

INTRODUCTION

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ORGANISATION OF THE DIRECTORATE OF PRISONERS OF WAR AND INTERNEES.

1. The duties of the Directorate of Prisoners of War and Internees, Australian Military Forces, were divided into the following four main headings: -

- (a) The custody and control of civilian internees detained in the Commonwealth under National Security Legislation and of those sent to Australia under arrangements with the United Kingdom and other Governments.
- (b) The custody and control of enemy prisoners of war captured by the AMF and those held in the commonwealth on behalf of the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States of America.
- (c) The protection of the welfare and interests of Australian prisoners of war held by the enemy, and the organisation of arrangements for their recovery.
- (d) The tracing, apprehension and trial of minor war criminals.

2. In the early stages of the war, only a comparatively small number of local internees was held, and the main problems of administration were associated with the setting up of camps, the preparation of regulations and camp rules etc to ensure proper treatment and discipline of internees, and the establishment of policy in respect of prisoners of war. Accordingly it was not found necessary to set up a separate Directorate until after the arrival of Italian prisoners of war from the Middle East, and in the meantime a DAAF (Later AAG), under the Director of Personal Services, was responsible for all "A" Branch matters relating to prisoners of war and internees.

3. It is imperative, at this stage, that the reader should clearly understand that the Director of Prisoners of War was not the only authority through whom directions were issued to Camp Commandants of PW & I Camps through Commands concerned. Instructions concerning the supply of clothing for PW & I, the issue of appropriate rations, the conduct of canteens, the movement of personnel, and matters of concern to other Directorates and / or Branches of Army Headquarters, were issued direct. In relation to such matters, DPW & I functioned as a consultant and advisor to ensure proper compliance with regulations which incorporated or interpreted the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1929 relating to the treatment of prisoners of war. The purely Directorate functions were as set out in the following paragraphs.

PRISONERS OF WAR & CIVILIAN INTERNEES

4. DPW & I was responsible for :-

- (a) The general administration of National Security (Prisoners of War) Regulations and National Security (Internment Camps) Regulations and of Orders made thereunder.
- (b) The co-ordination at Army Headquarters of all action relative to PW & I camps.
- (c) Liaison and communication with the United Kingdom Government and with the Department of External Affairs and other Commonwealth Departments concerned on matters of policy.
- (d) Administrative arrangements for the employment of PW & I.

- (e) Liaison with the War Office (DPW) Liaison Officer in Australia, in respect of Prisoners of War, and with the British Home Office Representative in Australia in respect of internees held on behalf of the United Kingdom.
- (f) Correspondence on, and administrative action regarding, reports of the International Red Cross Delegate in Australia on his visits to PW & I Camps.
- (g) The handling of complaints by Protecting Power Representatives appointed by enemy governments to protect the interests of their nationals.
- (h) Administrative action concerning movements within the Commonwealth, transfers overseas, and repatriations of Prisoners of War (including disarmed personnel) and internees.
- (i) Administration of the Prisoners of War Information Bureau in Australia, established in accordance with Article 77 of the Geneva Convention of 1929.
- (j) Handling of reports from Official Visitors to Internment Camps, who were appointed by the Minister for the Army to inspect and report upon conditions at Internment Camps, and of petitions by internees relative to their treatment.
- (k) Arrangements for the organisation and operating of Mixed Medical Commissions in Australia.

AUSTRALIAN PRISONERS OF WAR HELD BY THE ENEMY

5. As a result of experience in the United Kingdom during World War I, an early decision was made to include in the Directorate responsibilities of the protection of the welfare and interests of Australian prisoners of war held by the enemy. It had been found that belligerent powers were at all times inclined, as a measure of retaliation, to impose on prisoners of war in their hands any stringent regulations which may have been imposed by the enemy on those in its custody. Accordingly, when framing regulations for the treatment of enemy prisoners of war, it was necessary at all times to consider how their enforcement might affect British or Allied prisoners of war, and the concentration of the two main branches of the work in the one Directorate was therefore desirable if not even essential. It is desired to report here that experience in World War II has borne out once again the utmost necessity for this procedure to be adopted. In fact, during World War II the interests of the large number of Australian prisoners of war held by the enemy became matters of high political and national interest. It followed that the administration of all policy matters relating to enemy prisoners of war held by us was conditioned by the strong desire to adhere to Prisoner of War Convention standards and thus minimise the possibility of providing the enemy with pretexts for retaliation against our own men.

