



Reference Number: **2016.0056**

Collection/Series Title: **MEDIA RELEASES**

Creator	Australian Red Cross Society, National Office
Creator's Activity/Occupation	Community organisations - Charities

Creator's Historical Note

Note: University of Melbourne Archives holds records of the Australian Red Cross National Office and the Victorian Division of the Australian Red Cross. Records of other state Divisions are not held by the University of Melbourne.

Red Cross began in Australia on the 13th August 1914 in response to the start of the First World War nine days earlier. Modelled on the British Red Cross Society and initially established as a branch of that Society, it formed at the instigation of Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, wife of the Governor-General. Vice-regal patronage and a predominantly female membership continued to be features of the Red Cross throughout the twentieth century. The Australian society was recognised by the International Committee of the Red Cross as a national society in its own right in 1927 and was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1941.

In keeping with the international Red Cross movement of which it is a part, and the Geneva Conventions which govern and vest its wartime role, the Australian Red Cross primary objectives are to alleviate human suffering and protect life and health, especially during armed conflicts and other emergency situations. Principles of humanity, impartiality and voluntary service guide its programs, which have evolved over the years in response to international and domestic needs.

The organisations development throughout the twentieth century has been extensively documented (see references at the end of this note), however the following points may assist researchers wishing to use Red Cross records held by the University of Melbourne Archives.

The organisations initial structure, still largely in place in the early 21st century, included three tiers of administration and activity. Its National Headquarters (later known as National Office) has been based in Melbourne since 1914. Divisions were established in all states and territories, most of them within weeks of the formation of the national body, and these operated with substantial autonomy until at least the 1950s and continued to be the locus of much of the organisations emergency and social services program delivery beyond this date. A Papua New Guinea Division also operated between 1940 and 1973 and subsequently became an independent national society. The third tier of the Red Cross is the extensive network of local branches which also commenced during World War I. These have been particularly active in wartime and it is through these branches that large numbers of Australians engage with and support the work of the Red Cross.

The scope and dates of operation of some distinctive Red Cross programs are:

Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs, later known as Voluntary Aid Service Corps or VACs) were first formed in 1915 to provide nursing and domestic services in Australian military hospitals and convalescent homes. In peacetime this largely female volunteer labour force has assisted during natural disasters and other emergencies. As an organisational entity VACs were phased out by the 1970s, however volunteer service continues to be integral to the organisations delivery of many of its programs.

Services to trace the whereabouts of missing and wounded service personnel were also first established in 1915. These services operated during both World Wars and after World War II evolved into services for tracing civilians displaced from their homelands in the aftermath of war and civil unrest. By the 1960s, with the growth of Red Cross role in disaster management, registration and enquiry services were set up to respond to inquiries about people displaced by natural disaster. The units responsible for this work and have been variously known as the Wounded and Missing Inquiry Bureau, Tracing Bureau, and the National Registration and Inquiry System. Like many Red Cross programs, administration of tracing services has gradually been centralised from state Divisions to national management. Note that Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau records from World War I are held by the Australian War Memorial.

Blood transfusion services were first established in 1929 in the Victorian Division and soon after in other states. These continued to be primarily state based services until 1996 although during the Second World War a level of national coordination was introduced to facilitate the supply of blood to the armed forces. In 1996, largely in response to the AIDS epidemic, the divisional services were amalgamated to form the Australian Red Cross Blood Service, a separate operating division of the Australian Red Cross.

References and Further Information

Melanie Oppenheimer: *The Power of Humanity: 100 Years of Australian Red Cross 1914-2014* (Sydney, Harper Collins, 2014)

Australian Red Cross web site: www.redcross.org.au (accessed June 2015)

Australian Red Cross Blood Service web site: <http://www.donateblood.com.au/about-us> (accessed June 2015)

Australian Red Cross has donated 100 years of archives to the University of Melbourne:

<http://www.redcross.org.au/gift-to-the-nation.aspx> (accessed June 2015)

Australian War Memorial, First World War Red Cross Wounded and Missing Files:

https://www.awm.gov.au/people/roll-search/wounded_and_missing/

Australian Womens Register entry for the Australian Red Cross:

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0715b.htm> (accessed June 2015). See also Register entries for individual women prominent within the Red Cross.

