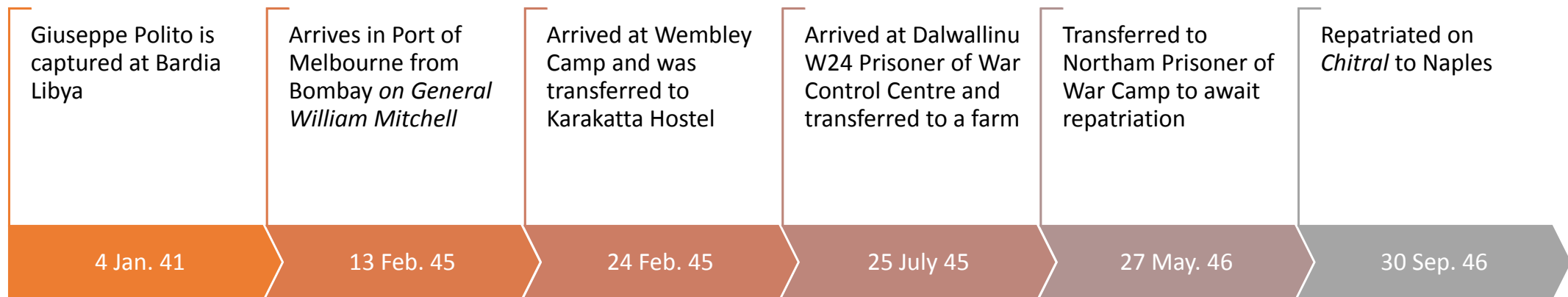




Giuseppe Polito
PWIX68172

ITALIAN PRISONERS
MARCHING ALONG
THE BARDIA ROAD.



Libya and Egypt



Battle of Bardia

Bardia is a small town on the Mediterranean coast of Libya, in the region of Cyrenaica, approximately 30 kilometres from the Egyptian border. During the early decades of the 20th century it was developed as a military outpost during Italy's colonisation of the region. Prior to the Second World War it was fortified by the construction of an arc of defensive posts, 29 kilometres long, around the town and its small harbour.

