

See also: [Gallipoli](#); [Pozières](#); [History of the Post War Army](#); [Images of WW2](#)

The 2nd Division was formed in Egypt on 26 July 1915 under the command of Major General JG Legge. Divisional strength was about 18,000 men. The staff included MAJ TA Blamey, later [Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey](#). In addition to artillery, engineers, signals and service units, it included three brigades of infantry, each of four battalions:

5th Brigade: 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Inf Bns from NSW;
 6th Brigade: 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th Inf Bns from VIC; and
 7th Brigade: 25th (QLD), 26th (QLD and TAS), 27th (SA) and 28th (WA) Inf Bns.

2nd Division began reinforcing the ANZAC force on [Gallipoli](#) on 19 August 1915, in time for 5th Brigade to take part in the Suvla battles. The Division served there until the withdrawal to Egypt in December 1915.

In early 1916 the five AIF infantry divisions moved to the Western Front in France and Flanders. 2nd Division

In early 1916 the five AIF infantry divisions move entered the line on 7 April 1916 and from July to November took part in the Battles of the Somme 1916, including [Pozières](#). In 1917 the division fought at Bapaume (5th and 6th Bde), Bullecourt and in the Ypres offensives, including Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Broodseinde, Poelcappelle and Passchendaele.



Pic: Australian War Memorial
 View of the swamps of Zonnebeke on the day of the First Battle of Passchendaele.
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2nd Division played a major role in the 1918 Advance to Victory, including the Capture of Hamel (4 July – 5th and 6th Bde), Amiens, the Second Battles of the Somme (Albert and the Capture of Mont St Quentin) and breaking the Hindenburg Line (Beaurevoir). The division was the last Australian formation withdrawn from the line, five weeks before the armistice on 11 Nov 1918. During the repatriation of the AIF the division was disbanded in France in Mar 1919.

During the Great War 2nd Division lost probably about 12,000 men killed in action or died of wounds. Thirteen men were awarded the Victoria Cross:

PTE W Jackson	17th Bn	25-26 Jun 16	Bois Grenier, France
SGT CC Castleton+	5th MG Coy	28 Jul 16	Pozières, France
CAPT PH Cherry+	26th Bn	26 Mar 17	Lagnicourt, France
LT PV Storkey	19th Bn	7 Apr 18	Bois de Hangard, France
SGT W Ruthven	22nd Bn	19 May 18	Ville-sur-Ancre, France
CPL WE Brown DCM	20th Bn	6 Jul 18	Villers-Bretonneux
LT AC Borella	26th Bn	17-18 Jul 18	Villers-Bretonneux
LT AE Gaby+	28th Bn	8 Aug 18	Villers-Bretonneux
SGT AD Lowerson	21st Bn	1 Sep 18	Mont St Quentin, France
PTE R Mactier+	23rd Bn	1 Sep 18	Mont St Quentin, France
LT ET Towner	2nd MG Bn	1 Sep 18	Mont St Quentin, France

LT J Maxwell DCM MC& bar	18th Bn	3 Oct 18	Beaurevoir, France
LT GM Ingram	24th Bn	5 Oct 18	Montbrehain, France

(+ indicates a posthumous award)

Between the wars the AMF was based on the Militia of five infantry and two cavalry divisions. 2nd Division was re-formed in Sydney in Mar 1921 to command three of the five NSW infantry brigades (twelve of the twenty battalions) in addition to artillery and other arms and services:

5th Brigade: 4th, 20th, 36th and 54th Inf Bns;
 9th Brigade: 1st, 19th, 34th and 45th Inf Bns; and
 14th Brigade: 3rd, 53rd, 55th and 56th Inf Bns.

During the Depression, although the AMF's divisional structure was maintained, recruiting was not supported, manning and equipment levels were very low, training time was severely reduced and two battalions in each brigade were linked to reduce the total in NSW from 20 to 15. The allocation of battalions to brigades and divisions sometimes varied (particularly in the Sydney metropolitan area), eg in Jan 1939 17th Battalion was in 2nd Division (9th Brigade) and 36th Battalion had been moved to 1st Division (8th Brigade).

During the early years of World War 2, 2nd Division was partly mobilised. Units were gradually restored to full strength, although many members left to join the AIF as its formations were raised for service overseas. In Jan 1940 compulsory service was introduced for the militia, and during 1940 the AMF followed the British Army in converting its infantry brigades from four to three battalions.

When the Pacific War started in Dec 1941, militia members were prevented from joining the AIF and all were called up for full-time service. 2nd Division was mobilised at Parramatta in Eastern Command. Its first role was as Command Reserve in support of 1st Division in the Defence of Sydney. It now commanded 5th Brigade (at Bathurst), 8th Brigade (Wallgrove) and 14th Brigade (Greta). Some units had left these brigades: 19th Battalion to Darwin, 20th Battalion to 1st Division and 53rd Battalion to Port Moresby (30th Bde).

