

NEW USES FOR PIONEERS

Specialist Unit

On the training grounds at Puckapunyal yesterday units of the Seventh Division were fast taking shape swelled by the constant stream of enlistments.

One of the most interesting battalions in camp is the Pioneer unit. Similar units are being organised and trained in other States.

Pioneers are now specialist troops. In 1914-18 they were used mainly for trench digging, preparing defensive positions, and road building. From experience in the last war, however, the work of these battalions has been changed drastically. Now classed as corps troops they will really be super-infantry battalions.

An officer described them as infantry battalions trained in normal infantry work, plus advanced field engineering duties. As Pioneer battalions to-day are wholly mechanised they will have a larger percentage of specially trained engineer officers, and many of the men will also be specialists or highly skilled tradesmen.

The Puckapunyal battalion will include fitters and turners and motor mechanics. For mechanics a driving licence is an added qualification. Various tradesmen, such as bricklayers and carpenters, are welcomed in the ranks. Skilled artificers receive extra pay, ranging from 1 to 3 a day.

The Pioneer Battalion's own band will arrive in camp this week under Bandmaster Hore. Several members of a city theatre orchestra have enlisted to play under him.