



Guide to the Australian Defence Forces

Ranks and Structure

Navy, Army, Airforce

Comparative Table of Ranks

Other ranks

<i>Boy 2nd Class</i> <i>Boy 1st Class</i>		
Seaman (SMN) <i>Cook</i> <i>Musician</i> <i>Signalman</i> <i>Stoker 2nd and 3rd Class</i> <i>Telegraphist</i>	Private Bandsman Craftsman <i>Driver</i> Gunner <i>Pioneer</i> Sapper Signaller Trooper	Aircraftman/woman (AC/W)
Able Seaman (AB) <i>Steward</i> <i>Stoker 1st Class</i> <i>Writer</i>		Leading Aircraftman/woman (LAC/W)

Non-commissioned officers

	Lance Corporal (LCPL) Lance Bombardier (LBDR)	
Leading Seaman (LS) <i>Leading Cook</i> <i>Leading Signalman</i> <i>Leading Steward</i> <i>Leading Stoker</i> <i>Leading Telegraphist</i> <i>Leading Writer</i>	Corporal (CPL) Bombardier (BDR)	Corporal (CPL)
	<i>Lance Sergeant</i>	
Petty Officer (PO) <i>Yeoman of Signals</i> <i>Bandmaster</i>	Sergeant (SGT)	Sergeant (SGT)
	Staff Sergeant (SSGT)	
Chief Petty Officer* (CPO) <i>Chief Stoker</i>		Flight Sergeant*

Warrant officers

	Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2)	
Warrant Officer (WO)	Warrant Officer Class 1 (WO1)	Warrant Officer (WOFF)

*During World War One, the AIF held the ranks in bold and those in italics.
*Flight Sergeants and Chief Petty Officers hold an equivalent position in the rank hierarchy to Army Warrant Officers Class Two but do not possess a warrant issued under the authority of *The Defence Act*.

Comparative Table of Ranks

Commissioned Officers

<i>Cadet</i>		
Midshipman (MIDN)		
	Second Lieutenant (2LT)	Pilot Officer (PLTOFF)
Sub-Lieutenant (SBLT)	Lieutenant (LT)	Flying Officer (FLGOFF)
Lieutenant (LEUT)	Captain (CAPT)	Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT)
Lieutenant Commander (LCDR)	Major (MAJ)	Squadron Leader (SQNLDR)
Commander (CMDR)	Lieutenant Colonel (LTCOL)	Wing Commander (WGCDR)
Captain (CAPT)	Colonel (COL)	Group Captain (GPCAPT)
Commodore (CDRE)	Brigadier (BRIG)	Air Commodore (AIRCDRE)
Rear Admiral (RADM)	Major General (MAJGEN)	Air Vice Marshal (AVM)
Vice Admiral (VADM)	Lieutenant General (LTGEN)	Air Marshal (AM)
Admiral (ADM)	General (GEN)	Air Chief Marshal (ACM)
Admiral of the Fleet	Field Marshal	Marshal of the RAAF

Check out the AWM's blog "The Australian Imperial Force Badges – 1914-1918"

<https://www.awm.gov.au/blog/2014/07/31/australian-imperial-force-aif-badges-1914-1918/>

It is particularly useful for understanding all of the badges that you might see on the uniform of an AIF soldier. Badges can tell you much more than rank. You can learn about their unit, overseas service, good conduct and wounds.

Navy, Army, Airforce

Royal Australian Navy Structure

The Royal Australian Navy was established in 1911. It has the most flexible structure of the three services.

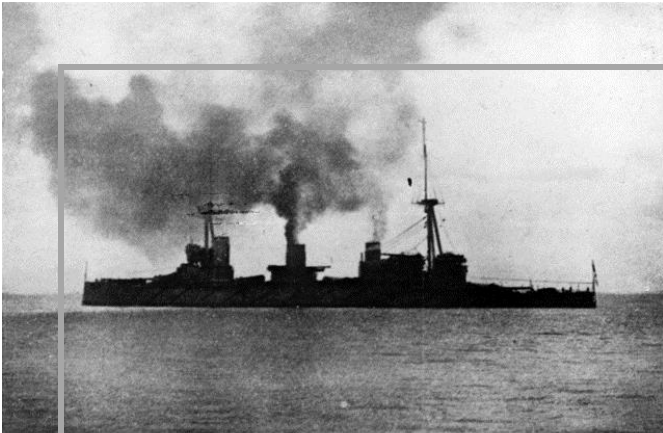
Flotilla	2 divisions	Captain
Division	2 sub-divisions	Commander
Sub-division	2 vessels	
Vessel		Lieutenant Commander (destroyer, submarine) Lieutenant (smaller vessels)

