



# Child Conscription Our Country's Shame

## Prosecutions and Imprisonments under the Defence Act

The authorities launched thousands of prosecutions of:

- ◆ boys and young men for failure to attend medical examinations, military drill, or complete the required number of hours (often for reasons of personal or family hardship); a small number were of boys who had a conscientious objection to military training.
- ◆ parents who refused to register their sons or prevented them from attending military drill.

	Prosecutions		Convictions
	2 years to 30.6.13	3 years to 30.6.14	
Queensland	1,249	2,671	1,714 to 31.12.19
New South Wales	4,871	11,082	
Victoria	4,573	8,086	
South Australia	1,327	2,699	
Western Australia	860	1,749	
Tasmania	775	1,462	
Total	13,655	27,749	27,803

Number of commitments to continuous detention (imprisonment) in fortresses and military barracks

For 3 years ending 30.6.14	5,732
For 9 months ending 31.3.15	1,361
Total to 31.3.1915	7,093

Reference: John Percy Fletcher & John Francis Hills. *Conscription under Camouflage...* 1919, and records of Australian Peace Alliance, Mitchell Library, NSW (MLMSS 166).

## Tom Roberts' story



In May 1914, 16 year old Tom Roberts, son of Frederick and Susannah Roberts, was sentenced at Brighton Court to 21 days at Queenscliff. As he had only recently recovered from a serious illness, his parents made strong representations and his sentence was postponed, but on June 3rd, Tom was sent to Queenscliff Fort.

A few days later, the parents visited Tom and found that, on refusing to drill, he had been put in the guard-room for two days, and was then committed to solitary confinement on "half-rations" for seven days. Tom Roberts was threatened with further periods of solitary confinement if he continued to refuse to drill. Widespread coverage in the press, and questions asked in parliament, eventually resulted in Tom Roberts' release. The government promised to abolish solitary confinement for trainees.



Queenscliff Fort, Victoria

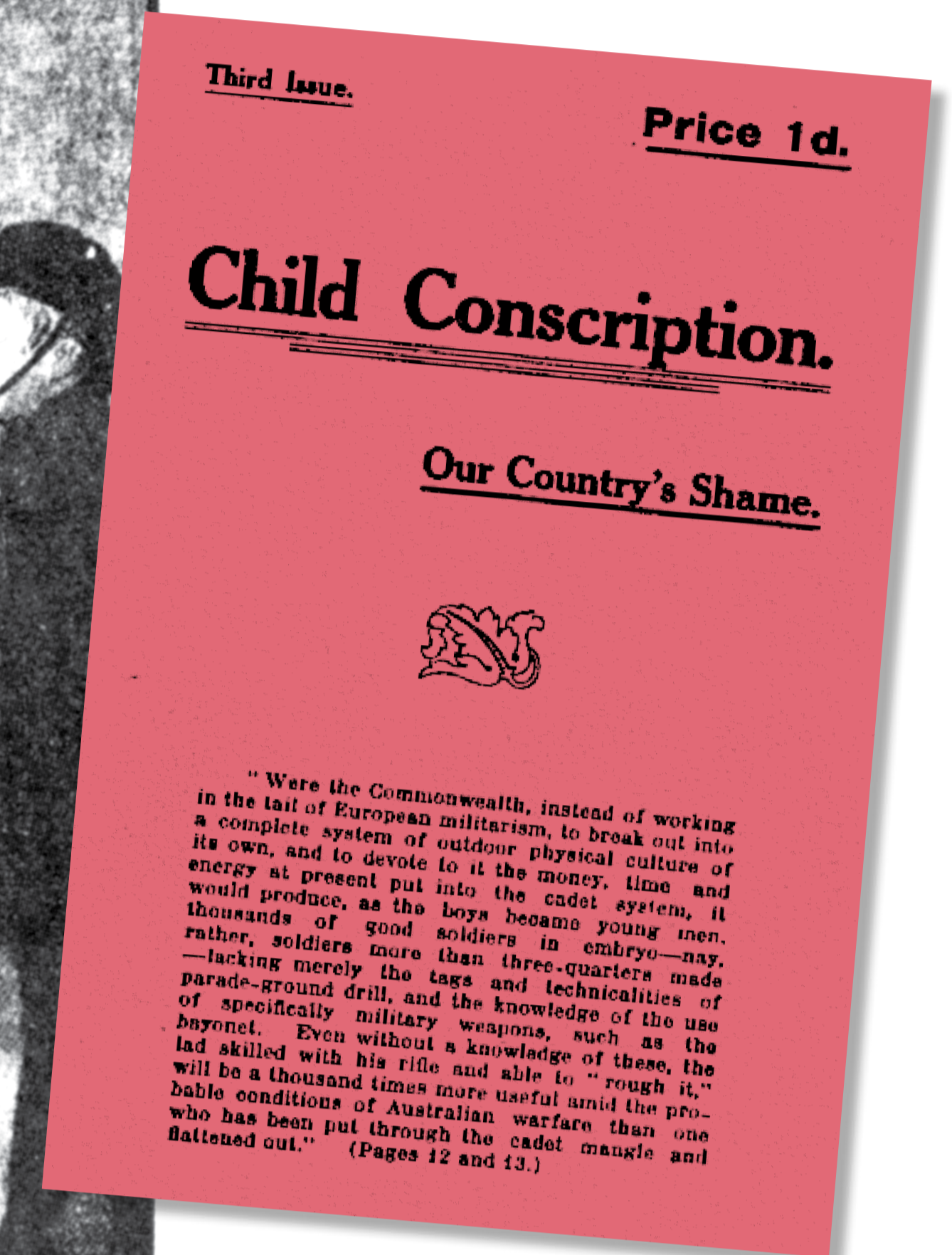
“Our children ought not to be taught the necessity of war, much less its glory.”

General Meeting for Australia, October 1906



THE BEST OF REASONS  
OFFICER: "How is it you and your brother did not turn up for parade last night?"  
"Please, sir, we couldn't come. It was our bath night!"

Bulletin 29 August 1912



## Douglas Allen's story

In March 1914, Douglas Allen was prosecuted at Hawthorn Court and sentenced to 20 days at Queenscliff. During this time he was well treated, although he refused to drill or submit to a medical examination.

During the period of her son's imprisonment, Indiana Allen, as Clerk of Melbourne Monthly Meeting, was a member of a deputation of interstate members of the Society of Friends, who met the Prime Minister Joseph Cook to protest against compulsory military training.

Immediately following Douglas Allen's imprisonment, Harry Flintoff (a socialist) received a 20-day sentence, which included seven days solitary confinement at Queenscliff and a diet of gruel, bread and water. Weeks later he was imprisoned for a third time.



Douglas Allen with his mother, Indiana Allen

Quaker boys imprisoned in 1913 and 1914 for refusing to do military drill, or non-combat duties, as senior cadets

	Age	Sentence	Military Barracks
Douglas Allen	18 yrs.	20 days: Refused to drill or to submit to a medical examination	Queenscliff Fortress, VIC
Sidney Crosland	18 yrs.	53 days: released after 20 days following publicity in the press; summonsed again, charges withdrawn	Victoria Barracks, NSW
Herbert Ingle	15 yrs.	15 days: verbal & physical abuse (father, William Ingle, 14 days for refusing to allow his son to drill)	Forts Largs & Glanville, SA
Thomas Roberts	16 yrs.	21 days: solitary confinement & half rations; threats of extension of sentence; released early after questions in parliament	Queenscliff Fortress, VIC

These and other boys were arguably the first conscientious objectors in Australia.

Exhibition prepared in 2014 by:  
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in NSW  
www.quakers.org.au



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