

STATEMENT OF LADY WHITE

1. I worked in Navy Office early in the Second World War. I had just left Melbourne University. Women were being drafted into munitions work and the like. I was able to obtain a reference from an Engineering Admiral and obtain the job in Navy Office. A security check was required.
2. The job I obtained in Navy Office involved the constant monitoring of merchant ships around Australian waters. The office I worked in was on the first floor of Navy Office, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. There was a room with a number of tables. Located on each table was a chart of a particular area of coastline. It was our job over the course of an eight hour shift to monitor merchant ship movements on the particular chart.
3. My understanding was that departure and estimated arrival of ships were notified to the office. This material together with any other intelligence received would be used to update merchant ship positions on the charts.
4. It was my understanding that the information on the movement of merchant ships was conveyed to Australian warships in Australian waters. I believe the updates were signalled during the course of each eight hour shift, however, it might have been twice a day, I'm not sure. The updating of warships was the reason we were there. I understood the name of the system was "VAI", Vessels Area Indicated.
5. We undertook our work in what was called the "convoy room MMS – Mercantile Movement Section". This room was off the naval staff room. The person in charge of the convoy room was Commander Graham Boyd.
6. I have a very good recollection of Captain Burnett being in Navy Office and entering the *convoy room* from time to time to make observations concerning merchant ship movements. He would look at the charts. Senior Officers would enter the room if they wanted to know the position of a particular ship.
7. My recollection is there was also an "off-station" plot. This was to monitor merchant ships not immediately in Australian waters.
8. I believe I commenced work at Navy Office in 1940. I do not recall the precise date. I worked in Navy Office until shortly before I was married on 9 May 1942.