

Border Closures

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There were two other occasions between the two world wars that border crossings between NSW and Victoria were closed. In 1919 the border was closed to prevent the spread of influenza.

A less well-known closure was from August 1937-April 1938. This time children under the age of sixteen could not cross from Victoria to NSW unless they could produce a medical certificate vouching that they had not been exposed to infantile paralysis (poliomyelitis).

The *Albury Banner* informed its readers on Friday September 3, 1937 that: "All the bridges over the Murray are being watched day and night by New South Wales police, and all vehicles from Victoria are being stopped to see that no uncertificated children are allowed into this State ... every consideration was being extended to border residents to permit them to do their ordinary business ... all vehicles must be stopped, and unless the persons in charge of the vehicles possess a certificate stating that for 21 days previously any child in the vehicle under the age of 16 years has neither been in contact with, nor exposed to infection during the last 21 days, the vehicle shall not be allowed to come into New South Wales. A special squad of police meets every train coming to Albury from Victoria, while there are also police guarding the railway bridge over the Murray."

The restrictions continued into 1938, with the *Sydney Morning Herald* reporting on January 12,



Checking papers,
Border Morning Mail, August 1937

1938 that: "Eighty-eight police cadets, known as the Khaki force, have reached Albury, for distribution along the Murray as far as Wentworth, for the supervision arising from the Infantile paralysis epidemic in Victoria."

The 'Khaki force' was sent to 21 river crossings, seven road crossings, six railway stations and three airports. Local business houses complained that the border patrol did little to prevent the spread of disease and much to disrupt business.

On Saturday April 16, 1938, the *Border Morning Mail* reported: "that restrictions on children entering NSW from Victoria had been lifted and that the patrol would cease to operate at once.

"The announcement was received with wild excitement by some of the members of the patrol stationed at some of the dreariest of outposts. They could not pack their gear quickly enough to return, as they called it, 'to civilisation' ... There is little doubt that the ban was an effective barrier in preventing the epidemic reaching large proportions in NSW."