6. In relation to Australian prisoners of war held by the enemy, DPW & I was responsible for: -

- (a) Policy in relation to the application of the Geneva Convention to them.
- (b) Examination of all reports on prisoners of war camps in enemy territory, including those from Protecting Power Representatives and the International Red Cross Delegates, in order to check observance by the enemy of the provisions of the Geneva Convention and of other express agreements between belligerents.
- (c) Communications with the United Kingdom Authorities and with the Department of External Affairs on matters on administration and policy.
- (d) Administrative arrangements in connection with the establishment of Reception Groups and Contact and Enquiry units to handle repatriations after hostilities ceased and to search for personnel unaccounted for.

- (e) The investigations of claims by natives and others for compensation in respect of losses sustained when rendering assistance to Australian personnel.
- (f) Administrative matters in connection with the return to Australia of Australian civilians who were interned by the Japanese.

WAR CRIMES

7. Responsibility for conducting investigations into war crimes committed by the Japanese was vested in the Allied Forces who, subsequent to the Japanese capitulation, occupied areas previously held by the Japanese. It will be appreciated that the bulk of these investigations were most advantageously made in the areas where the alleged crimes were committed. DPW & I was responsible for the co-ordination of all action by the AMF to trace, apprehend and bring to trial alleged perpetrators of war crimes. The main functions of this section of the Directorate were as follows: -

- (a) The collection and collation of evidence to assist prosecution of alleged war criminals.
- (b) The establishment of a registry of suspects.
- (c) The establishment of military courts for the trial of minor war criminals.
- (d) Administrative action on court findings and sentences.

8. The complex subject of war crimes is dealt with fully in Part V of this report, and the above brief statement of the responsibilities of DPW & I is included merely to give the reader a general idea of the task before proceeding with the detailed record of Directorate activities. It is necessary later to explain fully the distinction between "major" and "minor" war crimes, to expressly state the division of responsibility in relation to these, and to give details of the various diverse duties under each of the four main functions of this section of the Directorate.

ORGANISATION WITHIN THE DIRECTORATE.

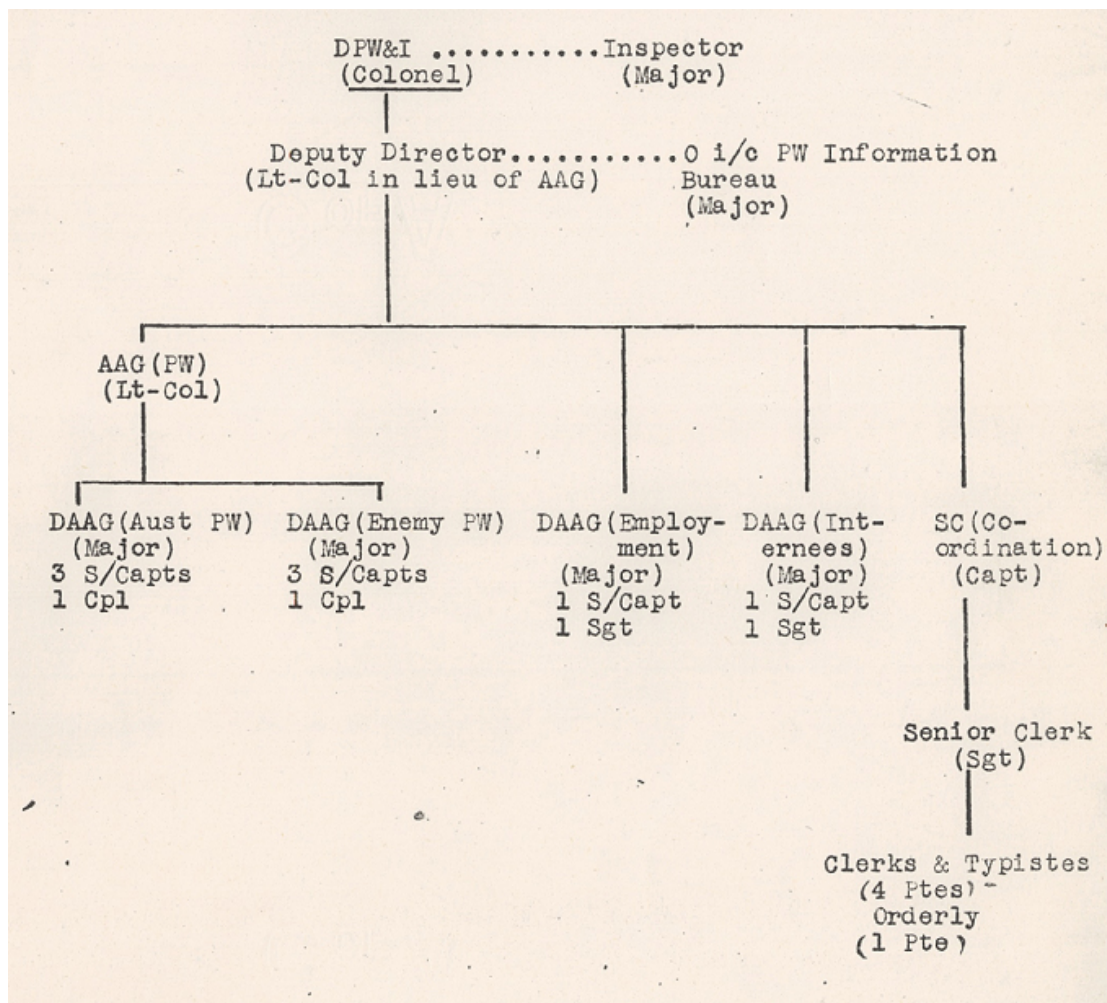
9. The Directorate of Prisoners of War and Internees at Army Headquarters, Melbourne, was organised on a basis which proved eminently satisfactory although in the early stages of the war it was found necessary to make many minor alterations to cope with changing circumstances and the resultant variation from time to time in the amount of work to be handled by each section. Similarly, after the end of hostilities considerable adjustment was necessary to cope with responsibilities relating to war crimes, vide para. 15.

