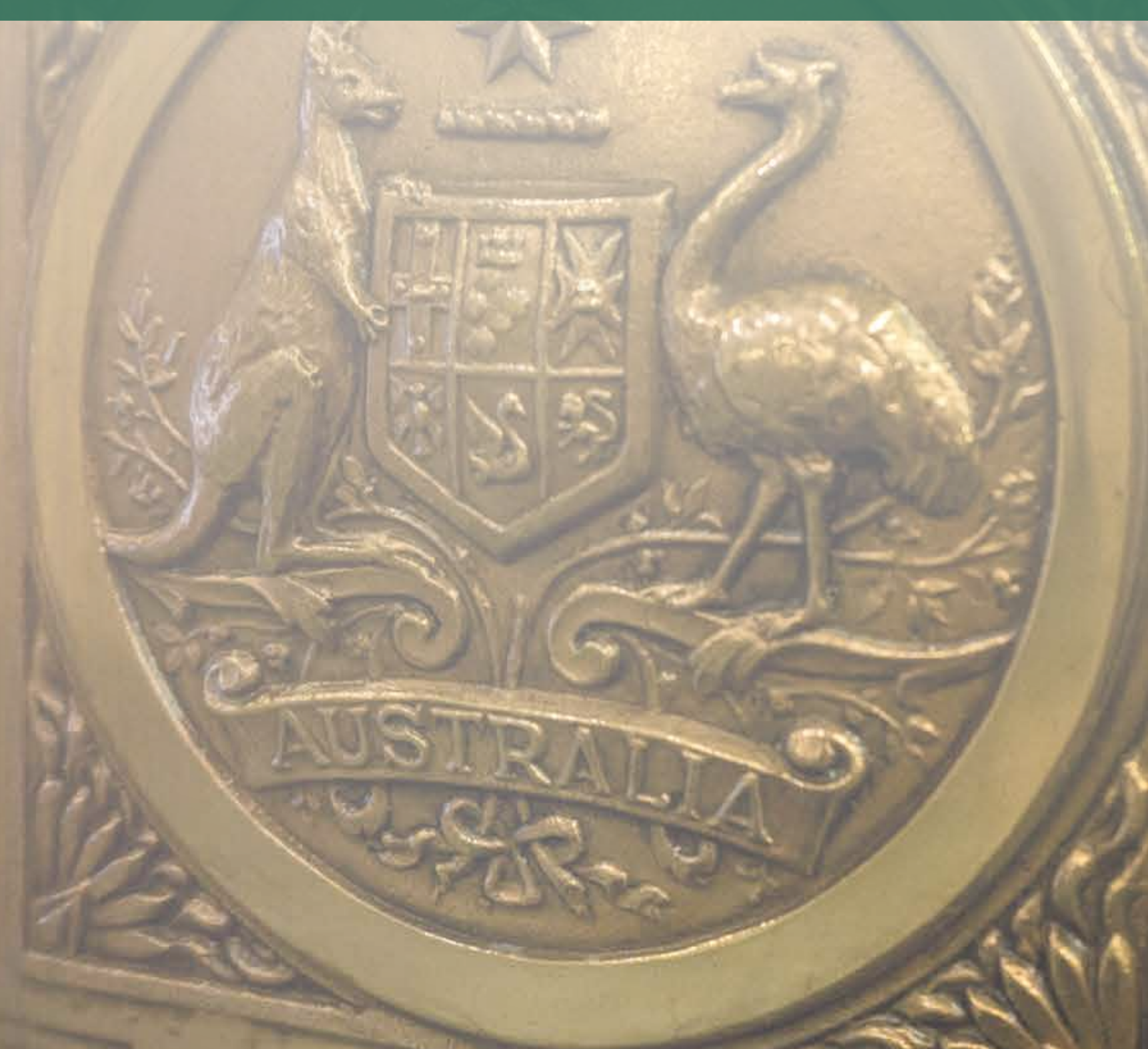
