Australians in WWI

Australians who served

» **More than 416,000 Australians enlisted during the First World War, with more than 330,000 serving overseas. Many served in more than one theatre**

» **More than 50,000 Australians served at Gallipoli**

» **Some 295,000 Australians served on the Western Front**

» **More than 20,000 Australians served in the Middle East**

Major Units

» **The Australian Imperial Force included infantry, artillery, engineers, medical units, mounted units, the Australian Flying Corps and service units**

Casualties

» **More than 60,000 Australians died during or as a result of service in the First World War**

» **Some 155,000 Australians were wounded during the First World War, many more than once**

Specific Medals

» **64 Victoria Crosses were awarded to Australians in WWI**

» **53 of these were awarded between June 1916 and October 1918 on the Western Front**

» **Nine were awarded to Australians who fought at Gallipoli, one was awarded to an Australian who fought in Palestine and one was awarded to an Australian for service in East Africa with the British Army**

Cemeteries

» **Gallipoli – There are more than 2,800 Australians buried in cemeteries in Turkey**

» **Villers-Bretonneux – There are 780 Australian graves at the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery**

More information

» **www.anzacsite.gov.au**

» **www.ww1westernfront.gov.au**

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the Australian Government pledged full support to Britain. In 1915 Australians became involved in an Anglo-French campaign at Gallipoli to ease Turkish pressure on Britain's ally, Russia.

Gallipoli

Members of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) landed at Gallipoli, about 300km south-west of Constantinople (Istanbul). Many came ashore on 25 April 1915 at what became known as Anzac Cove and established a tenuous hold on the steep slopes above the beach.

The most successful operation of the campaign was the evacuation which ended on 19-20 December 1915, conducted under a well-planned deception operation. The eight-month-long campaign cost more than 26,000 Australian causalities, including some 8,700 deaths.

Western Front

Following the Gallipoli campaign, a large part of the AIF transferred from Egypt to the Western Front in France and Belgium. Their first major battle was on 19 July 1916 at Fromelles. The aim was to prevent the Germans sending reinforcements to the Somme but the attack was a complete failure and within 24 hours the Australians were forced to retreat and the AIF had suffered more than 5,000 casualties.

In 1917 a further 76,000 Australians became casualties in battles at Bullecourt, Messines and the four-month campaign of the 3rd Battle of Ypres in 1917, commonly known as the Battle of Passchendaele.

In August 1918 the Allies launched a major offensive beginning 100 days of operations that ended with the Armistice.

Middle East

In 1916 Australian troops participated in the defence of the Suez Canal and the reconquest of the Sinai peninsula.

The following year, Australian troops advanced into Palestine and assisted in the capture of Beersheba, Gaza and Jerusalem. By 1918, along with the rest of Allenby's Egyptian Expeditionary Force, they had occupied Lebanon and Syria, and on 30 October 1918 Turkey sued for peace. Some 1,400 Australians were killed in the Middle East.

Prisoners of War (POWs)

Just over 4,000 Australians were taken prisoner during the First World War by Turkish and German forces. More than 3,800 were captured by the Germans on the Western Front and some 217 became prisoners of the Turkish forces – most were captured at Gallipoli or in the Sinai and Palestine campaigns. A total of 395 Australians died in captivity.

The Victoria Cross

64 Australians were awarded the VC during the First World War beginning with Lance Corporal Albert Jacka on Gallipoli in May 1915 and ending with Lieutenant George Ingram in October 1918. One VC was awarded to a light horseman, Hugo Throssell, and one to a member of the Australian Flying Corps, Lieutenant Frank McNamara. The remainder were awarded to infantrymen. Fifteen of Australia's First World War VCs were awarded posthumously.