The Korean War

**Australians who served**
- Approximately 18,000 Australians, including over 50 nursing sisters who served in both Korea and in a base hospital in Japan
- Australians commenced operations as part of a United Nations Force in 1950 and stayed in Korea post-armistice from mid 1953 until 1957

**Major units involved**
- 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions, Royal Australian Regiment (RAR)
- HMA Ships Anzac, Arunta, Bataan, Tobruk, Warramunga, Condamine, Culgoa, Murchison, Shoalhaven and Sydney (including RAN 805, 808 and 817 Squadrons)
- RAAF No. 77 Squadron

**Casualties**
- More than 1,500 Australians wounded
- 340 Australians killed, including 43 listed as missing in action
- 16 Australians died during the post-armistice period
- The USA lost more than 36,000 personnel
- Millions of Korean and Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed

**Specific Medals**
- The Korea Medal
- The United Nations Medal for Korea
- The Australian General Service Medal Korea
- The Australian Active Service medal 1945-75 clasp Korea
- Australian Service Medal 1945-1975 clasp Korea

**Commemorations of Korean War dead**
- 43 commemorated at Memorial to the Missing; 10 Australians buried at the Yokohama War Cemetery, Japan; 11 commemorated in Australia.

**Memorials in Korea**
- Australian Monument; Australian & New Zealand Memorial, Commonwealth Monument, Kapyong; RAAF Plaque and Navy Plaque, Maryang San.

Between 1950 and 1953, personnel from the Australian Navy, Army and Air Force fought as part of the United Nations (UN) force, defending South Korea from a communist North Korean invasion which was later strongly supported by China.

On 25 June 1950 North Korean forces crossed the border and proceeded towards Seoul, taking the capital within days. They continued towards the port of Busan. Almost immediately, the UN Security Council had the support of 21 member nations to defend South Korea, including Australia.

An armistice was signed on 27 July 1953 after over two years of negotiations. Australia maintained a presence in Korea until 1957. With no peace treaty signed, a state of war technically continues to exist today.

The Korean War marked the first collective UN action. Australian soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses won international respect for their courage, endurance and combat skills in Korea.

**Navy Involvement**
HMAS Ships Shoalhaven and Bataan were quickly committed to operations and saw service in Korean water within days of the outbreak of war. Australian ships also assisted the Incheon landings in 1950. HMAS Murchison was famously involved in a duel with land-based guns at the Han River in 1951.

Aircraft from HMAS Sydney were involved in mostly ground attack missions against Communist lines of communication, troop concentrations and industrial infrastructure. Aircraft also undertook patrols to protect Sydney from air attack and submarines. Royal Australian Navy (RAN) vessels conducted blockade, escort and bombardment operations on both sides of the peninsula throughout the war.

**Army Involvement**
In October 1950, 3RAR moved north from South Korea’s capital of Seoul into North Korea. They fought their first major action near Pyongyang. 3RAR stayed in Korea throughout the War.

The Chinese Government moved troops into North Korea, striking against American troops as they approached the border with China and forcing a retreat. Key battles involving Australians included Kapyong and Maryang San. 3RAR was awarded a United States Presidential Unit Citation for their efforts at Kapyong.

In the latter part of 1951 the war changed from one of movement to a static conflict in which both sides faced off from opposing trench lines. Patrolling, rather than major battles, became the mainstay of operations until the armistice was signed.

By 1952 some countries were keen to extricate their troops from Korea but Australia’s commitment increased, with 1RAR arriving mid year. They stayed for almost 12 months, being replaced by 2RAR.

**Air Force Involvement**
In 1950 both the Royal Australian Air Force’s (RAAF) No. 77 Squadron and Army’s 3RAR were serving in Japan with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. The RAAF committed No. 77 Squadron to combat operations within days of the outbreak of the war.

Initially the squadron flew ground attack missions in Mustangs but later in the war re-fitted with Gloucester Meteors, they were assigned to an interceptor role before returning to ground attack missions.