

RSL NEWS

11.11.15
WHY A MINUTE'S
SILENCE AND
WHERE WILL YOU
REMEMBER?

**100 YEARS
OF CANTEEN
SERVICE**
AAFCANS HAS
A LONG AND
PROUD HISTORY
OF SERVING
OUR SERVICE
PERSONNEL

**KEEPING
THE PEACE**
WAR WOUNDS
ARE NOT ONLY
INFLECTED ON
THE BATTLEFIELD



STANDING PROUD

Gallipoli Poppies campaign celebrates the strength and resilience of our military women past and present



100 YEARS OF CANTEEN SERVICE



Its title and structure may have changed over time, but the mission of the Army and Air Force Canteen Service has remained constant for 100 years: to provide Australian Defence personnel with everyday essentials and outstanding service.



“THE ORGANISATION PROVIDED A CENTRALISED CANTEEN SERVICE THAT OPERATED AUSTRALIA-WIDE ON ADF BASES, ON TROOPSHIPS, IN INTERNMENT (POW) CAMPS AND ALSO DEPLOYED OVERSEAS WITH OUR TROOPS.”

THE canteen service has always been a part of military life, however, the structure of the canteen service and purpose of existence changed in 1915. This change appeared to be largely inspired by the actions and achievements of an Australian mother, Dame Alice Isabel Chisholm. Concerned for the welfare of her son, Bertram, who was serving as a light horseman in Gallipoli, she sailed for Egypt in mid-1915. Bertram was wounded in action about this time; he later returned to his regiment.

Once in the country Mrs Chisholm, and later Miss Rania MacPhillamy (an Australian nurse who she met in Cairo), set up and operated canteens in three parts of Egypt to help Australian soldiers with basic amenities and a few home comforts while doing their duty so far from home. Profits from their canteen operations were used to fund more services and amenities for the men.

Mrs Chisholm and Miss MacPhillamy’s stories are truly inspiring, and it’s no wonder their actions and achievements influenced our political and military leaders back home. It was on this basis in 1915 that the structure of the new canteen service (AIF Canteen) was formed. And it is under this very same structure – the *Defence Act of 1903*

along with the addition of Regulations in 1959 – that the Army and Air Force Canteen Service (AAFCANS) conducts its activities today.

AIF Canteen was established in 1915-1919 at the start of The Great War. The organisation provided a centralised canteen service that operated Australia-wide on ADF bases, on troopships, in internment (POW) camps, and also deployed overseas with our troops to the United Kingdom, France and right throughout the Middle East in places such as the Western Desert in Egypt, Ottoman Empire, Lebanon, Suez Canal, Palestine and Tel Aviv. The AIF Canteen ran a network of canteens, mobile outlets, issuing points and bulk stores, with surplus funds provided to AIF Canteen Trust. A total of £1,156,150 of grants were provided to 49,826 war widows, dependants and seriously injured soldiers.

From the period of 1920 to 1938 – post WWI – the canteen service reverted to the pre-war arrangement of the Garrison Institutes and became known as Army Garrison Institutes and RAAF Garrison Institutes, operating on a cooperative store principle.

The organisation changed names to Australian Defence Canteen Service (ADCS) in October 1939 until 1943, and operated both domestically and overseas. The canteen service was also

known as ADFC; the name change was intended to embrace all three services, however, the RAAF and RAN effectively chose to retain their own canteens.

In 1942 the canteen service provided all types of services, including canteens, mobile canteens, clubs, grocery stores and barber shops, and also operated canteens on board troopships such as HMAS *Duntroon* for troops returning from duty in the Middle East. The ADFC also minted its own currency. The ‘coins’ were used as tokens or chits and ‘Canteen Orders’ acted like money orders or store vouchers. The Canteen Orders were marketed to the general public as an easy method of gift giving for family

OPPOSITE PAGE: Calais, France, 1919: External view of the Canteen and Regimental Barber Shop at the Australian Veterinary Hospital. (AWM: E04475)

ABOVE LEFT: A busy corner of an AIF Canteen, with troops lined up at the counter waiting to buy supplies. (AWM: 012769)



members serving domestically and overseas.

