

SOLDIER ON ANZAC APPEAL

Honour veterans of the past and support veterans of today

Corporal David Austin and Emma Millis

Recognising the impacts service has on a person is important. But ensuring they access the services needed to help them secure their future is equally as important. The two stories below showcase the importance of getting help when it is needed.



Australian War Memorial
P0 3236.339

Corporal David Austin, 20th Battalion (Left)

Austin was an Englishman who had previously served with Australian forces during the Boer War. Austin was taken prisoner during a German trench raid on 5 May 1916, the first clash between Australian and German troops on the Western Front. He spent six weeks in Dulmen prisoner of war camp before being transferred to Minden. In a report made after the war, Austin wrote *"I remained in this camp for nearly 12 months and during that time saw no real reason to complain of the treatment meted out to British prisoners of war."* Under the Hague Conventions, Austin could not be made to work unless he volunteered. He was later transferred to a number of camps for NCOs where the prisoners were subjected to coercion and abuse until they *"volunteered"*. Under an agreement between British and German governments that sought to minimise the psychological impact of prolonged incarceration, Austin was sent to Holland, where he was interned for the rest of the war.

In 1919 he was returned to Australia, to his wife and his pre-war profession as a butcher in the inner-city suburbs of Sydney. In 1923, he pleaded guilty to the charge of indecent assault. A noted psychologist who gave evidence in Austin's defence claimed that he *"was on the borderland of insanity"*, confirming his suspicion that *"most soldiers who had been held as prisoners by the Germans for any substantial length of time were abnormal on release."* Austin appeared *"haunted and distressed ... tormented by dreams in which his awful war experiences were lived over again"* and he was *"defective in self-control"*.

Austin spent the following six months in Grafton prison; his marriage was dissolved soon after his release and in the following decades he lived with his sister. He later worked as a cleaner in Australia House in Carrington Street in Sydney, where he died under suspicious circumstances in June 1946. His body was found in a gas filled room, where he allegedly had been making a cup of tea.

Whilst David was unable to get assistance, 100 years later, Emma was able to get assistance for her husband.



Emma Millis

When Emma's husband, James, returned from Afghanistan, she noticed he was different in many ways. His fun loving, carefree temperament had changed to short-tempered and very difficult to live with. He would isolate himself from his family and throw himself into work and surfing. Things became difficult for Emma and James, and their marriage was suffering. He had visited a couple of Army psychologists but walked out feeling angrier than when he went in. James refused to talk to Emma about his experiences.

After seeing a Soldier On Facebook post, Emma called the organisation in desperation. Emma and Soldier On made arrangements for James to meet another serviceman who was respected and experienced in combat. After the meeting, Emma saw her husband smile for the first time in years, as if a load had been lifted from his shoulders. This was just the beginning in his journey towards recovery and reintegration.

Emma is passionate about supporting Soldier On so the organisation can continue to support future generations of returned servicemen and women, their partners, and their families.

Click here to donate
#InTheirHonour

soldieron.org.au