Guarding the Periphery: the Australian Army in Papua New Guinea, 1951–75

Monday 23 October 2017, 5:45pm–7pm

Launched by
Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery, AC, AO (Mil), CVO, MC (Retd)
Former Governor General of Australia

Dr Tristan Moss
Researcher, Australian War Memorial

Location
Atrium, Hedley Bull Building
130 Garran Road, Acton ANU

Registration
W http://bit.ly/2wVM96h
T 02 6125 8533

This is a free event open to the public
Copies of the book will be available to purchase and to be signed
Please join us for light refreshments after the launch

Tristan Moss's Guarding the Periphery: the Australian Army in Papua New Guinea, 1951-75, Cambridge University Press, 2017, is the first in-depth examination of the role played by Papua New Guineans in the Australian armed forces during the Cold War. From 1951 to 1975 Papua New Guineans formed a significant part of the Australian Army's order of battle. The men of the Pacific Islands Regiment and Papua New Guinea Command were tasked with defending the territory that formed Australia's strategic barrier to the north. During Confrontation in the 1960s they guarded the border with Indonesia. As PNG independence approached in the early 1970s, this force came to form the basis of the Defence Force for the newly independent nation of Papua New Guinea.

This important book also considers the dual strategic role played by Australia's army in PNG: the defence of Australia's interests from threats to the north and west; and the management of the army's role within a colony at a time of great change. Taking as its focus the operational, social and racial aspects of the Army in PNG, Guarding the Periphery integrates Papua New Guineans into Australia's military history, and places the development of the Army in PNG within the context of colonial rule and decolonisation. It reveals that the Australian Army was concerned during the Cold War not only with the battlefields of Southeast Asia. It also managed a unique force of Papua New Guineans, assisting their development into national army in the final mad rush to ‘localise’ the defence force in the five years before independence.

Tristan Moss is an Australian War Memorial researcher on the official histories of Australian operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and East Timor and an adjunct lecturer at the University of New South Wales. Tristan completed his PhD at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre in 2015, for which he won the CEW Bean Prize for Military History.