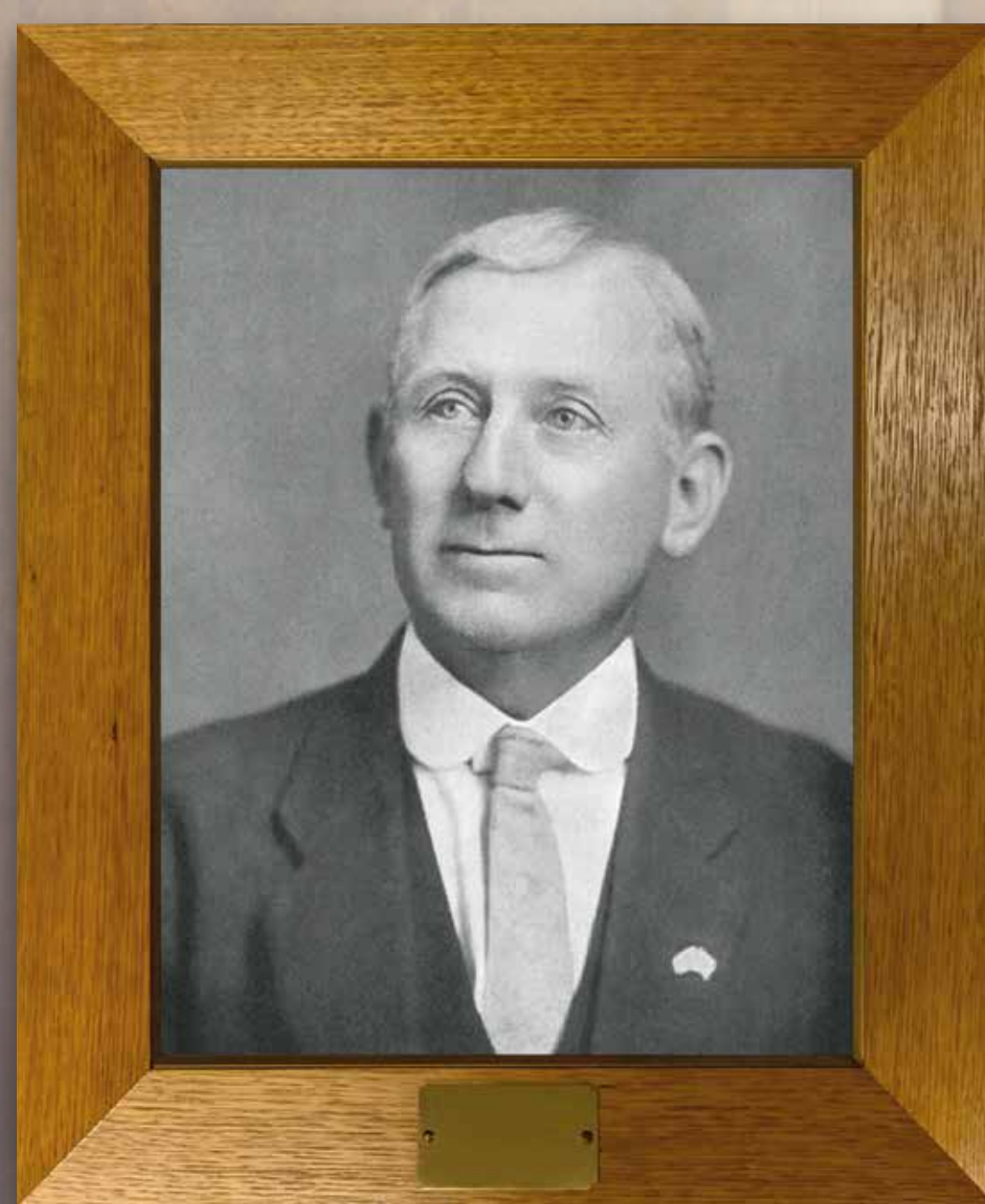


