

UNSPORTING CONDUCT – LISTENING IN AUSTRALIAN SPECIAL WIRELESS GROUP

From September 1939, the Director General of Posts and Telegraphs made available Observation Centres across Australia for the monitoring of designated frequency bands. These Centre were manned by qualified Post Office Radio Operators who carried out radio surveillance as part of 1



**Australian
Discrimination
Unit.**

**The Perth
Observation Centre
was in the
Government
Astronomer's
residence at the top
of Havelock Street,**

**West Perth now occupied by National Trust of Western
Australia.**

**In June 1940, a small group of signalmen established No. 1
Special Wireless Section at Seymour in Victoria. As No 4
Australian Special Wireless Section. they left Australia in
December 1940 to serve in Egypt, Greece, Crete and Syria.
where they intercepted German, Italian and Vichy French
messages and monitored Allied wireless transmissions.**

**When Australia declared war on Japan in December 1941,
the section started to learn the Japanese Wabun/Kana Code.
Staff from British Sigint assisted with training in Japanese
intercept procedures. During the voyage back to Australia,
Brigadier Simpson, the Chief Signals Officer developed the
model for the Australian Army's Sigint organisation.**

The new Sigint organisation comprised the majority of No. 4 Australian Special Wireless Section and some reinforcements which became the newly formed No. 5 Australian Special Wireless Section. The intelligence personnel from No. 4 Australian Special Wireless Section became members of MacArthur and Blamey's new top-secret intelligence unit called Central Bureau which comprised Australian Army, RAAF and US Army personnel.



The Australian Army intercept portion of No. 4 Australian Special Wireless Section moved to Bonegilla in Victoria and in May 1942 it was renamed as the Australian Special Wireless Group with a War Establishment of 1,000 personnel. Most of the new personnel were recruited from New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia.

The core roles of the ASWG remained to intercept enemy transmissions monitor Allied operators to ensure there were no security breaches which could allow an enemy interceptor to identify a unit or its location. To these were added checking for possible clandestine stations as well as sensitive diplomatic work.

After messages were intercepted by the ASWG operator they went to the decoder/decryptor, then to the translator and then to Central Bureau where the messages were assessed and the information passed out to field commanders. Some operators were involved in what was known as high-speed work. Morse signals were transmitted at high speed and were recorded on Edison wax cylinders and replayed later at a slower speed. The operators were

usually not aware of the contents of the messages they were receiving or sending.

From August 1942, members of the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) were also recruited into ASWG. ASWG detachments were deployed in key locations around Australia. The Western Australian station was located at Queens Park (Crocker Park near the Carousel Shopping Centre). Operational sections were sent to Darwin and to Port Moresby.

ASWG scaled down its operations after World War 2 and changed its name to the 101 Wireless Regiment in 1947. In 1964 the unit changed its name to the 7th Signal Regiment. In 1989 the unit joined forces with the 72 Electronic Warfare Squadron to become the 7th Signal Regiment (Electronic Warfare).