



CEW Bean Prize Citation - 2017

Dr Johanna van Mosseveld

‘Fighting Fit: A History of Innovation in the Australian Government Clothing Factory and in the Transformation of the Australian Army Uniform, 1912-1995’

PhD, University of New England

It is always exciting to uncover under-researched topics in Australian Army history and Dr Johanna van Mosseveld’s impressive and original thesis does just that. The thesis provides a history of army and military uniform production from the establishment of the Australian Government Clothing Factory as part of the Federation project, through to its privatisation in the 1990s. Broad sweeping in its scope and narrative and supported by meticulous and detailed research, this thesis makes a significant contribution and presents an impressive cross-disciplinary approach to a topic of vital importance to the Australian Army.

The work explores how and why the Australian Army’s uniform changed across time, told against the backdrop of the work of the Government Clothing Factory. While the thesis engages the role the Factory played within the wider Australian textile industry, its predominant focus and real value is in the fastidious detail and fine scholarship that outlines the design and production processes of Army’s uniforms across the Factory’s period of operation. This allowed the development of a standardised uniform across the newly federated nation, and the capacity to innovate and adapt that uniform to address different conflicts and military requirements over the succeeding decades.

It was the innovation of its subject matter, thoroughness of its research and the originality of approach taken by the author that made this thesis stand out against a strong field of applications. The thesis opens up new areas for historical inquiry about the Australian Army and is a worthy recipient of the CEW Bean Prize for Military History in the postgraduate division.