# GEORGE EDWIN YATES

1871 - 1959



MP (Adelaide, SA) • ALP, 1914–1919 • 1922–1931

Born in Staffordshire, England, George Yates was elected to the House of Representatives at a 1914 by-election for the seat of Adelaide.

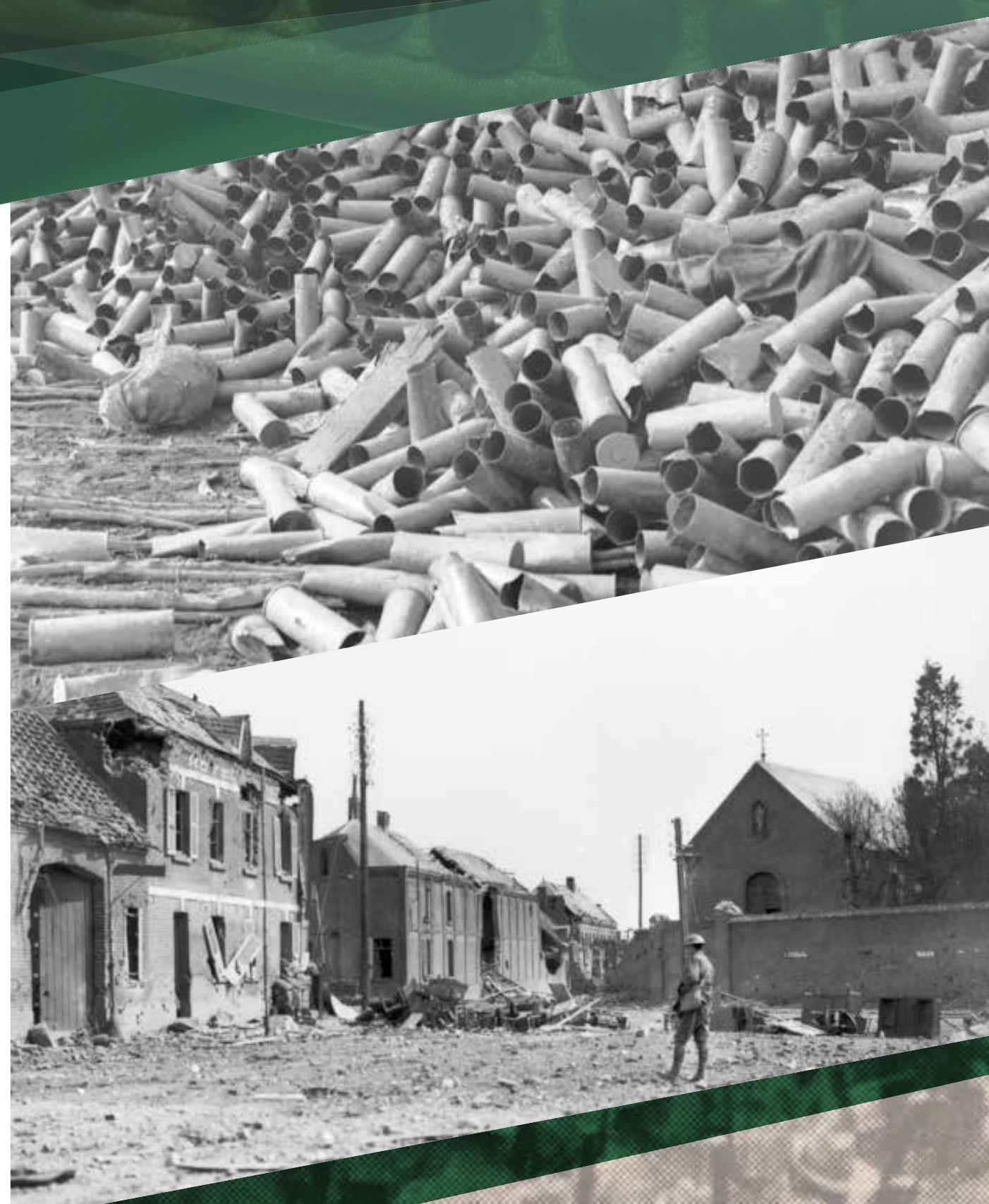
Yates enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in October 1916 at the age of 45 (his attestation sheet giving his age as 40 years and his occupation as labourer). On 26 November 1917, he embarked as a gunner in the Field Artillery Brigade, arriving in France in time for the 1918 offensive. He joined as a reinforcement to the 13th Field Artillery Brigade, and saw service in the battles of Villers-Bretonneux, Morlancourt and Hamel.

Yates fell ill in 1918 and was evacuated before the War's end by ship to Australia. Frustrated at the quarantine rules applied to South Australian troops, Yates (still an MP at that time) lead discussions involving the troops quarantined on the troop ships, and, at times, threatened to go ashore. He was court-martialled and found guilty of 'conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline', in that he had encouraged the troops to mutiny. He was sentenced to 60 days detention. Yates retained his parliamentary seat, as the conviction did not fall foul of section 44(ii) of the Australian Constitution, which disqualifies a person convicted of a crime punishable by more than one year's imprisonment, while that person is awaiting or serving their sentence.

Yates was discharged on the 'cessation of hostilities' in 1919.

Nevertheless, his political career was damaged. Yates complained of a whispering campaign about his war record and he lost his seat by 344 votes at the 1919 election. In 1920, Assistant Minister for Defence Granville Ryrie made a statement in the House suggesting that Yates had not taken part in 'the big offensive on the 8th August, 1918'. Yates would later remark that this was 'one of the most serious reflections possible to put on a man—an inference that he had not carried out the services required of a soldier'. A subsequent inquiry found this was incorrect, and Ryrie expressed 'profound regret' for 'putting Mr Yates under a cloud and casting aspersions on his service'. A Select Committee inquired into the matter in 1923, and Yates was awarded compensation of £200 for damage to reputation.

Yates returned to office at the 1922 election, where he remained until his defeat at the election of 1931.



Parliamentary Library 2015

#### Sources:

- The Parliamentary Handbook, Parliament of Australia
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- House of Representatives, Report from the Select Committee on the Case of ex Gunner Yates, 1923
- House of Representatives, Debates, 29 September 1920
- Nathan Church, Hannah Gobbett, Martin Lumb and Rob Lundie, Commonwealth Members of Parliament who have served in war: Colonial wars and the First World War, Parliamentary Library Research Paper, September 2014



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- W.A.S Dunlop, 1914. Australian Imperial Force's 2nd Infantry Brigade marching through Bourke Street, Melbourne, Friday, 25th September 1914, National Library of Australia, nla.pic-vn4982243
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