10. A small nucleus staff divided into two sections (A Prisoners of War Section and an Internees' Section) was able to function satisfactorily until July 1941 when it was considered necessary to set up a third section to handle all matters relating to Australian prisoners of war held by the enemy. In June 1942, a submission was made that the Directorate should be re-organised with two AAG's under DPW & I, one AAG (Prisoners of War) to administer two sections each under DAAG's and dealing with Australian prisoners of war and enemy prisoners of war respectively, and other other AAG (Internees) to administer two sections under DAAG's and dealing with (a) the administration and custody of overseas and local internees in Australia, and (b) Co-ordination within the Directorate and the handling of reports from Official Visitors, Inspectors, International Red Cross Delegates and others. The inclusion of the latter DAAG under AAG internees was for convenience only; it was found later that an entirely separate co-ordination section was desirable and that the various reports mentioned could be more satisfactorily and expeditiously handled by individual sections to which they related.

11. On the commencement of large scale employment of prisoners of war and internees in Australia a further section was inaugurated to handle all matters relating to employment, and it was also recommended at this stage that the Inspector of PW & I Camps who had previously functioned independently of DPW & I, should be included in the war establishment for the Directorate.

12. Many minor changes were effected and an Acting Deputy Director was finally appointed in lieu of one AAG, it being considered at that stage, that a DAAG (Major) could adequately handle all matters relating to internees.

13. A final stable and fairly satisfactory war establishment was approved in August 1945 under which DPW & I organisation was :-



14. Experience has shown that it is most essential that a Deputy Director should be appointed in any Directorate of this nature to enable the Director to maintain close liaison with Government Departments concerned and other Army Branches. The Deputy Director should handle all semi-policy matters referred to him by sections and should refer to DPW & I only such matters as require important policy decisions. This aspect is recorded as it may at some stage be of assistance to those concerned in the setting up of a similar organisation.

15. It was not until after the cessation of hostilities that any necessity arose to organise a special section for the handling of war crimes and, in order to conserve manpower, it was then decided that the Directorate should operate with two AAG's (as previously provided under war establishment), one to administer prisoners of war and internees and the other war crimes. A substantial increase in staff was essential, however, to cope with the detailed work connected with war crimes and the Directorate operated with an organisation as set out on the following page. It will be noted that, as a result of the gradual repatriation of prisoners of war and internees it was practicable to amalgamate the sections dealing with enemy prisoners of war, and internees. The organisation shown was subjected to several minor amendments but was the sound basic organisation during the period of the investigation of war crimes. Comments are made in Part V of the report concerning the form of organisation considered suitable for the handling of war crimes matters.