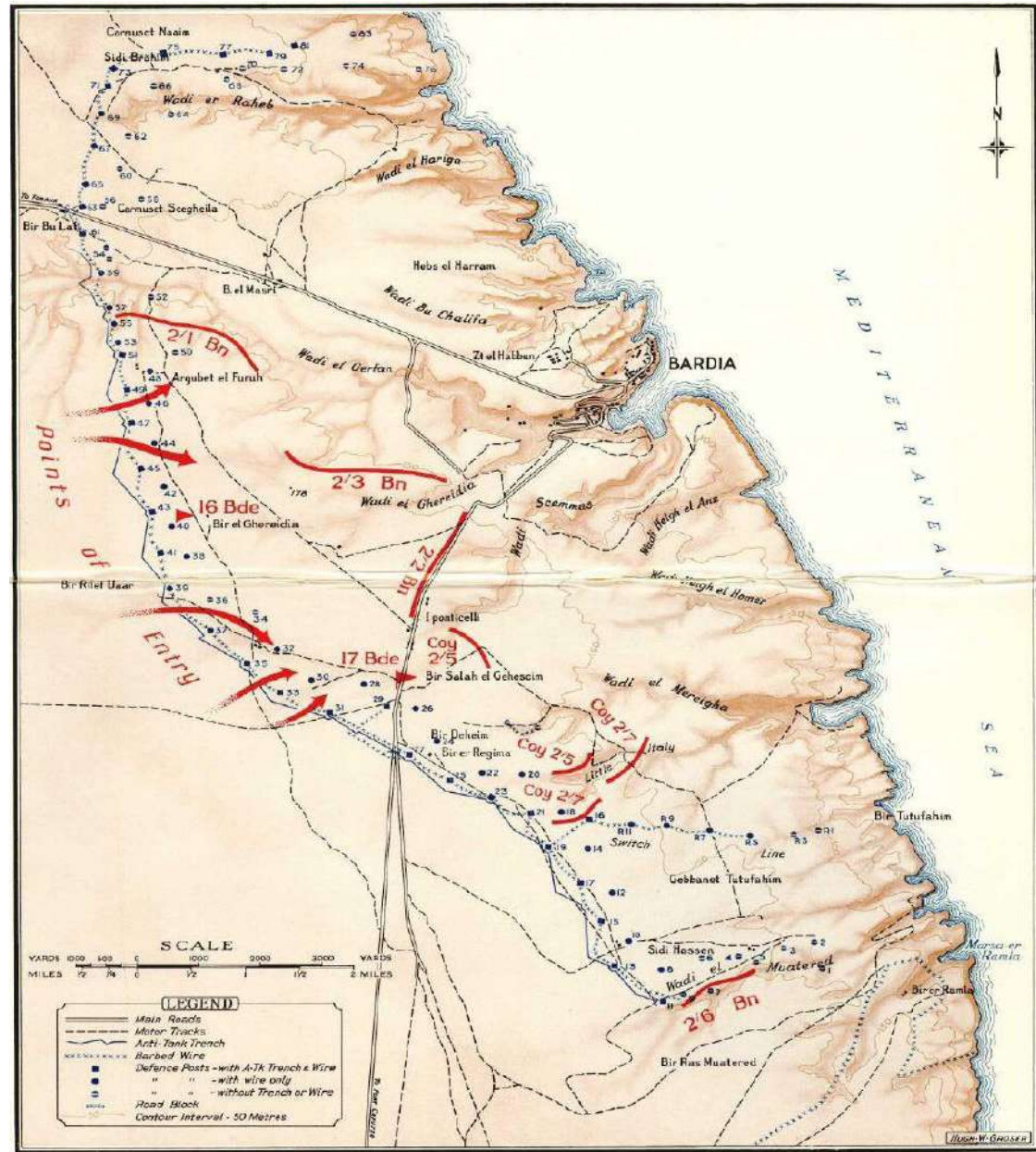
Bardia was the site of the first battle fought by Australian troops in the Second World War. On the morning of 3 January 1941, troops of the 16th Brigade of the 6th Australian Division attacked and broke through the western face of the defensive perimeter, while the 2/6th Battalion mounted a diversion in the south. Troops of the 17th Australian Brigade joined the fighting later in the morning to clear the southern portion of the Italian defences, while the 16th Brigade advanced toward Bardia itself.

Bardia was captured late in the afternoon of 4 January, but Italian resistance in the southern portion of the perimeter, which had been particularly determined, did not cease until the morning of 5 January; the diversionary force had encountered the toughest fighting of all. The attack had cost the 6th Division 130 men killed and 326 wounded but netted them approximately 40,000 Italian prisoners and large quantities of arms, rations, equipment, and alcohol. All of which was put to good use by the Australians. (AWM)



Australian War Memorial, Battle of Bardia,; Keating, Geoffrey (Major), The Western Desert Campaign Image E1579, Imperial War Museum; Hurley, Frank, Bardia 5th January 1941, Image 004931, Australian War Memorial

Bardia: arc of
defensive posts
29 km long



Map of Battle of Bardia, Position at Dusk on 3rd January 1941, from Battle of
Joanne Tapiolas © Footprints Bardia Wikipedia

Prisoner of War

Initially the prisoners were held in temporary camps in North Africa before being processed and shipped to places around the world for detainment for the duration of the war. They were impounded in caged compounds near place of capture. They were then transported to temporary camps. Some of these first tented camps were in Alexandria, Ismailia, outside Cairo and along the Suez Canal: Bitter Lake, Fayed, Geneifa and Port Suez. The POWs were also camped near Wadi Sara Palestine (Yesodot Israel) and entrained from Haifa Israel.

They were places with limited water rations, very little food and too much sand and dust.

An Italian POW, Umberto Cofrancesco, reached Alexandria by ship and then was moved to Port Said by train.