2 Structure of a destroyer flotilla

Fleet

- Largest naval structure containing squadrons, flotillas and/or task forces
- Often works in specific geographic region
- Not enough ships to form more than one fleet – so RAN fleet = entire sea-going navy
- Commanded by an admiral

For more information see <https://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/structure/ran-structure/>



1 The Battle Cruiser HMAS Australia. AWM EN0039

Flotilla:

- 2 or more ships - Destroyers, submarines, mine-sweepers, corvettes, light patrol craft
- The table on the right is of a destroyer flotilla. There is no fixed organisation for flotillas of smaller vessels

Squadron:

- 2 or more capital ships - Battleships, cruisers, aircraft carriers
- Squadrons of more than 3 vessels have divisions and sub-divisions
- Command depends on size and may be a commodore, rear admiral or vice admiral

Task Force/Group

A variety of vessels grouped together to achieve a specific task

Amphibious Force

- A range of vessels designed to transfer and army from sea to land on enemy territory
- Includes specialist units for to survey, select landing spots, control and guide landing

3 Group portrait of unidentified Signal and Wireless Ratings of the North Sea Draft, Royal Australian Navy, on board HMT Wiltshire. AWM A02588



Australian Army Structure – WWI to Present Day



Formations	Organisation	Strength	Made up of		Commanded by
	Army		Two or more corps		General
	Corps	30,000 or more	Two or more divisions		Lieutenant General
	Division	10,000 - 20,000	3 brigades		Major General
	Brigade	2,500 - 5,000	WWI	WWII	Brigadier (General)
			4 battalions	3 battalions	
(sub-) units	Battalion	550 - 1000	4 companies	4 companies	Lieutenant Colonel
	Company	100 - 225	4 platoons	3 platoons	Captain or Major
	Platoon	30 - 60	4 (later 3) sections	3 sections	Lieutenant
	Section	9 - 16			Corporal/Sergeant

REL29538

4 Light Horse Rising Sun hat badge.
AWM REL29538

For more detailed information about Army structure see

<https://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/structure/army-structure/>

5 Broadmeadows, Victoria. 1914. Members of an AIF Signal Section at the Army camp with some of their equipment. AWM H18420



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H18420

Australian Army Structure – WWI to Present Day

Army sub-units and units by corps

Corps	Sub-Unit & commander		Unit & commander	
Army Service Corps	Section (Sect)	Corporal	Battalion (Bn)	Lieutenant Colonel
Engineers				
Infantry	Platoon (Pl)	Lieutenant		
Intelligence				
Military Police	Company (Coy)	Captain or Major		
Ordnance				
Aviation	Section (Sect)	Corporal	Regiment (Regt)	Lieutenant Colonel
Cavalry/Armour				
Engineers (post-1945)	Troop (Tp)	Lieutenant		
Signals				
Transport	Squadron (Sqn)	Captain or Major		
Artillery (pre-1939)	Detachment (Det)	Sergeant	Brigade (Bde)	Lieutenant Colonel
	Section (Sect)	Lieutenant		
	Battery (Bty)	Major		
Artillery (post-1939)	Detachment (Det)	Sergeant	Regiment (Regt)	Lieutenant Colonel
	Section (Sect)	Lieutenant		
	Troop (Tp)	Lieutenant/Captain		
	Battery (Bty)	Major		



6 Three unidentified members of No 4 Section, B Company, 10th Battalion, Cairo. AWM C01885

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

C01885

RAAF structure – WWI to Present Day



The RAAF was established in 1921 making it one of the oldest air forces in the world. During World War I, Australian Flying Corps (AFC) squadrons were part of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and flew as part of the British Royal Flying Corps (RFC)/ Royal Air Force (RAF) formations.

For more about the history of the Australian Flying Corps, see <https://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/ww1-flying/>

Year	Flight	Squadron	Wing	Group
1916	RFC: 3 aeroplanes	3 Flights	2-6 Squadrons	2-6 Wings
	AFC: 4 aeroplanes			
1917	AFC: 6 aeroplanes	3 Flights	2-6 Squadrons	2-6 Wings
1943	Fighters and Bombers: 6 aircraft	2-4 Flights	2-6 Squadrons	2-6 wings
	Transport: 6 aircraft			
	Maritime: 3 aircraft			
1965	Bomber: 4 aircraft	2 Flights	2 Squadrons	Flexible
	Helicopter: 4 aircraft			
	Transport: 6 aircraft			
1998		Flexible		



8 A side view of a Handley-Page O/400 aircraft of No 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps. AWM B02113