

# *A bit on the side: price fixing, rationing, profiteering and black markets in Australia and Britain, 1939-1945*

by Michael Tyquin

Self-Published; 2017; 299 pp.; ISBN 9780648156604 (paperback); RRP \$35.55



*A Bit on the Side* breaks new ground in this little known and understood aspect of Australia's society during World War II. It explores theft, price fixing, rationing, profiteering and black markets in Australia in the context of Australia's economic and social landscape between 1939 and 1945.

While these activities did not occur on the scale seen in Britain, they did occur and, certainly, they preoccupied the Australian government. As more consumer

commodities came under government scrutiny in terms of price control and rationing, the criminal world began to realise the potential to make easy money.

The black market was extensive and insidious, with all community sectors involved, from professional criminals, to those with ready access to goods, to retailers and to members of the public, who simply took advantage of the opportunity or fulfilled a short-term need. Despite the

masses of legislation, numerous court proceedings and imposition of fines, the authorities were unable to stem the phenomenon.

*A Bit on the Side* looks at these issues chronologically over the course of the war, while making relevant comparisons to the British experience. The book includes 16 black-and-white images and 16 tables spread through the text. There is one appendix, endnotes for each chapter, a comprehensive bibliography, and an index.

Michael Tyquin is a consulting historian based in

Canberra. He has published extensively in the areas of Australian social, medical and military history. He is the official historian of the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps and is an adjunct professor at the University of Queensland's Centre for Military and Veterans' Health.

Black markets are an interesting and little-appreciated effect of war on society and *A Bit on the Side* will be of interest to readers of military and social history.

**Marcus Fielding**