

Conscription in WWI

This framed original poster is the Military Service Act 1916. In Britain, the Military Service Act was passed in 1916 which brought conscription into effect for the first time in World War I on all single men aged 18 to 41, with some exemptions: 1) for those in war time employment 2) those deemed medically unfit 3) religious ministers and 4) conscientious objectors*. By 1916, the British government was faced with an increased number of casualties and it believed the only way to win the war was to introduce compulsory active military service or conscription.

In Australia, the topic of conscription was raised by the Government because, like Britain, as the war continued, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) faced a shortage of men because casualties increased and the volunteers decreased. In a referendum or a public opinion poll, Australians were asked in October 1916 and again in December 1917 to vote YES or NO on the issue of conscription. On both occasions, the proposal for conscription was defeated.

Posters such as this Military Service Act 1916 and others may have been hanging on a wall somewhere on college grounds as part of a campaign to encourage and support pro-conscription, possibly to recruit volunteers and also to show the underlying support of Australia's strong connection with Britain in her fight to win the war.

TA75 Framed original poster - Military Service Act, 1916, Sydney TAFE Heritage Collection

*Source: www.parliament.uk



real skills, endless possibilities