In 1943 The Australian Army Canteens Service (AACS) was established, with a Central Canteens Control Board and a District Canteens Board for each Military District. The AACS operated 700 stores with 4800 staff, and had outlets located throughout Australia, the Middle East and Asia, including the Pacific, Japan and POW camps. With the surplus funds, school scholarships were established for children of ex-servicemen to pay for schooling all the way through to university.

During this time the canteen service also operated a number of aerated water/cordial factories. It appears that at least nine factories were in operation both within Australia and overseas. Four factories were located in Australia and a further five factories were located offshore:

- Adelaide River, NT, 1942
- Darwin, NT, 1942
- Atherton Tablelands, Qld, 1943
- Mt Isa, Central Qld, 1944
- Papua New Guinea
 - 17 Mile Loloki River, 1946
 - Lae, 1946
 - Rabaul, 1946
- Morotai Island (near Borneo), 1945
- Hiro, Japan, 1953 (which was in operation after the occupation of Japan)

The canteen service both constructed the factories and engineered the creation of the machinery used to manufacture the cordials and aerated water, which included sophisticated bottle-washing equipment and recycling spent beer bottles for the cordial drinks. It was quite the high-tech operation, with 1000 dozen bottles produced daily from each plant. These beverages were shipped

throughout Australia and overseas for sale in the canteens.

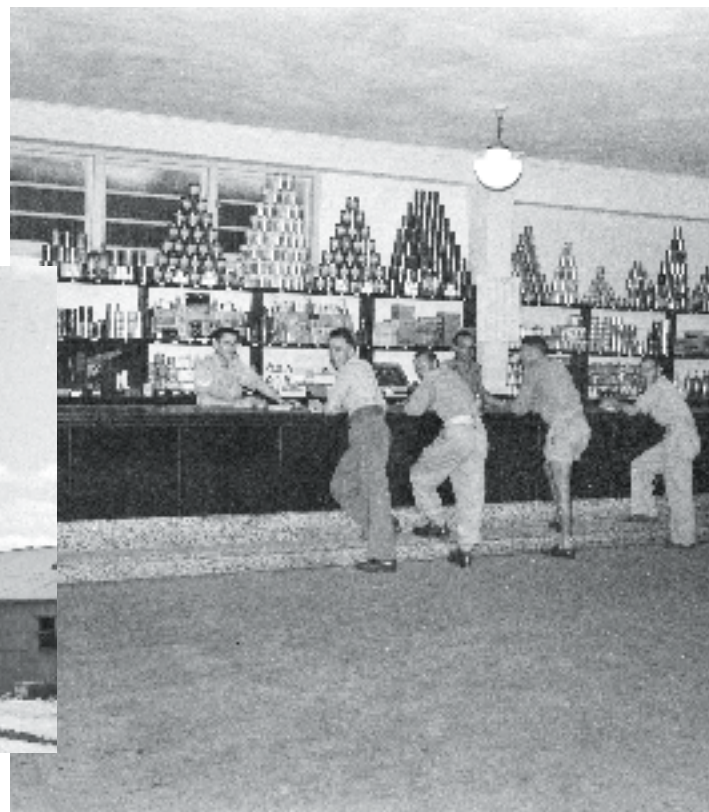
In 1959, AACS changed names to Australian Service Canteen Organisation (ASCO). This change occurred in response to a review into the needs of Defence members. ASCO was an integration of AACS and RAAF canteens and served troops throughout Australia, Papua New Guinea (1959-1981) and Vietnam (1966-1969). ASCO provided services such as canteens, bulk stores, snack bars, newsagencies and bank agencies.

The military unit was disbanded in 1979 and the name changed to Army and Air Force Canteen Service (AAFCAANS), and operated from 1979 through to 1998 under this name. AAFCAANS was officially established as a Prescribed Commonwealth Statutory Authority in 1981, answerable to the Chiefs of the Army and Air Force and Ministers for Defence, and was tasked with providing services to ADF members, with profits sent back to the ADF through disbursements.