Geneifa in the Sinai is mentioned as the place where the Italian prisoners of war were processed and M.E. Number assigned.

(Hyperwar, Map 4 The Egypt- Palestine Base, page 59,
<https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/UN/UK/UK-Med-I/UK-Med-I-4.html>)



CARD TO BE USED FOR NOTIFICATION OF CAPTURE ONLY

AF. W. 3054 (Substitute)

PRISONER OF WAR

Postage Free
Franco di Bollo

Nome Illuzzi
Cognome Lorenzo
No. Matr. 15993
Grado Artigiano
Unità 201. S. S. S. S.
Data e luogo di nascita: 20. 4. 1900
Giovinazzo
Nome padre: Nicola
madre: Leonilda
No. dell' Internato: 113680
Indirizzo: Illuzzi, Lorenz.
Italian Prisoners of War Camp
15 - ANGO - 40,000 - 1141
Egypt

1180

Stiggar
Illuzzi, Nicola
Via Cilelandano 135
Giovinazzo
Italia (Bari)

COMITE INTERNATIONAL
de la CROIX ROUGE
Bureau Centrale
des Prisonniers de Guerre
GENEVE

Notification to Family

These two cards are examples of the notification sent to families about the captured Italians.

The first card was used for *Notification of Capture Only*.

The second card was used to notify family that their loved one had been Transferred to Australia.

Once in Australia, there must have been a card used to notify family of their place of imprisonment and address details for correspondence.

Transféré to Australia R. 2/136/11/4.

PRISONERS OF WAR. N° 113680 M. E

Number 6.541

Surname ILLUZZI Names LORENZO

Rank Sold. Unità 23. Marzo Regt. Art. S.

Date of Birth 20/4/00 Place of Birth Giovinazzo G.G.

Surname & Name of Father Nicola

Name of Mother

Address & relationship of Person to be notified as to dates & place of Capture place of Internment, wounds, subsequent Casualties (Death, accidents, wounds etc.)

Casualties: See Reverse.

Father: Via Cilelandano 35
Giovinazzo Bari
D.L. 586

Cards Courtesy of Pastore, Vitoronzo Giovinazzo (Bari) Illuzi Lorenzo Internato in Australia

India Prisoner of War Camps

Giuseppe was sent to India from a POW Camp in Egypt. Some of these camps were Ramgarh, Bangalore, Bairagarh, Ahmednagar, Yol and Ceylon. The Italians suffered disease in India eg malaria, typhoid, dysentery. The tropical conditions of humidity and torrential rain was unbearable.

... life was monotonous and over time many of the men felt they were forgotten and became more desperate. Health was the most serious worry. At the camp, at Ramgarh many succumbed to beriberi and typhoid fever, 'at an alarming rate'. The camp turned into a sea of mud and was filled with mosquitoes when the rains started. Several hundred Italians died while interned during the war in India, some from natural causes but the majority from illnesses caught while in confinement. For prisoners of war of all different nationalities, the war was characterised by a long, testing time of waiting in camps, longing for letters and hoping that their own news was getting through.

Khan, Yasmin, *The Rah at War: A People's History of India's Second World War*
ICRC Guerre 1939-1945, British India Group V Italian Prisoners of War VP HIST-03470-34



Being a POW in India

Umberto Cofrancesco:

Living conditions in the POW camp of Ramgarh were particularly harsh. Umberto tells about his suffering and diseases:

"From March 41, closed in barbed wires we had to suffer not only because we were imprisoned, but also because of the great heat of India, almost unbearable. And when later, in the month of June 41, the rains began, we, the prisoners, we had to drink dirty water, with the same color as the earth. And this was the cause of serious diseases which made several soldiers die in the RAMGARH camps."

Even Umberto got sick. Pleurisy!

"I began the day 28-6-41 to be sick with low fever, steady pain at my back (shoulder).

Medical diagnosis: Pleurisy."

And together with pleurisy, many other illnesses.

