

Leave for Post Troops  
(Amoy leave)



C O P Y.

DECIPHER of CABLEGRAM to General Birdwood from Defence  
Department - dated 17th September 1917.

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WX 512. Following has been telegraphed to Secretary of State  
for the Colonies, message begins :

"Commonwealth Government has had under consideration the fact  
that many Australian soldiers have now been serving three  
years away from their homes and desires to arrange for such  
to have one clear months' furlough in Australia during  
winter 1917 - 1918.

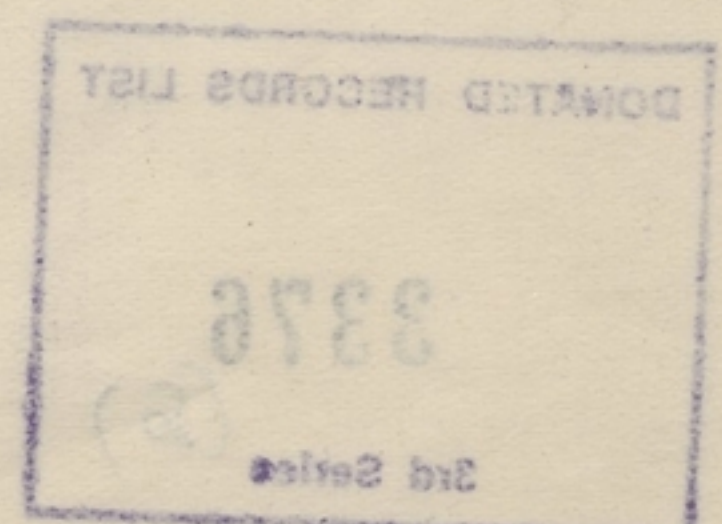
"Your concurrence is requested.

"It is desired that the two new Brigades lately formed in  
England should not be utilised as fighting formations because  
considered this will prejudice the success of recruiting  
here the principle argument for which is the necessity for  
reinforcements for existing units. These troops can be  
utilized to replace in the five Australian Divisions all  
who originally formed part of the First Australian Division  
and Fourth Brigade and who have not less than two years  
active service." Message ends.

In sending officers and men on furlough it is  
proposed to leave to you to arrange the order of going based  
on length of service with preference to fighting troops.  
Considered the movement should begin October so as to get men  
home if possible by Christmas Day.

PEARCE.

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C O P Y .

CABLEGRAM from General BIRDWOOD to Defence Department, Melbourne  
sent from Adminsust on 1.10.17. No.42/536

42/536. Your WX.512 of 17th September. I need hardly say how completely I am in sympathy with the desire to send back to Australia on leave the gallant men who came forward at the first call, who have so devotedly given their services to King and Country for nearly three years, and who have indeed fully done their bit and earned every possible consideration AAA The practical difficulties however appear so great that it hardly seems possible to give effect to the wishes of us all in this respect AAA Our calculations here show that there are still 12,000 men of the original contingent which includes 1st Division, 4th Infantry Brigade and 1st Light Horse Brigade AAA To provide transport accommodation for this number seems to be beyond our resources when we remember that we have at the same time 6271 invalids and wounded men now awaiting transportation in England AAA Further 40,000 men have already been sent back to Australia though these of course include many outside the original contingent AAA Not only would it seem impossible to send back the original contingent on leave except by doing so at the expense of our wounded and invalided men, but it would seem quite impossible to keep up our units here if these large numbers are returned to Australia AAA As you were informed in my T270 of 15th September 1917 the 16th and 17th Brigades have already been drawn upon as reinforcements for existing Divisions AAA These men were re-transferred to their original units, and practically none now remain as they ~~were~~ were required to bring units up to strength before recent operations and subsequently to replace casualties AAA It must also be remembered that the 2nd and 3rd Light Horse Brigades immediately followed the original contingent and the 2nd Division came out only 7 months after the first AAA Consequently there would be an equally just demand for the men of these units to be sent home before the transport could be provided for original contingent men AAA

/Realising what great



(2)

. . . . . Realising what great difficulties there must consequently be I suggest for your consideration that the 1914 medal which it about to be sanctioned for men who left England in the original Expeditionary Force during first months of war should be extended to men of the Australian and New Zealand Forces who left in 1914 with their original contingents AAA This would doubtless not be as completely satisfactory to all members of the force, but from what I can gather here from large numbers would go a long way towards meeting great desire of all ranks that their coming forward in first instance should receive should receive special recognition as it would include those present at landing Gallipoli Peninsula 25th April 1915 and would be enormously appreciated AAA I therefore suggest this point of view should be urgently pressed on Imperial Government.