LEFT:
Staff members serving customers at the well-stocked counter in the canteen of the new services club in Melbourne, Vic, 1943. (AWM: 139596)

BELOW LEFT:
The Australian Army Canteen Services Cafeteria in Atherton, Qld, 1943. (AWM: 056724)

BELOW:
The men's canteen operated by the Australian Army Canteens Service at Headquarters, 7th Military District, Darwin, 1946. (AWM: 126206)





100 YEARS OF SERVICE

Now celebrating its centenary, AAFCONS has proudly been a part of the Australian Defence Family for over 100 years. Over the years the canteen organisation has provided:

- Both wet and dry canteens, mobile canteens, milk bars and snack bars
- Canteens on-board troopships and POW camps
- Service clubs and hostels (which provided ADF members with a destination to rest, recoup and network with colleagues both domestically and overseas)
- Grocery/general stores
- Adventure wear/disposal stores
- Postal services
- Financial institutions
- Barbers
- Mechanical services
- Dry cleaning
- Fuel stops
- Photographic services
- Newsagencies
- Constructed and operated a number of aerated water/cordial factories that provided professionally made carbonated beverages for AACS canteens both domestically and overseas
- The canteen premises often incorporated recreational equipment and facilities, reading rooms, letterwriting rooms and even a full library (Melbourne c.1943)
- Minted its own currency by way of Canteen ADFC 'money orders' and 'token coins' (The money orders were used as gift vouchers and marketed to the general public and the coins used as chits/tokens – c.1940s)



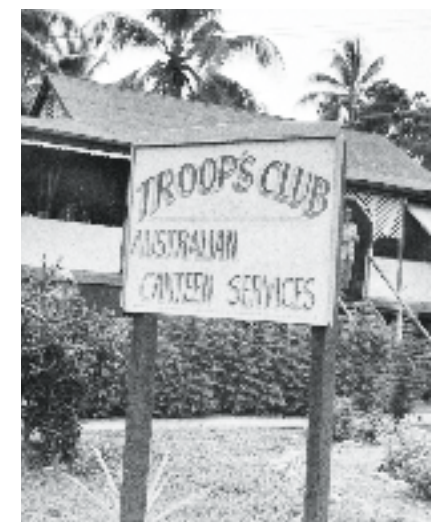
LEFT: AIF bakers at work in New Guinea, 1943. Six hundred dozen mixed cakes are cooked each day for canteen services. (AWM: 015022)

BELOW CENTRE: Staff of the Australian Women's Services Club, conducted by the Australian Army Canteens Service, preparing afternoon tea in the kitchen, Port Moresby, Papua, 1944. (AWM: 070551)



provides services to 33 Army bases, Air Force bases and joint ADF facilities throughout Australia. The organisation directly operates facilities such as canteens, bistros, taverns, kiosks, mobile food vans, transportable canteens, post offices, fuels stops, convenience stores and even a supermarket. Additional convenience services such as hairdressers, barbers, financial institutions, dry cleaning services, post offices, mechanical services, photographers and adventure wear stores are provided by licensees.

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AAFCONS provided services such as canteens, mobile food vans, snack bars, wholesale supply of alcohol to messes and clubs, vending, dry cleaning services, postal services, grocery stores, photography services, adventure-wear stores and fuel.

From 1998 through to 2011, AAFCONS adopted the new trading name of 'Frontline Defence Services'. In the period between 1996 and 2006, \$6.2 million was provided in the form of disbursements to units and welfare trusts; this figure was 80

ABOVE CENTRE: A voluntary helper with AIF troops in the canteen, Melbourne Showgrounds, 1939. (AWM: 000221)

RIGHT: A portion of the Troops' Club erected by the Australian Army Canteens Service, Milne Bay, New Guinea, 1944. (AWM: 070391)

per cent of Frontline's profit during that time. Disbursements were put on hold in 2006 to undertake significant and essential upgrades to AAFCONS facilities and services. During this time, Frontline was also deployed to East Timor in an amenities support role.

In 2012 the canteen service reverted to its earlier trading name, AAFCONS. AAFCONS expanded its operations, providing services to an additional 14 bases in New South Wales and Victoria. AAFCONS now