chiefs confer on ARP', *The Argus*, 4 September.
- (1941) 'If Black-out order came to Melbourne', *The Herald*, 15 February.
- (1941) 'Lighting and shelters: More money for A.R.P. work', *The Age*, 22 December.
- (1941) 'Protection in air raids: Red tape to be cut in shelter digging', *The Herald*, 30 December.
- (1941) 'Request for "secret" A.R.P. Plans: Emergency Council Acts', *The Herald*, 19 February.
- (1942) "'Build shelters now" – Public warned', *The Herald*, 24 January.
- (1942) 'Air raid protection in city', *The Argus*, 13 January.
- (1942) 'Air raid test clears streets', *The Argus*, 1 April.
- (1942) 'Big improvement in today's raid test', *The Herald*, 31 March.
- (1942) 'Blackout test: "Very satisfactory" reports', *The Age*, 12 February.
- (1942) 'Councils to dig 40 miles of trenches', *The Herald*, 4 February.
- (1942) 'Country news: Ballarat', *The Age*, 21 April.
- (1942) 'Melbourne's first daylight air raid test', *The Argus*, 13 March.
- (1942) 'News of the day: Air-Raid Precautions', *The Age*, 21 July.
- (1942) 'Sir J. Harris resigns: Civil defence dispute', *The Age*, 2 January.
- (1942) 'Trenches and shelters', *The Age*, 6 January.
- (1942) 'Uniform Tax', *The Age*, 22 May.
- (1943) 'Brownout ended officially', *The Sun News-Pictorial*, 16 July.
- (1944) 'Death of Lieutenant G. H. Lamb, MLA', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 5 September.
- (1944) 'Protecting buildings', *Gippsland Times*, 20 January.
- (1944) 'Referendum Forum: A Case for "No"', *The Argus*, 21 July.

- (1945) 'DUNSTAN MINISTRY DEFEATED,' *The Age*, 26 September. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article205650329>
- (1945) 'V-E Day in Victoria', *The Age*, 8 May.
- (1945) 'Victory Day observance', *The Age*, 13 August.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (1954) *6101.0 - Labour Report*, Canberra, ABS.
- Australian War Memorial (2025) 'Lieutenant George Hamilton Lamb', AWM website. <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P11035803>
- Australian War Memorial (2025) 'Victory in the Pacific (VP) Day', AWM website. https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/vp_day
- Babbage, D. (1995) *The Parliament of Victoria remembers: A commemorative listing of Victorian Parliamentarians who served in World War II to mark the 50th anniversary of V-P Day, 15 August 1945*, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria.
- Blainey, G. (2013) *A History of Victoria*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press.
- Bolt, A. (ed) (1995) *Our Home Front*, Melbourne, Wilkinson Books.
- Carr, E. H. (2016) *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cleary, E., W. Dunstone & A. McDonald (1937) 'Governors Speech: Address in reply,' *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 10 September.
- Costar, B. J. & A. Harkness (2007) 'Francis (Frank) Field (1904-1985)', Australian Dictionary of Biography website. <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/field-francis-frank-12489>
- Darian-Smith, K. (2009) *On the home front: Melbourne in wartime: 1939-1945* (2nd edition), Carlton, Melbourne University Press.
- Department of Veterans' Affairs (2020) 'Victory (8 May 1945/15 August 1945)', DVA Anzac Portal website. <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/world-war-ii-1939-1945/events/victory-8-may-194515-august-1945>
- Dunstan, A. (1939) 'Ministerial Statement: The British Empire at War', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 5 September.
- Dunstan, A. (1940) 'Ministerial Statement: National War Effort', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 30 July.
- Dunstan, A. (1940) 'National Security (Emergency Powers) Continuation Bill', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 27 August.
- Dunstan, A. (1945) 'The political situation: dissolution of Parliament', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 27 September.
- Dyrenfurth, N. & F. Bongiorno (2024) *A Little History of the Australian Labor Party*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press.
- Falk, B. (1981) 'Harold Edward Cohen (1881-1946)', Australian Dictionary of Biography website. <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cohen-harold-edward-5712>
- Fisher, J. (1970) 'Appendix 1: Civil defence organisation', in P. Hasluck (1970) *Government and the People, 1942-1945: Australia in the War of 1939-1945: Series 4, Civil*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, pp. 637-67.
- Florence, E. & A. Wright (2025) *'We just did our best': Victorian women and Parliament during World War II*, Parliamentary Library & Information Service, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria.
- Garden, D. S. (1984) *Victoria - A History*, Melbourne, Nelson.
- Goyne, R. (2022) 'Australia's Blueprint for Economic Warfare in the Second World War: The war book of the Commonwealth of Australia 1939', *Sabretache*, 63, pp. 39-43.

