

## What you should know

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building at the South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue.

■ Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straightforward inquiries for a fee of \$65 per hour, including copying and postage.

■ For further information, phone 6925 5666, email [archive@csu.edu.au](mailto:archive@csu.edu.au) or visit the website at [www.csu.edu.au/research/archives](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/archives) for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

## at the archives



Wayne Doubleday

he focus this week for our series on the Women's Voluntary Services during WWII, is in regard to the dedicated work of the Women's Auxiliary of the RSSLIA in 1930.

the RSSLIA (Returned Sailors and Soldiers Services League of Australia) who packed thousands of parcels and forwarded them to local men and women serving in the Australian forces overseas.

An invitation from the Wagga sub-branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers of the Imperial League of Australia instigated the formation of the Women's Auxiliary of the RSSLIA in 1930.

For a decade the auxiliary assisted the sub-branch by raising funds and by organising functions but then had disbanded by 1941.

Meanwhile, the community had been raising money for the mayor's patriotic fund, most of which was forwarded to the Lord Mayor's fund in Sydney.

However, local people considered that a need had arisen for the RSL Women's Auxiliary to assist service men and women from the Wagga area, including the Mitchell and Kyamba Shires.

On November 14, 1941, about 100 ladies met at the patriotic hut and decided to form an organisation which was known as the Women's Auxiliary of the Wagga Sub-branch of the RSSLIA.

Mrs Ella Partridge was elected as president, with the inaugural meeting held on December 3, 1941.

Even though there was opposition from the mayor's patriotic and war fund committee, who wanted canteen orders sent to the fighting forces, the auxiliary insisted that a personal parcel would be more acceptable and memorable, instead of a "piece of paper" such as a canteen order.

The auxiliary was registered as a charitable organisation on January 16, 1942 which enabled the ladies to start fund raising by holding functions and appeals.

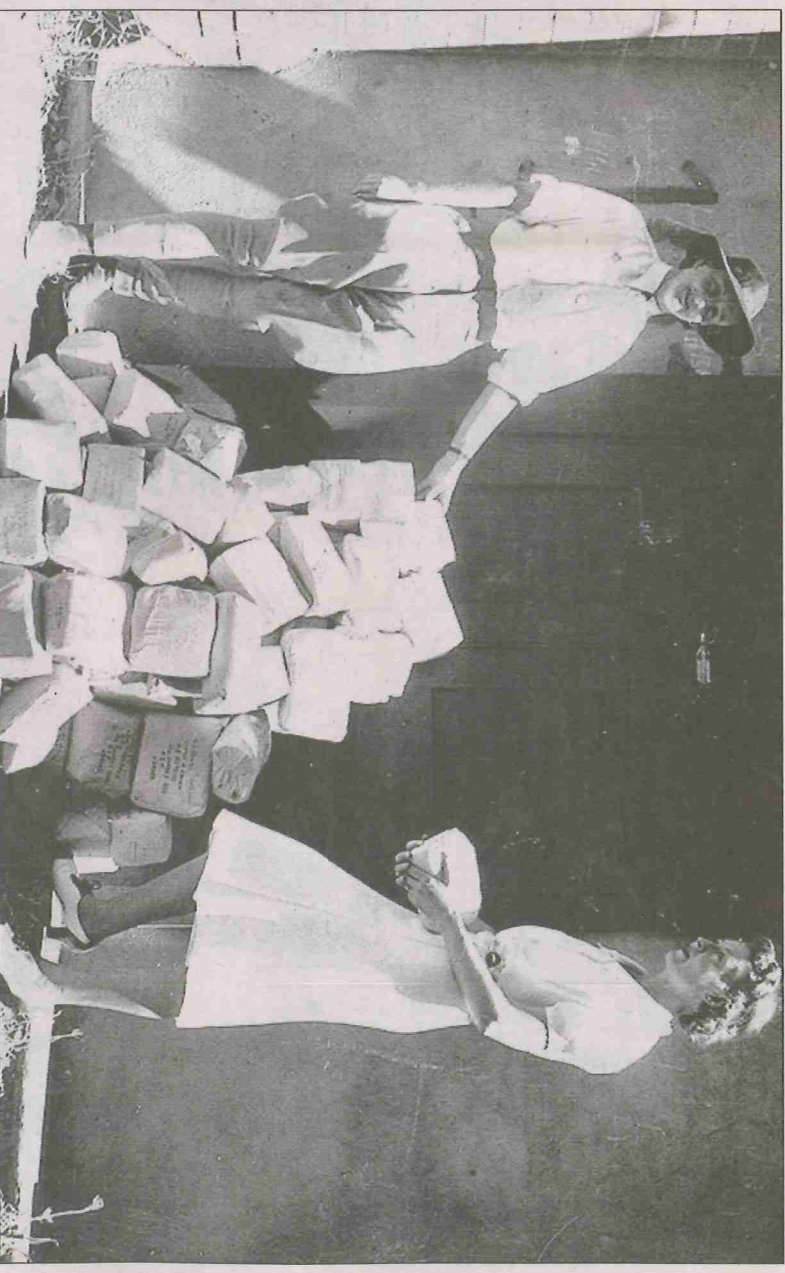
The support of the Wagga community was overwhelming, one instance being 400 people attending a cabaret ball at the Coconut Grove.

