

ABC
COMMERCIAL

AUSTRALIA AFTER



WAR

A thought-provoking exploration of the cultural, political and personal significance of Australia's returned veterans

Australia has a long history of sending men and women to war. From the mass global conflicts of World Wars One and Two, to the Cold War, peacekeeping operations and recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Australia has sent close to a million men and women to over 40 conflicts in just over a century.

Some of those men and women – close to 100,000 of them – never return, but those who do are honoured and revered for their service. Moreover, the veteran has become Australia's most dominant cultural icon, and wartime qualities of mateship, stoicism and egalitarianism have become synonymous with what it means to be Australian. Veterans aren't simply a part of Australian life, they have profoundly shaped it.

But what happens when the wars end and soldiers come home? How do they return to civilian life and communicate with loved ones? How have the returned impacted Australian life, and how are they best honoured?

Combining the personal stories of veterans and their families, and contextualised by commentary from leading academics and experts, *Australia After War* is a comprehensive and thought-provoking exploration of one of the most important icons in Australian life.

4 x 60'

WildBear Entertainment



Episode Synopses

Episode 1

Returning from war to civilian life can be challenging. What makes that transition easy or difficult, unremarkable or deeply traumatic, depends on a multitude of factors. Why, for some veterans, is return successful whilst others fall apart? From the Great War to the modern day, this episode explores the factors that impact on the experience of return for Australia's service personnel – from the complexities of return, to how public opinion affects the experience of return, to how we look after our returned, and to how war and conflict changes people.

Episode 2

When we think of return from war, we think of how this event affects the men and women who have served their country. But return is felt as well by those closest to them; for the families of the returned – their partners, their parents, their children, their communities – readjusting to post-war life with their loved ones can be an extraordinary challenge.

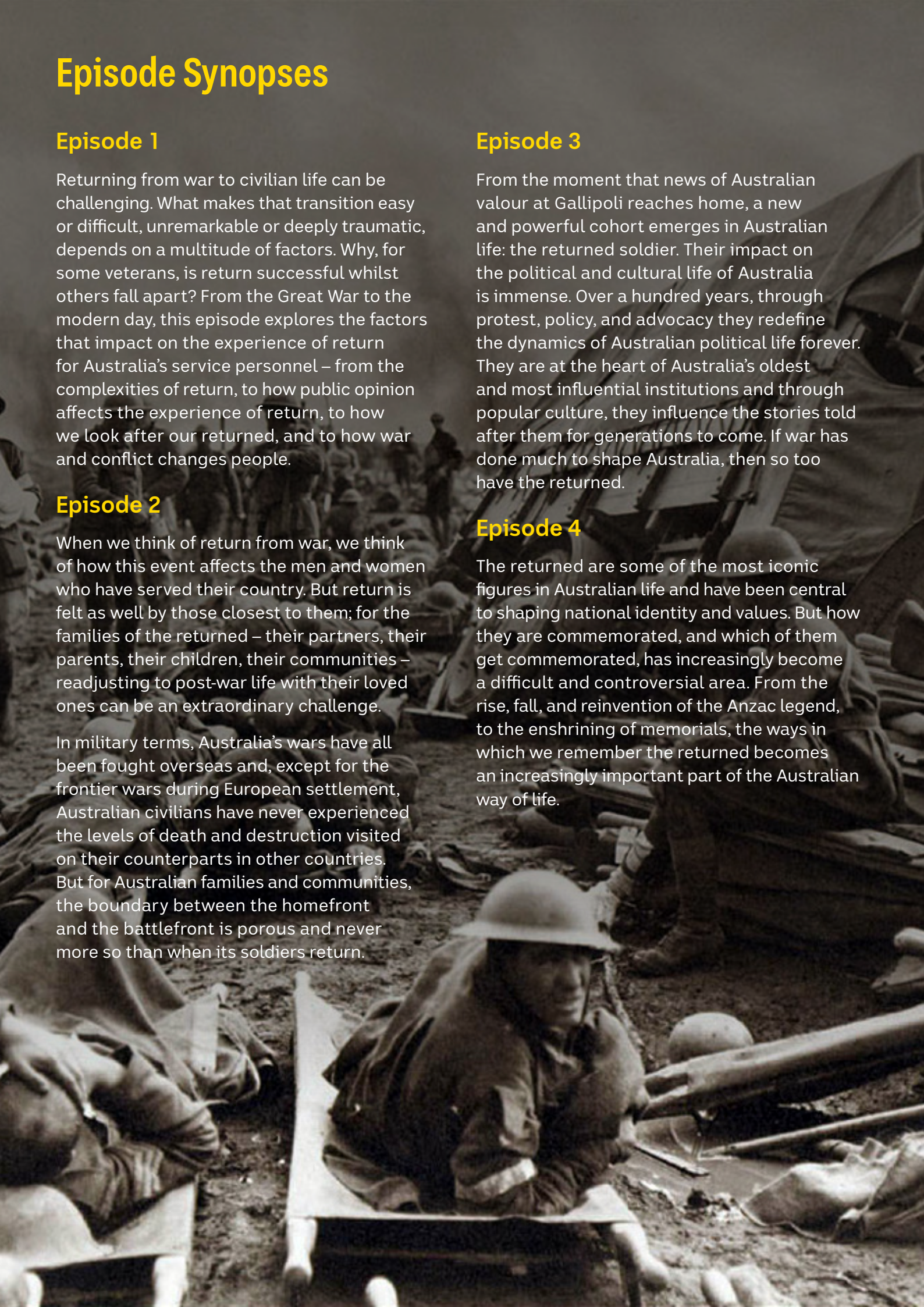
In military terms, Australia's wars have all been fought overseas and, except for the frontier wars during European settlement, Australian civilians have never experienced the levels of death and destruction visited on their counterparts in other countries. But for Australian families and communities, the boundary between the homefront and the battlefield is porous and never more so than when its soldiers return.