- Gregory, P. (2001) *Speaking volumes: The Victorian Parliamentary Library 1851–2001*, Melbourne, Parliamentary Library.
- Hancock, I. R. (2000) 'Sir Wilfred Selwyn (Billy) Kent Hughes (1885–1970)', Australian Dictionary of Biography website. <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kent-hughes-sir-wilfrid-selwyn-billy-10723>
- Harris, J. (1939) 'National Security (Emergency Powers) Bill', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 5 September.
- Hasluck, P. (1952) *Government and the People, 1939–1941: Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 4, Civil*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial.
- Hasluck, P. (1970) *Government and the People, 1942–1945: Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Series 4, Civil*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial.
- Hollway, T. T. (1945) 'Adjournment', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Council, 14 August.
- Hughes, C. A. & A. D. Graham (1968) *A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics 1890–1964*, Canberra, Australian National University Press.
- Jones, B. O. (1996) 'Thomas Tuke (Tom) Hollway (1906–1871)', Australian Dictionary of Biography website. <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hollway-thomas-tuke-tom-10524>
- Knox, G. (1945) 'Adjournment', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Council, 14 August.
- Macintyre, S. (2009) *A Concise History of Australia*, Port Melbourne, Cambridge University Press.
- Macintyre, S. (2025) *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s*, Sydney, UNSW.
- Martin, N. A. (1940) 'Local Government Bill', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 4 December.
- National Archives of Australia (undated) 'The bombing of Darwin', NAA website. <https://www.naa.gov.au/help-your-research/fact-sheets/bombing-darwin>
- National Archives of Australia (1939) Prime Minister's Department; A1608, Correspondence files, multiple number series with variable alphabetical prefix and general prefix 'SC' (fourth system); O27/1/9, *State War Book* – Victoria.
- Old Treasury Building (2020) 'Women work for Victory in WWII Exhibition: Civil defence', Old Treasury Building website. https://www.oldtreasurybuilding.org.au/work-for-victory/civil-defence/?srsltid=AfmBOoqMhf1D6BstULJi3MO3ixjyYH8Zbz_nBvDXr7ZhoMng3PXiiddo
- Parliamentary Library of Australia (2014) 'Part 5 - Referendums and Plebiscites - Referendum results', *Handbook of the 44th Parliament*, Parliament of Australia website.
- Pittard, A. J. & P. Jones (1941) 'Address-in-Reply', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Council, 29 July.
- Premier's Office (1940) *First Interim Report of the State Emergency Council for Civil Defence*, Melbourne, Premier's Office.
- Reid, B. (2025) *From 'rotten boroughs' to independent scrutiny: A history of electoral boundaries in Victoria*, Parliamentary Library & Information Service, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria.
- Reinhardt, S. & L. Steel (2006) 'A Brief History of Australia's Tax System', Commonwealth Treasury website. <https://treasury.gov.au/publication/economic-roundup-winter-2006/a-brief-history-of-australias-tax-system>
- Royal Australian Navy (undated) 'Japanese midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour', RAN website. <https://www.navy.gov.au/about-navy/history/history-milestones/japanese-midget-submarine-attack-sydney-harbour>

- Sinclair, W. (1996) 'Victorian's Economy in the Long Run', *Australian Economic History Review*, 36, pp. 3–29.
- State Emergency Council for Civil Defence Victoria (1941) *Air raid precautions: Advice to householders*, Melbourne, State of Victoria. (State Library Victoria Digital Collections) https://find.slv.vic.gov.au/permalink/61SLV_INST/1sev8ar/alma991299003607636
- Tsokhas, K. (1989) 'The Wool Industry and the 1936 Trade Diversion Dispute Between Australia and Japan', *Australian Historical Studies*, 23, pp. 442–461.
- Waters, W. J. (1969) 'The Opposition and the 'Powers' Referendum, 1944', *Politics*, 4(1), pp. 42–56.
- Weber, I. (1940) 'Local Government Bill', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 4 December.
- Wettenhall, M. E. (1932) 'Lieutenant-Governor's Speech: Address-in-Reply', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 16 June.
- Wright, R. (1992) *A People's Counsel: A history of the Parliament of Victoria, 1856–1990*, South Melbourne, Oxford University Press.

Suggested citation

Reid, B. & D. Reeves (2025) *The Victorian Parliament and World War II*, Parliamentary Library & Information Service, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria.

Acknowledgements

The Parliament of Victoria Library acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present, and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and knowledge.

The authors would like to thank Ellie Florence, Annie Wright, Angus Tonkin, Caley Otter, Marianne Aroozoo and Caleb Triscari for their assistance in the preparation of this paper.

Information in this paper was current as at the time of publication. It should not be considered as a complete guide to the particular subject or legislation covered. While it is intended that all information provided is accurate, it does not represent professional legal opinion. Any views expressed are those of the author(s). Some hyperlinks may only be accessible on the Parliament of Victoria's intranet.

© 2025 Parliamentary Library & Information Service, Parliament of Victoria



Research Notes produced by the Parliamentary Library & Information Service, Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliament of Victoria are released under a Creative Commons 3.0 Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs licence.

By using this Creative Commons licence, you are free to share – to copy, distribute and transmit the work under the following conditions.

Attributions – You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).

Non-Commercial – You may not use this work for commercial purposes without our permission.

No Derivative Works – You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work without our permission.

The Creative Commons licence only applies to publications produced by the Library, Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliament of Victoria.

All other material produced by the Parliament of Victoria is copyright. If you are unsure, please contact us.

Enquiries

Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service
Parliament House, Spring Street
Melbourne VIC 3002
Telephone: (03) 9651 8640
<https://parliament.vic.gov.au/>

Research Note

Parliamentary Library & Information Service

ISSN: 2204-4779 (Print) 2204-4787 (Online)