"Tonsillitis, headache, tiredness, rheumatism, bone pains. During the imprisonment I was tormented by diseases, which left serious injury for life."

The physical examinations occurred very often. Umberto notes carefully the dates and diagnoses.

"Physical examination

28-6-41

7-7-41 pleurisy

24-7-41

29-7-41 pleurisy

30-7-41

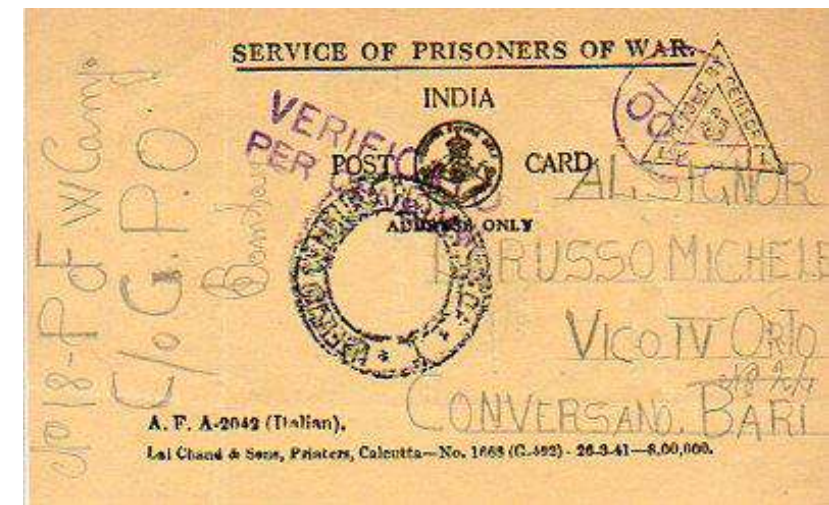
8-9-41

16-9-41


The year 1942 did not start any better than the previous one. Umberto's health condition had become worse and it was requested that he be given a "complete physical examination", in view of a possible repatriation.

"Day 7 February 1942. Passed a complete physical examination by the English at Ramgarh hospital S. P.te. Day towards the end of March 1942. Passed a complete physical examination by the International Commission at the Ramgarh hospital for Repatriation."

But obviously, it had nothing to do with the "Repatriation" (written with the first letter in capital, for its great importance. It was not just a word, but a dream, a mirage). The Commission must have decided that Umberto had not suffered enough and that his health allowed him to continue that very painful life of the POW camp.



(<http://www.pastorevito.it/conversano-bari-lorusso-donato/>)

Photograph. 		Prisoner's of War History Sheet. 63497		P.O.W. No. 11118H	
PART I. SURNAME. SOLIMANI		*Christian Names. Genesis		Nationality. Italian	
Rank, Regiment & Regimental No. 10th Regt. Bersaglieri					
Date and Place of birth. 21-10-1916 Tompenseco Mantova		Civil Occupation. Farmer		Date and place of capture. 5-2-41 Bulgaria	
Relationship and address of next of kin. Father. Solimani Eliseo Via Zaccati 26 Tompenseco Mantova					