Two examples of the generosity of local people supporting their efforts: Miss Jean Saxon asked that for her 21st birthday goods be given for parcels to be sent overseas instead of a birthday gift, and in March 1942 a pet lamb owned by John Harmon of Peter Street was sold at the saleyards, with the proceeds given to the auxiliary.

Forty to 70 ladies of the Women's Auxiliary met each week to pack parcels, with some of the items for parcels being donated and the rest purchased.

Included in the comfort parcel were: "toothpaste, shaving cream, sweets, glucose, tobacco, cigarettes, cigarette papers, Aspros, condensed milk or milk and coffee and Johnsons' talc powder".

Extra items such as cocoa,



Parcels of comforts ready to be dispatched overseas.



Transporting the parcels of comforts.

cheese and fruit, and a special nominated greeting card were included in the parcels for Christmas, with over 1200 being sent for Christmas 1942.

It was decided by the auxiliary that the parcels be packed in calico to ensure that they arrived to their destination in good condition.

A registry was also deemed necessary so that all the lads would be certain of receiving a parcel; this registrar was kept up-to-date by Miss Ann Anderson assisted by Miss Maisie Inglis.

Hundreds of letters of appreciation were received expressing the delight from the recipients of the parcels, and when Private Jack Hudson was in Wagga he called in to personally thank the ladies, not only for himself but also on behalf of the "boys" who were serving with him.

In September 1944 Pte WM Ruthertford, AAMWS, wrote to Mrs Ellis of Thorne Street saying, "The parcel was a grand surprise. I did not realise that a parcel could bring so much joy to one away from her home town".

At the same time Mrs

McMullen received a letter from Marjorie Lee, WAAAF, thanking her for the "parcel of comforts" which arrived in perfect order." She said it helped considerably to brighten the outlook.

Throughout the World War II the members of the Women's Auxiliary were not only raising funds for the thousands of parcels of comforts but were busy making camouflage nets, knitting and assisted other organisations for the war effort, as well as helping to raise funds for a new memorial hall for the returned servicemen.

The Wagga RSL Women's Auxiliary certainly contributed to the comfort of the local men and women serving overseas and their post war activities should also be recognised.

The welcome that they gave to English war brides into the Wagga community was appreciated as were the parcels sent to the local "boys" at Christmas when serving in Korea and Vietnam.

References: *RSL Women's Auxiliary: a history*, Sherry Morris and Harold Fie 2001, *The Daily Advertiser*, 20/9/1944



Members of the Wagga RSL Women's Auxiliary packing parcels to send to the local servicemen and women serving overseas. Standing at the rear are (from left) Margaret Ellis, Nell Wilks, Catherine Graham and Ethel Wiid.