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International Tracing and Refugee Services, Australian Red Cross

(2004 -)

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Summary

The International Tracing and Refugee Services department of the Australian Red Cross endeavours to locate, reunite and support families separated by war, conflict and disaster. As such, the department services one of the most longstanding activities of the International Red Cross Movement, that of restoring family links between victims of armed conflict. In Australia, an important predecessor of the department, The Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau, was founded at the beginning of World War 1 by Australian Red Cross Commissioners Vera Deakin and Winifred Johnstone. The Bureau was established in 1915 to help trace wounded and missing men and provide information about them to their families.

Details

In many ways the predecessor of International Tracing and Refugee Services, the Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau was established in 1915. Founded by the Australian Red Cross Commissioners, Vera Deakin and Winifred Johnstone, the Bureau helped trace wounded and missing men, and informally started a hospital visiting service. After World War II the service connected people who had lost touch with relatives and friends, supporting State Divisions, whose workers met and accompanied new migrants, provided assistance, and produced phrase books. As an Enquiry, Tracing and Message service, the Australian Red Cross extended to link refugees with their families and register evacuees, under the Disaster Services Department from 1975. In the 1990s, the Asylum Seekers' Assistance Scheme continued this service and the Tracing and Refugees' Department expanded as a core Red Cross service. In Strategy 2005, the Australian Red Cross re-committed to the Tracing and Message Service and aimed to enhance the delivery of humanitarian services to asylum seekers, refugees and other people in crisis. In 2004, these activities were covered by the International Tracing and Refugee Services, the Immigration Detention Program and the Asylum Seekers' Assistance Scheme. This Scheme is funded by the Australian Government's Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, and administered by the Australian Red Cross.

Published resources

Book
Australian women at war, Adam-Smith, Patsy, 1984

50 years service to humanity, Australian Red Cross Society, [1964]

Look what you started Henry! A history of the Australian Red Cross 1914-1991., Stubbings, Leon, 1992

Red Cross yesterdays, Robertson, Philadelphia N. (Philadelphia Nina), 1950

The More things change…The Australian Red Cross 1914-1989, Minogue, Noreen, 1989

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

The University of Melbourne Archives
Missing, Wounded and Prisoner of War Enquiry Cards

Annual Reports of the Australian Red Cross

Minutes and Meeting Papers, National Council

Annual Reports of Red Cross Divisions and Blood Service

Australian War Memorial, Research Centre
Australian Red Cross Society (ARCS)

Australian Red Cross Society

Australian Red Cross Research and Information Service
Records of the Central Bureau for Wounded, Missing and Prisoners of War, and of the National Tracing Bureau

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