

Sylvia Margaret Barry (née Dwyer) –
WAAAF Aircraftwoman, WWII

Full Name: Sylvia Margaret Dwyer (later
Sylvia Barry)

Date of Birth: 13 July 1917

Place of Birth: Watchem, Victoria

Enlistment: 3 September 1941, Melbourne,
VIC

Service Number: 90137 (as Dwyer);
changed to 350191 upon marriage to John
Barry

Marriage: 1942, Melbourne (Victoria BDM
Reg. No. 5155)

Discharge: 29 March 1946

Rank on Discharge: Aircraftwoman

Service Overview and Timeline

Initial Training and Early Service

- 3 September 1941: Enlisted in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) in Melbourne under her maiden name, Sylvia Dwyer, Service No. 90137.
- Early 1942: Undertook administrative and clerical training at School of Administration, noted as "Sch Admin" on her record, under Authority 21 AST (Case) – likely No. 21 Air School (Training).

Cypher and Wireless Telegraphy Postings

- 8 June 1942 – Melbourne W/T Station
- Authority: PZ103/2/6
- Duties: Cypher
- Posted to the Melbourne Wireless Telegraphy Station, beginning specialist cypher work. This role involved encoding

and decoding secret military messages.

- 19 July 1942 – Brisbane W/T Station
- Authority: POR M/2
- Transferred to the Brisbane Wireless Telegraphy Station, continuing signals and cypher duties supporting the growing Allied command structure in Queensland.

- 5 August 1942 – Allied Air Headquarters (Brisbane)

- Authority: AAHQ 4/42
- Duties: W/T Station (Wireless Telegraphy)

- Assigned to Allied Air Headquarters, Brisbane, the central communication and intelligence hub for the South-West Pacific. This posting placed her directly within the highly secret signals intelligence network later known as the “Garage Girls.”

Service Under Married Name

- Late 1942: Married John Barry in

Melbourne. Her service records were amended to Sylvia Barry, and a new service number, 350191, was issued.

- 21 March 1943 – HQ RAAF

Command, Brisbane

- Authority: AFCO 44/43
- Continued in communications and intelligence duties under Headquarters RAAF Command. This unit coordinated operational communications across the Pacific theatre.

Demobilisation

- 30 July 1945 – 3rd Personnel Depot (3 P.D.)
- Authority: 3 P.D. 358
- Duties: “45 Pending Termination – RPP” (Release Pending Personnel Pool)
- Posted to 3rd Personnel Depot as the war concluded, preparing for discharge.
- 29 March 1946: Discharged

honorably as Aircraftwoman Sylvia Barry, with service conduct described as very good/excellent.

Connection to the “Garage Girls”

Sylvia’s posting to Allied Air Headquarters, Brisbane, in August 1942, confirms her direct involvement with the secret communications network known today as the “Garage Girls.” These WAAAF women worked in a repurposed garage building near Brisbane’s city centre, handling encoded messages vital to Allied strategy in the Pacific.

Her role as a Cypher and Wireless Telegraphy (W/T) operator placed her among the earliest Australian women to

work in classified intelligence – encoding and decoding top-secret messages sent between Allied commanders, including those of General Douglas MacArthur’s headquarters.

Historical Significance

- One of the early women to enlist in the WAAAF, joining within months of its formation.
- Served continuously from 1941–1946 in cypher and communications intelligence roles.
- Her work supported high-level operations across the South-West Pacific Area Command (SWPA).
- Her service record provides a documented link to the “Garage Girls”, whose cryptographic contributions

remained secret for decades.

- Represents the vital, often unacknowledged role of Australian women in wartime intelligence and communications security.