

# NEWS OF NATIONAL SOCIETIES

Formerly: International Bulletin of Red Cross Societies, founded in 1869

---

## Australia

*During her visit to Australia, Miss Pfirter, delegate of the ICRC, had the opportunity of visiting not only the headquarters of the Australian Red Cross in Melbourne, but also several provincial divisions of that National Society. She has recorded that there is great enthusiasm everywhere which has led to the realisation of several practical projects of extreme interest for other National Societies, which will be an encouragement to them. Mrs. W. R. B. Donnan, Divisional Commandant, Western Australian Division, has been so good as to forward a brief report to us on the action of that Division in cases of disaster, and Miss L. W. Bloore, Supervisor, New South Wales Division, has also sent us a report on a particularly useful effort in the social sphere.*

### **The Discharged Servicemen's Handcraft Centre New South Wales Division**

In various States in Australia the Red Cross Society conducts Centres where disabled ex-service men and women are trained in handcrafts as a diversion and as a means of augmenting their pensions.

In the New South Wales Division a centre was opened in Sydney in 1945 known as the Discharged Servicemen's Handcraft Centre. Since then many thousands of totally and permanently incapacitated ex-servicemen and temporarily incapacitated ex-servicemen have been enrolled.

All trainees must have a medical reference to ensure that the service is being given to men and women who will benefit by having an opportunity to learn some types of crafts and who can enjoy the satisfaction of engaging in creative work.

The Centre is frequently used by doctors as a conditioning place when they are endeavouring to train men to once more get used to arriving at work on time, coping with public transport, making decisions for themselves and finding their work tolerable before taking up full time employment.

Many psychiatric cases have been helped by having a period of time in this sheltered environment prior to returning to work in the community.

The service is extended to the disabled dependents of service men so that some women and children also attend. To cater for the interests of the different age groups a great variety of hand-crafts are taught. An average of 50 cases per day attend and trainees spend whatever time the doctor recommends.<sup>1</sup> This gives a constant change of people daily as few are able to attend regularly.

It was decided that an outlet should be provided for the goods, so an area at the entrance to Red Cross House was fitted as a shop. This is very attractive with modern glass fixtures and lighting.

The trainees pay for the material which they use and then receive the full amount of the sale. Certain standards of proficiency are required before goods can be placed in the shop. A steady business has been built up and most trainees are now working on orders. The availability of good wool yarn makes the weaving of cloth and other items a special feature, also the weaving of unspun wool. Kangaroo hide is especially good for plaiting, items made from this type of hide have souvenir value and are sought by overseas visitors. Special attention is given to fashion goods and colour schemes, so that the shop takes its place in the city with other business houses and customers purchase because of the quality of the goods and not because it is the work of disabled people.

For the assistance of the home-bound, a Home Visiting Service is carried out in the metropolitan area.<sup>2</sup> To meet the needs of country people a Correspondence course was devised. This has been an interesting experiment and many lonely, sick people in the far outback have had great pleasure from having this interest and in particular those members who send their work to the shop.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Plate.*

<sup>2</sup> *Plate.*

A very important part of the work of the Department is the training of the teaching staff. The New South Wales Division has a training course and all staff teachers are required to take the course. A continuity of teaching methods is considered necessary when dealing with sick people.

The Centre is more like a club than a workshop. The area is spacious and comfortable and every effort is made to make it a happy meeting place. A healthy spirit of competition adds zest and interest and men and women have expressed their gratitude to the Red Cross for being able to engage in interesting and purposeful occupation and in so doing learn to adjust themselves to the restriction of their disabilities.

MISS L. W. BLOORE

### **The action of the Red Cross in cases of disaster Western Australian Division**

During one of the hottest summers on record a series of fires started in heavily timbered and grassed areas in the South West of our State. Fanned by near gale-force winds, the fires raced through the countryside forcing many people to leave their homes. Although there were at times up to three hundred men fighting the fires, one town—a timber centre—was almost completely destroyed.

As soon as the Red Cross heard of the disaster it took immediate action. Teams of voluntary workers were sent to the devastated areas with food, clothing and medical supplies. Many people had lost everything they possessed except what they were wearing, so more clothing was an immediate necessity. Boxes and cases of clothing sent in to Headquarters were sorted and packed and sent down to the fire victims and the Voluntary Aides distributed the clothing. Other groups of Aides made meals and hot and cold drinks for the fire fighters, who had been on duty for many hours. Meals were also prepared and served for the women and children who had lost their homes.

The Red Cross Aides in their uniforms were able to give much help and comfort to the distressed, the uniforms commanding a great deal of respect and trust and hope.

For a week we kept up a roster of Aides, who went down at six-hourly intervals, until the emergency was over.

During the height of the fires, eyes were affected by the heat and smoke. We found that eye irrigators were a wonderful help in relieving this distress. Red Cross Aides set up centres, where they treated eyes with the irrigators, which were filled with a saline solution.

Rather remarkably, with such disastrous fires, there were no casualties.

We had hardly completed this emergency when reports were received of a cyclone sweeping down on two of our Northern towns—Onslow and Carnarvon.

It was feared that Carnarvon might be flooded, due to the river breaking its banks, so it was decided to evacuate about 2,000 people a distance of 250 miles. An emergency centre was set up at Geraldton and again we were in action. Clothing, food and helpers were again needed. Tents were erected, beds and bedding supplied and soon a kitchen, clothing centre, first aid post, post office and all necessary requisites were supplied.<sup>1</sup> Our Aides had again been called upon and had done a sterling job.

We had just started to settle back into normal routine, when another series of fires broke out—this time within 20 miles of Perth. Once more our Service Corps were called upon to prepare and serve meals for the firefighters and to give first aid treatment.<sup>2</sup>

Now there seemed to be a series of fires breaking out in other parts of the State. Our country Branches were called upon to give assistance and to take immediate action.

Rain eventually came to our rescue and the fire situation came under control.

The Red Cross had gained a great deal of experience in the necessity for preparedness and had carried out a series of worthwhile and satisfying humanitarian tasks. We had, we felt, upheld the honour of our Society.

MRS W. R. B. DONNAN

---

<sup>1</sup> *Plate.*

<sup>2</sup> *Plate.*



*Collecting handcraft work made by the disabled in their own homes.*

**AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS (New South Wales Division)**

*Handcraft Centre for disabled ex-servicemen in Sydney.*







*Victims of the fires being transported to hospitals in Perth.*

## **AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS (Western Division)**

*First aid post set up during the floods in Carnarvon.*