16. Here again it is considered desirable to record that it would be of inestimable value to have some small section at least in any similar Directorate in the future, right from its inception, to handle war crimes. If practicable, an entirely separate Directorate would be a more satisfactory form of organisation. It is essential that early policy decisions on these matters be properly recorded and that preliminary action at least should be taken before hostilities cease, to place Commands in possession of policy and to inform them of necessary preliminary action to be taken in various circumstances.

LINES OF COMMUNICATION

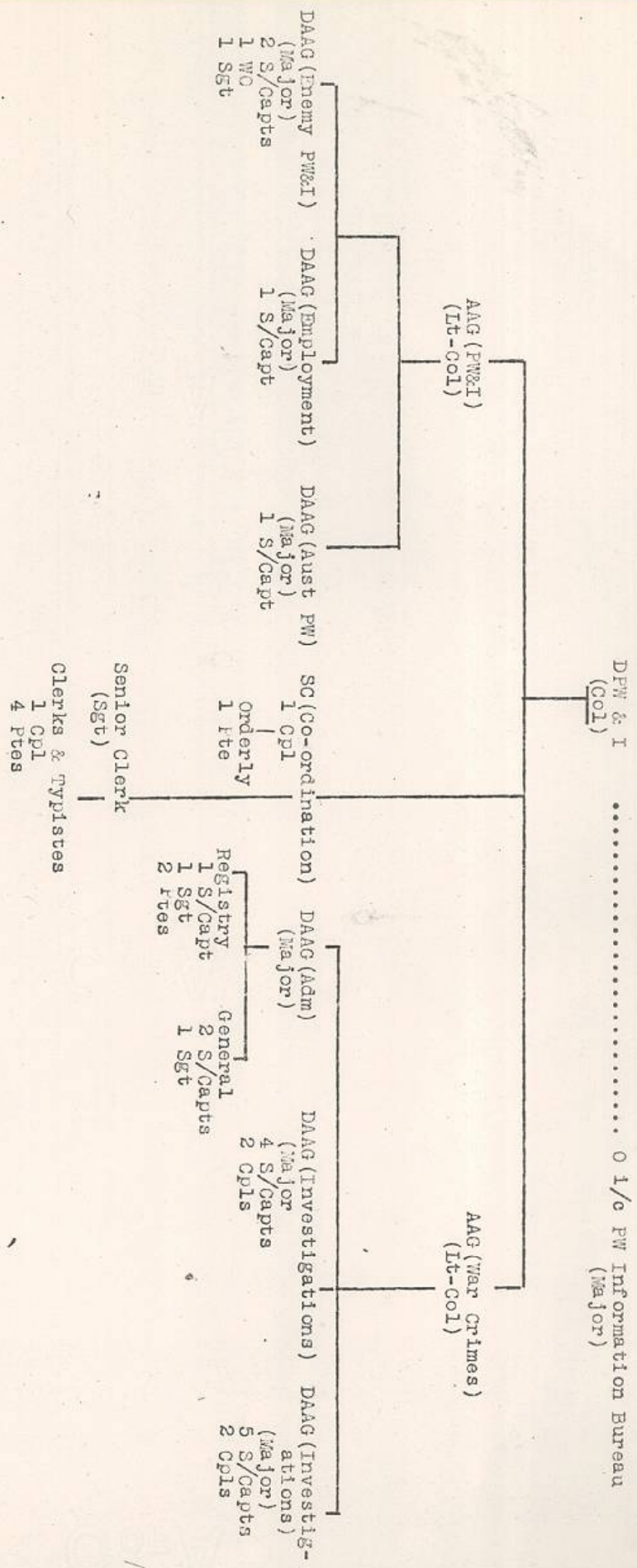
17. Finally, before proceeding to the report proper, it is desired to state that all instructions for the administration of PW & I Camps were issued through normal channels by Army Headquarters to HQ Commands concerned who were responsible for administration within their Command area. These Headquarters in turn issued instructions to Group and Camp Commandants.

STANDING ORDERS

18. While many important amendments to instructions issued are mentioned throughout the report the general policy has been adopted of using as a basis for each subject the instructions in force during the more important stages of administration. For this reason some minor amendment effected during the closing stages of administration have been omitted intentionally as they would tend to confuse the issue and would not serve any really useful purpose.

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ORGANISATION OF PW & I DIRECTORATE IN 1946



Note

(a) Structure of camp was not required at this stage.

(b) Deputy Director attached and replaced by one NAC.