Episode 3

From the moment that news of Australian valour at Gallipoli reaches home, a new and powerful cohort emerges in Australian life: the returned soldier. Their impact on the political and cultural life of Australia is immense. Over a hundred years, through protest, policy, and advocacy they redefine the dynamics of Australian political life forever. They are at the heart of Australia's oldest and most influential institutions and through popular culture, they influence the stories told after them for generations to come. If war has done much to shape Australia, then so too have the returned.

Episode 4

The returned are some of the most iconic figures in Australian life and have been central to shaping national identity and values. But how they are commemorated, and which of them get commemorated, has increasingly become a difficult and controversial area. From the rise, fall, and reinvention of the Anzac legend, to the enshrining of memorials, the ways in which we remember the returned becomes an increasingly important part of the Australian way of life.



Director's Statement

I've had the opportunity to work on various military shows with WildBear, but *Australia After War* was a unique opportunity to explore a different side of history – to go beyond war and tell the story of return; of rebuilding; and of the lingering impacts of conflict.

It was fascinating to go beyond the myths and narratives and discover just how deeply the wars of the past hundred years have affected Australian society. Rather than the usual chronological format we decided to focus on four key areas: the experience of return itself; the families and communities surrounding the returned; the impact the returned have on the country; and how we remember the returned. This allowed us to deeply explore experiences of return, how they echoed each other from conflict to conflict, and approach the history in a more nuanced manner.

Australia After War is built on a mix of the personal and the historical, and finding the right mix of interviewees was such a rewarding and humbling experience. We were overwhelmed by the amount of incredible experts who were happy to share their expertise on post-war Australia and the returned experience. But the heart of our series came from the veterans and their families. Speaking with people who had experienced war and return was something incredibly special, and I am deeply grateful to all who shared their stories with us. The combination of historical and personal insights gave us the opportunity to explore the story of *Australia After War* in all its profoundness – and so rarely spoken about.

– **Jim Wilks, Director**