In May 1942, 14th Brigade (3rd, 36th, 55th Battalions) was deployed to New Guinea Force. In Jul 1942 2nd Division assumed its second major role of the War, the Defence of Western Australia, as part of 3rd Corps. It deployed to WA in Aug 1942 with 5th Brigade (54th, 56th Battalions and WA 44th Battalion) and 8th Brigade (4th, 30th and 35th Battalions). Here it joined WA's own 13th Brigade, and 4th Division (sent from VIC in May 1942, with 2nd and 6th Brigades).

At its peak in WA in Apr-May 1943, 3rd Corps included, in addition to 2nd and 4th Divisions, 1st Armoured Division (1st Armoured Brigade and 3rd Motor Brigade). As the tide of war against Japan turned in favour of the Allies, the role of 3rd Corps in defence of WA diminished. The preparation of formations for active service in New Guinea and the Islands became more important.

In early 1943, 6th Brigade, 13th Brigade and HQ 4th Division left in succession. 2nd Brigade became part of 2nd Division until it too moved to Darwin in Aug 1943. When 8th Brigade left in Sep 1943 for N QLD (en route to 5th Division in New Guinea), and HQ 1st Armoured Division was disbanded, 3rd Motor Brigade joined 2nd Division. Finally, in Mar-April 1944 5th Brigade was moved to North Queensland to prepare for operational deployment, and HQ 2nd Division was disbanded in Apr 1944.

During the war, in addition to eleven NSW battalions of the AIF, two NSW militia brigades saw active service in the South West Pacific theatre, and eight NSW militia infantry battalions were awarded battle honours for this service. They were not, however, under command 2nd Division at the time.

In Apr 1948 the CMF was re-formed as part of the [post-war Army](#). Initial voluntary enlistment was boosted by the introduction of national service in 1951, which required three years service in the CMF after full-time basic training. 2nd Division was re-raised as the main CMF formation in NSW. By 1951 it included 5th, 8th and 14th

Brigades (including 2nd, 3rd, 13th, 17th/18th, 30th, 34th, 41st and 45th Battalions, Sydney University Regiment and University of NSW Regiment), Divisional Artillery, Engineers and Signals and its own reconnaissance regiment (7th/21st Australian Horse). 56th Battalion was re-raised briefly in 1956. Other separate formations in NSW included 1st Armoured Brigade and an anti-aircraft brigade, known as 1AGRA(AA).

In 1957 the national service scheme was made selective and reduced, and in 1960 suspended in favour of voluntary enlistment. During this period the separate formations were disbanded. The RAA units were disbanded or transferred to 2nd Division. 7th/21st Horse and 56th Battalion were replaced by 4th Battalion, and the units of the armoured brigade were reduced and transferred to 2nd Division, 6th NSW Mounted Rifles being converted to an infantry battalion.

In Jun 1960 the pentropic division was introduced in a major re-organisation of the Army. Instead of three infantry brigades each of three battalions, a division now consisted of five large pentropic battalions called battle groups, each of five large companies plus its own supporting arms and services. All the old infantry battalions of the AMF were disbanded and replaced in each state by a new regiment with only one or two pentropic battalions. In NSW these were 2RNSWR and 3RNSWR. Together with 1RQR in QLD and the two ARA battlegroups, they formed 1st Division. The CMF battle groups from the other states formed 3rd Division. 2nd Division was disbanded. University regiments became part of a new Officer Training Group (later 2nd Training Group) outside the divisional structure.

Following the end of the pentropic experiment in 1965, the division returned to its structure of nine battalions, which could be grouped in three task forces (like brigades). The battalion reverted to its "tropical" establishment of about 800 men. In NSW the pentropic units were divided to provide five (later six) infantry battalions. HQ 2nd Division was re-formed on 20 Sep 1965, to include 5th Task Force (3 RNSWR, 4 RNSWR and 17 RNSWR) and 8th Task Force (2 RNSWR and 41 RNSWR). 19 RNSWR was raised under Div HQ in 1966, becoming 1/19 RNSWR in 1971.

In 1976 the Army was reorganised from its traditional regional commands into separate functional commands (for field force, training and logistics units, Australia-wide). On 1 Sep 1976 2nd Division was restructured as 2nd Divisional Field Force Group, to command directly all field force units in NSW. HQ RNSWR was raised to assume some command functions for the infantry battalions previously undertaken by task force HQs. On 1 Jul 1981, 2nd Division was reformed as a normal divisional HQ, with subordinate headquarters, 5th and 8th Task Forces, to command its units. These resumed the title of brigade on 31 Jan 1982. In 1987 all ARES brigades were reduced (in peacetime) to two battalions of infantry plus arms and services units.

With the Force Structure Review of 1991, the brigade replaced the division as the main deployable force of all arms. HQ 3rd Division was disbanded and HQ 2nd Division assumed a stand-by command and doctrine development role under Land Command for all Army Reserve brigades not in 1st Division. The 2nd Division currently (2002) consists of 4th Brigade in VIC, 5th and 8th Brigades in NSW, 9th Bde in SA and TAS and 13th Bde in WA.