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The Victorian Division of the Australian Branch of the British Red Cross Society was formed on 21 August 1914, days after the establishment of the Branch itself. The inaugural President was Lady Margaret Stanley, wife of the Governor of Victoria. For much of the twentieth century the state Divisions of the Red Cross held primary responsibility for the delivery of Red Cross services, especially during peacetime. Blood transfusion services, missing persons tracing, hospital and convalescence, fundraising, disaster relief and a wide range of other community services largely have their origins in the state Divisions rather than the National Office. However during the latter part of the twentieth century coordination of services gradually shifted from state to national level. Organisational restructuring in the late 1990s consolidated this shift.

For a summary of the history and activities of the Australian Red Cross as a whole see the entry Australian Red Cross Society - National Office in University of Melbourne Archives online catalogue. Other sources include:

Melanie Oppenheimer: *The Power of Humanity: 100 Years of Australian Red Cross 1914-2014* (Sydney, Harper Collins, 2014)

Australian Red Cross web site: www.redcross.org.au (accessed June 2015)

Australian Red Cross Blood Service web site: <http://www.donateblood.com.au/about-us> (accessed June 2015)

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Australian Womens Register entry for the Australian Red Cross:

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0715b.htm> (accessed June 2015). See also Register entries for individual women prominent within the Red Cross.

Date Range of Collection/Series	1951-2005
Size/Extent	2 units (0.34m)
Access Conditions	Access: Open

Scope and Content of Collection/Series

[Red Cross Archives series reference: NO15] Comprises media releases from the Public Affairs Department of the Australian Red Cross National Headquarters as well as the Victorian Division Red Cross.

These pertain to Australian Red Cross activities in Australia and overseas relating to projects , appeals for funds and volunteers as well as how the Red Cross will respond to specific natural and humanitarian disasters through the distribution of funds, supplies and expertise.

These function as a circulation on current activities, information and disclosure of funds. Media Releases (previously known as Press Releases or 'News Flash') were administered by the National Office, Public Affairs Department (1991-2000), and later National Communications Department (2001 - present).

See also: Series (2016.0063) 'Press Clippings' series which is a chronological record of Australian Red Cross citations within the Australian Press. This includes both reports published by the Red Cross as well as discussions of their activities.

Researchers should note that under the Geneva Conventions Act 1957 protections govern the use of the Red Cross emblem. For further information see Archives staff.

Collection Category

Community and Political, organisations

This document dated

23/03/2017

Unit/Box	Item Number	Title	Date Range
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00001	Australian Red Cross Society, National Headquarters media releases	1951-1953
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00002	Australian Red Cross press releases	1954-1955
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00003	Australian Red Cross press releases	1955-1956
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00004	News Flash	1967-1978
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00005	Press/Media Releases	1978-1979
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00006	Australian Red Cross Society, National Headquarters media releases	1986
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00007	National Headquarters Media Releases	1991
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00008	National Headquarters Media Releases	1992
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00009	National Office Media Releases	1993
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00010	National Office Media Releases	1994
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00011	Media Releases	1995
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00012	Media Releases	1996
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00013	Media Releases	1997
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00014	Media Releases	1998
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00015	Media Releases	1999
2016.0056 Unit 1	2016.0056.00016	Media Releases	2000
2016.0056 Unit 2	2016.0056.00017	Media Releases	20 December 1989-24 April 1991
2016.0056 Unit 2	2016.0056.00018	Media Releases - Victoria	1 May 1991-31 December 1991
2016.0056 Unit 2	2016.0056.00019	Media Releases - Victoria	6 January 1991-23 June 1992
2016.0056 Unit 2	2016.0056.00020	Media Releases	20 June 1993-19 September 1994
2016.0056 Unit 2	2016.0056.00021	Media Releases (incoming)	1997-2001
2016.0056 Unit 2	2016.0056.00022	Media Releases	2001
2016.0056 Unit 2	2016.0056.00023	Media Releases	2002
2016.0056 Unit 2	2016.0056.00024	Red Cross - Bali Appeal - Media Releases	17 May 2003-12 June 2003
2016.0056 Unit 2	2016.0056.00025	Media Releases	2003
2016.0056 Unit 2	2016.0056.00026	Media Releases	2004
2016.0056 Unit 2	2016.0056.00027	Red Cross - Tsunami Appeal - Media Presence Report	27 December 2004-31 January 2005