BIRDWOOD.



C O P Y.

PARAPHRASE TELEGRAM from the Secretary of State for the Colonies  
to the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

(Sent 11.30 p.m. 4th October 1917.)

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Army Council view with grave apprehension proposal to grant leave to Australian Troops under conditions disclosed in your confidential telegram of the 17th September. If accepted similar conditions must of necessity apply to all Imperial and Colonial Troops in all theatres of war without regard to the exigencies of the military situation. Conduct of operations might thereby be very seriously compromised. Australian troops pari passu with other troops have been receiving leave and facilities and to justify preferential treatment of this nature would be impossible. Constant pressure has for a very long time past been brought to bear in the House of Commons to increase leave facilities to this country from various theatres of war and owing to military situation and sea transport difficulties it has been impossible to improve conditions appreciably.

Moreover, if privilege were accorded Australian troops it could not be denied to other oversea troops and to provide necessary shipping and escort for their transport would be practically impossible while the use of further ships as transports would accentuate the shortage of mercantile shipping. In the interests of the men them-selves it is most undesirable in view of the submarine menace to have more troops at sea than absolutely necessary.

For above reasons it is regarded by His Majesty's Government as very undesirable that any leave facilities beyond those already provided should be granted.

His Majesty's Government trust that your Government will agree not to press their proposals. I may add that on the above considerations being put to New Zealand Government, they abandoned similar proposals which they had made.

With regard to disposal of two new brigades further reply will be sent.

LONG.

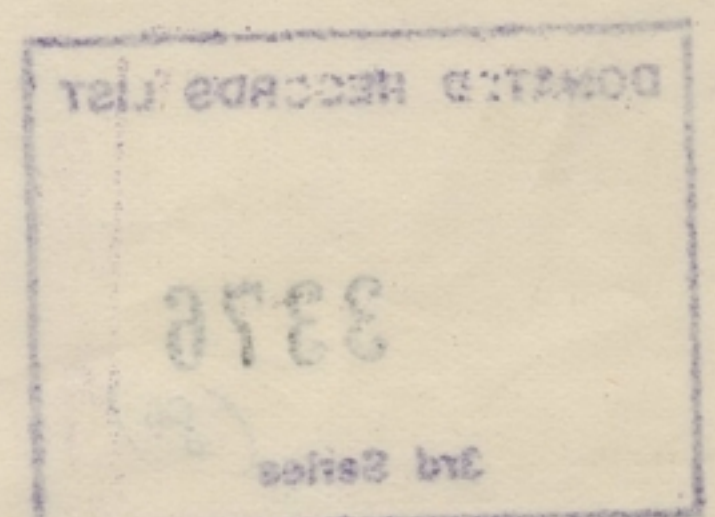


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PARAPHRASE TELEGRAM from the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. (Received Colonial Office, 16.10.17  
4.28 p.m.)

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Your telegram of 4th October - leave to Australian Troops. In view of considerations mentioned Commonwealth Government does not now press request, but desires to urge strongly that 1914 medal which it is understood is about to be sanctioned for men who left England during the first few months of war in original expeditionary force should be extended to men of the Australian Forces who left with original contingents in 1914. This would include those present 25th April 1915 at landing Anzac. Such recognition would be appreciated enormously. FERGUSON.





COPY

51158/1917

PARAPHRASE TELEGRAM from the Secretary of State for the  
Colonies to the Governor General of the Commonwealth  
of Australia. (Sent 11.5 p.m. 19th October 1917)

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In reply to your telegram of 16th October,  
attitude of Commonwealth Government in not pressing request  
for grant of leave to Australian Troops much appreciated  
by His Majesty's Government. Will reply as to question  
of medal later on.

LONG.