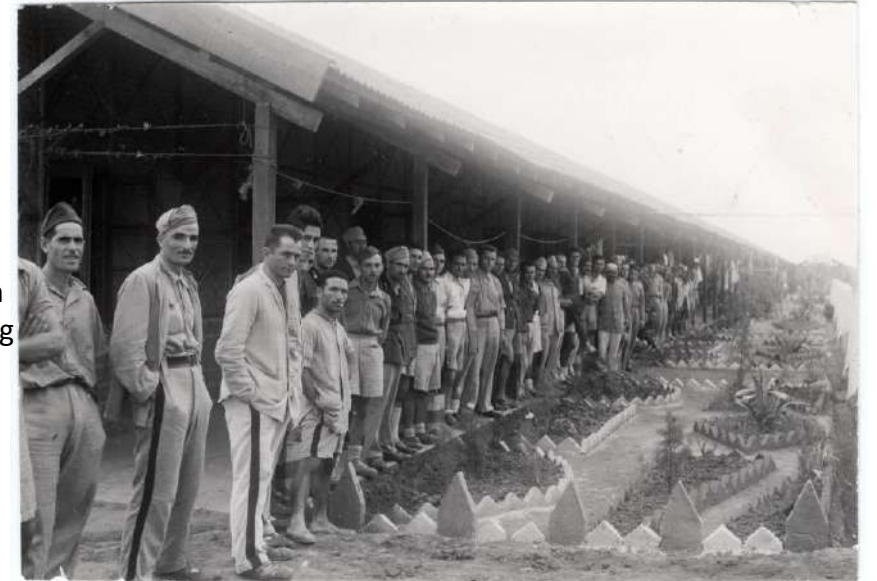
(http://cofrancesco.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=64&Itemid=86&limit=1&limitstart=6)

Joanne Tapiolas © Footprints

(NAA: A7919, C104054)



Italian Prisoners of War
Camp. Group 4. During
monsoons



Bangalore Camp 7 Italian
Prisoners of War standing
in front of decorated
gardens

Photographs from the collection of the ICRC



Cooks at Camp 25 Wing 3



Graves of Italian Prisoners
of War Bangalore Group 5
10/1944



General William Mitchell

The *General William Mitchell* departed Bombay on 30th January 1945 with 2076 Italian Prisoners of War. The ship arrived in Port of Melbourne 13th February 1945.

*“During the autumn of 1944 and through the spring of 1945, General William Mitchell called twice at Bombay India, as she redeployed and rotated troops in the China-Burma-India theatre. On the first of these voyages she sailed from New York via Panama and Australia, putting in at Bombay 7 October and embarking veterans for passage to Australia and America, and finally mooring at San Diego California, 17 November 1944. **Her second passage to India took her from San Pedro via Tasmania to embark Allied troops and Italian prisoners of war at Bombay; she subsequently off-loaded the POW's at Melbourne;** loaded dependent wives and children in New Zealand and returned to San Pedro 3 March 1945.”*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_General_William_Mitchell_\(AP-114\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_General_William_Mitchell_(AP-114))

Origin of PWIX

DPW(AG13)/NA

SECRET
SECRET

Army Form C.2118.
(Adap et.)

WAR DIARY OF INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.
(Erase heading not required.)

Unit AG13 Date and Time. From 0900 hrs 16 Jan 45 To 1730 hrs 16 Jan 45 *Serial 1133*

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
LHQ MELBOURNE	16 Jan 45		(A) PRISONERS OF WAR.	
			1. Signal A1360 from Milbase Brisbane advising 96 Jap PW for Cowra entrained Sth Brisbane 15 Jan.	255/10/85
			2. Signal A1352 from Milbase Brisbane advising arrival 4 Jap Army O/R PW 2 Chinese ex NG 13 Jan.	255/10/85
			3. Signal A1419 from Milbase Brisbane advising arrival 3 Jap offrs 2 Jap navy O/R PW ex Philippines 15 Jan.	255/10/85
			4. Signal PW 1305 from Westcom advising recapture PWG 41705 RETIMER Fritz L/Cpl 13 Jan 45.	
			5. Signal A 1352 from Milbase Brisbane advising arrival one Jap merchant seaman arrived Brisbane 13 Jan.	255/10/85
			6. Signal to Milbases Sydney and Melbourne approving transfer 1 Jap PW Class B and PWI 48049 FUDA Francesco to Murchison.	255/18/348
			7. Memo to W Comd and all areas directing that 3000 Italian PW from India with possible pro Fascist sympathies be designated by the prefix PWIX, and setting out manner and conditions in which such PWIX will be employed.	

PWIX
Pro Fascist

(AWM52 1/1/14 Headquarters Units January to April 1945)

Departure from Bombay India

SECRET 31/1

DPW (AG13) / CM **WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.** **SECRET** Army Form C.218. (Adapted)

(Erase heading not required.)

