

Perth Central Business District – Parties and Protests: Voices of the people

The Perth Central Business District (CBD) is the political, economic and cultural heart of the city of Perth. It is where the decision makers of Parliament House meet, discuss issues and set agendas; where Australia's Commonwealth ties remain in place through Government House; where businesses ply their trade and tourists visit. For years, the Perth CBD has drawn people from all over the State to make their voices heard – to celebrate, commiserate and demonstrate. This was especially true during the wars. Different issues at different times attracted Perth people over the decades. They came to commemorate the sacrifice made by soldiers on the war front, to help raise war funds, to celebrate the end of war, and to protest government policies.

Conscription

During World War One, in October 1916 and again in December 1917, Australian voters were asked to vote on the issue of conscription to address the falling numbers of men volunteering to fight. The first referendum was defeated by a slim margin. The second referendum sought approval for single men, widowers and divorcees without dependents aged between 20 and 44 to be called for military service by ballot. It was also marginally defeated. (For more information, see <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs161.aspx>)



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This photograph from the State Library of Western Australia's photographic collection shows a view of Hay St with banners on Perth's Town Hall urging a 'yes' vote for conscription (date unknown – 1916 or 1917). Ref 007390D.



A535/1: Parade of troops in support of the conscription referendum, Wellington Street, Perth, 25 October 1916

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REINFORCEMENTS REFERENDUM

WHAT OF THE SOLDIERS?

"Round to life" you heard the treason cry,
They wrought upon your women's weakness
then
You dared to send another's son to die,
But—**WHAT OF HIM?**

Is all your pity for the legless—**all?**
Have you no tears to flow, no heart to bleed,
Except for those who would not hear the call—
do will not lead?

Is all your tenderness for such as they?
You who would send, war-worn, with wounds
again healed,
To who have borne the burden of the front,
Back to the front.

"Round to life" — but on the plumes that bring
honour to cowardly and venial the following
will!
Soldiers, before it dips, you, there are things
More sacred still.

[Written by Arthur Heyward and drawn by Miss Green.]

Heard and felt—reference to the rest,
The blood of his to his, if fitted to bleed,
Of such is more.

We mourn the dead. Should we not rather mourn
The living, if the price for life they paid
Were loyalty unshaken and faith firm
And true beyond?

"Help us!" they cry, the cruel gods said—
The duty for you and yours who face the foe—
"Fill up those shattered ranks!" Now, that
duty,
You answer—"NO!"

VOTE YES ON DECEMBER 20.

(Authorised by Reinforcements Referendum Council)
WILLIAM LEITCH, Chairman. Wm. G. CORPUS, Hon. Secretary.



3045B/47: A rally in Hay Street, Perth during the debate on conscription, 25 October 1916

The photographs above show an organised parade on Wellington Street in support of conscription (ref slwa_b3599574_1) and a rally on Hay Street on the same day (ref slwa_b3929299_1). There is insufficient information about the photograph of the rally to know whether people were showing support for conscription or demonstrating against it. On the left is a piece of ephemera urging Australians to vote yes (SLWA, ref 006493D).

What do these images suggest about how some Western Australians felt about the issue of conscription? Who might have been in favour of conscription and who might have been opposed? What are the benefits and drawbacks of conscription?



380167PD: Protesters for and against Vietnam War conscription, Perth, 10 June 1966.

Decades later, Perth people returned to the streets of the CBD to voice their feelings about conscription, this time in respect to the Vietnam War.



380168PD: Protesters for and against Vietnam War conscription, Perth, 10 June 1966.



380317PD: Anti conscription and Vietnam War message in the Labour Day march, Perth, 6 March 1972



380064PD: Anti-Vietnam War protest march outside Perth GPO, Perth, 2 April 1966.

What do these photographs, when compared to the earlier photographs, suggest about how the sentiment towards conscription changed in Perth over time? (Gilchrist collection, slwa_b3807794_4; slwa_b3807794_5; slwa_b3807793_4; slwa_b3807803_1).

The End of World War One - Celebrations in the streets

On the 11th November 1918, World War One came to an end and Perth people came together in the CBD to celebrate the end of a protracted and brutal war.

This photograph (slwa_b4315278_2) shows a crowd of people standing in front of a Perth business which had not closed to participate in organised celebrations in the CBD on 13th November 1918. What are your thoughts on the situation displayed in this image? What message might the people in this photo have been conveying?



BA1813/26: A crowd taking over a business place which had not closed down to join in the celebrations for the end of the First World War, 13 November 1918

Perth people celebrated the end of World War One for days. This photograph (slwa_b4315273_6) shows a small sample of a crowd drawn to The Esplanade on 12 November 1918 for a thanksgiving service.



BA1813/31: A portion of the crowd on the Esplanade for the Thanksgiving Service, 12 November 1918

Welcome Home – The Daily News Fri 15 Nov 1918

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/81773916>

A few days later, Perth citizens again gathered on The Esplanade, this time to welcome home 800 ANZAC soldiers returning from World War One. The mayor and the premier attended the parade, commending the “glorious ANZACs” for ‘doing their duty’ and expressing gratitude for taking up arms in ‘the world’s greatest war’.

Read *The Daily News* article and consider the language used by the journalist. What picture of an ANZAC soldier does this article portray? Why did the journalist refer to the war as ‘the Great Adventure’? How might Perth readers have reacted to this

article at the time? How is this reaction similar or different to your own personal reaction to reading this article?

Recent protests

People in Perth still come to the CBD to voice their concerns and fight for change. These are considered to be important democratic rights. A number of issues, including: the negative impact of globalisation (Department of Premier and Cabinet, slwa_b4822625_4); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody (Department of Premier and Cabinet, slwa_b4822625_5); and the treatment of refugees by the Australian Government (Department of Premier and Cabinet, slwa_b48226525_2) inspire some local citizens to try to affect change.



BA2829/4: Anti-globalisation and anti-capitalism protesters, Perth, 28 October 2011



BA2829/5: Television cameras film an Aboriginal activist standing in front of a 'Stop deaths in custody' sign, Perth, 28 October 2011



BA2829/2: Protesters display anti-capitalism 99% placards and a protest against Australia's treatment of asylum seekers, Perth, 28 October 2011

What issues are currently being debated in Perth?

Some Western Australian government officials have stated recently that protest laws in Western Australia should be amended. Proposed anti-protest legislation was intended to stop 'extreme protests' which prevent other lawful activities from taking place by using items such as chains and locks. What do you consider to be the role of protesting in a democracy? What rules do you think protesters should abide by?

Perth's CBD has always been, and will continue to be, a place where Western Australians come together. They are drawn for a wide variety of reasons. What would inspire you to gather a group of like-minded individuals and gather in Perth's CBD?

State Library of Western Australia – Excursion Providers

The Education Centre at the State Library of Western Australia is an exciting space for students to engage with the State Library's collections, investigate Western Australian history and be creative with technology and storytelling.

The Education Team creates and facilitates a diverse range of workshops suitable for students in Kindergarten to Year 12. The workshops support the Western Australian HaSS and English curricula and promote information literacy skills at all levels. All workshops are free of charge.

Teachers are welcome to bring school groups in to the State Library on a self-guided visit. There are a variety of self-guided, educationally valuable activities available at different times of year. Exhibitions are often accompanied with student self-guided trails and teacher guides. There are also a number of self-guided options available for younger classes in the children's library, The Story Place.

For more information, or to make a booking, complete a booking request form through 'Our Services – Educators' on the State Library of Western Australia website www.slwa.wa.gov.au, email a request to ed@slwa.wa.gov.au, or phone an education officer on (08) 9427 3202.