Unit AG13 Date and Time.—From 0900 hrs 31 Jan 45 To 1730 hrs 31 Jan 45 Serial No. 1148

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
HQ MELBOURNE	31 Jan 45		A. PRISONERS OF WAR:	
			1. Signal A5018 from Milbase Brisbane advising arrival 5 Jap Army C/R PW ex NG 29 Jan.	255/10/25
			2. Cable 1005 from H/C London advising UK propose approach Germany re head for head exchange British Commonwealth PW against Germans from NW Africa and Middle East (incl merchant seamen) British PW to be selected from those captured before 1 Jul 1940, date line for Germans 1 Jul 1943. Views of Aust Govt sought on this proposal.	
			3. Signal Q3183 from Embn Bombay advising 2076 Italian PW transhipped General Mitchell for Australia 30 Jan 45.	
			4. Memo to HQ Vic L/C Area approving extension of boundaries of PWCC Corryong to cover existing applications from property owners in Tallangatta area for labour of not more than 25 Italian officer PW.	255/21/1

2076 Italian
PW depart
Bombay
30.1.45

(AWM52 1/1/14 Headquarters Units January to April 1945)

Arrival in Melbourne

DPW(AG13)/NA

SECRET

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

Unit AG13 Date and Time. From 0900 hrs 16 Feb 45 To 1730 hrs 16 Feb 45 Signal No. 1164.

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
LHQ MELBOURNE	16 Feb 45		(A) PRISONERS OF WAR.	
			1. Signal AG2504 from Milbase Melbourne advising 2076 PWI disembarked 13 Feb. Two casualties to 115 AGH, three troublemakers to Murchison all deducted from Sandy Creek quota.	
			2. Signal AQ 3591 from Milbase Adelaide advising 845 PWI arrived Sandy Creek 14 Feb in two trainloads 500 and 345.	
			3. Signal PWI 1667 from Milbase Sydney advising 409 and 466 PWI arrived Cowra 14 Feb totalling 875 not 876 as previously advised. Further check being made.	
			4. Memo to Attorney General's Dept requesting that instructions be issued for Deputy Commonwealth Crown Solicitors to prepare defence and assign counsel for PW who are to be tried by civil courts, the cost of legal expenses to be borne by Dept of Army.	255/2/628

Arrival:
13.2.45

(AWM52 1/1/14 Headquarters Units January to April 1945)

Movement from Melbourne to South Australia

SECRET

DPW(AG13)/KC **WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.** **SECRET** Army Form C.2118.
(Adap 6-1)

(Erase heading not required.)

Unit AG 13 Date and Time.—From 0900 hrs 20 Feb 45 To 1730 hrs 20 Feb 45. *Same to 1168*

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	Remarks and references to Appendices, Diaries, &c.
LHQ MELBOURNE	20 Feb 45		<p>A PRISONERS OF WAR.</p> <p>1. Signal A5015 from Milbase Brisbane advising PWI46547 PEDUTO A. entraining Brisbane 19 Feb for Hay to serve court martial sentence.</p> <p>2. Signal AG3060 from Milbase Melb advising PWIX ex India moved as follows 876 to NSW 845 to SA 350 to SA for on move to WA.</p> <p>3. Memo to HQ NSW L of C Area approving transfer of PWI 46636 RESTUCCIA Antonio from 113 (Concord) Mil Hosp to suitable accommodation in Vic 1 of C Area. PW has been added to roll of those recommended for repatriation.</p> <p>4. Memo to HQ Vic L of C Area, approving reduction of allocation of PWCC V4 Leongatha by 80; these 80 PW to be disposed of by increasing V11 Warragul by 30 and V7 Yarram by 50.</p>	<p>P/2/2446</p> <p>44/431/4</p> <p>215/18/266</p> <p>255/30/4.</p>

Allocation
to
Western
Australia

(AWM52 1/1/14 Headquarters Units January to April 1945)