



Australian Government
Defence

**Senate Standing Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade –
References Committee
Inquiry into Defence honours and awards system**

**Department of Defence
Submission**

September 2024

Defence Response

The Department of Defence (Defence) thanks the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for its invitation to provide a submission to its Inquiry into the Defence Honours and Awards system.

Introduction

The Australian Honours and Awards system provides appropriate and tangible recognition for acts of gallantry and bravery; distinguished, conspicuous, meritorious or noteworthy service; and acknowledges individual, or group, commitment and contribution of Australians. Defence Honours and Awards are nested within the Australian Honours and Awards system.

Responsibility for maintaining the principles and integrity of the system is shared by three key stakeholders: the Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat at Government House (Government House), the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and Defence. The Secretariat and PM&C are responsible for whole-of-government awards, for which Australian Defence Force (ADF) members may be eligible. These awards include the National Medal, the National Emergency Medal and the Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal.

Defence Honours and Awards comprise three distinct categories:

- Service awards that recognise the commitment and length of service in the ADF;
- Operational and campaign awards that recognise individual service during military campaigns or on operations; and
- Honours and decorations that recognise achievement, dedication, courage and tenacity for individuals and unit recognition for groups of ADF personnel.

Recognising the outstanding contribution of our personnel is a key responsibility and privilege of command. While any ADF member or civilian employee within Defence can nominate individuals for an honour, the chain of command plays a critical role in ensuring nominations accurately and objectively outline the acts or service warranting formal recognition. This, together with the confidential management of nominations, merit-based deliberations, and consistency in approach, forms the process that recognises exceptional or outstanding acts or service in a timely and effective manner.

There is a long-standing history of medallic recognition for service in the military, with traditions stemming from the United Kingdom's Imperial system embedded in the Australian Honours and Awards system, which will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2025. Defence continues to review the medals administered in the Defence Honours and Awards system to ensure it is contemporary and fit for purpose. [Annex A](#) provides a more in-depth view of the history of recognition.

A list of honours and awards Defence may recommend to the Governor-General is at [Annex B](#). This extensive list highlights the many conflicts ADF personnel have participated in, with some awards having multiple clasps to reflect the various types of recognition available.

Defence maintains the tradition of recognition that provides an appreciable mechanism to recognise significant achievement and reward the commitment and contributions of individuals to ADF service.

The ADF also recognises achievements and service through different recognition systems that extend beyond honours and awards, including career progression through promotion, additional education and training, and performance-based employment opportunities.

In addition, Defence administers an internal Commendation scheme that commends service and actions worthy of recognition that do not meet the threshold for medallic recognition.

Honours, awards and commendations are open to all ADF personnel regardless of rank, gender or position. Foreign military personnel serving on exchange with the ADF or supporting ADF operations, Australian Public Service employees, Defence contractors and consultants may also be eligible for an award in the broader Australian Honours system. Defence may also recommend foreign personnel for honorary Australian awards, where the individual has demonstrated significant contribution to their country's partnership with Australia.

Independent of Defence is the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal (the Tribunal), a statutory body established in 2011 under Part VIIIIC of the *Defence Act 1903*, to consider Defence Honours and Awards matters. Individuals are able to apply to the Tribunal for review of a Defence decision regarding eligibility for a Defence honour, Defence award or foreign award. The Government is also able to refer general eligibility issues to the Tribunal for inquiry and recommendation.

The topic of medals sparks significant passion and interest in the ADF and veteran communities. While some continually press to have criteria amended to make them eligible for a medal, others agitate against the changing of criteria, as they believe this diminishes their service.

Defence has addressed the specific Terms of Reference below. To assist the Committee, Defence remains available to answer any additional questions that may arise during the course of the Inquiry.

(a) Experiences of ADF personnel progressing through the Honours and Awards system

The individual experiences of ADF personnel who engage with the Defence Honours and Awards system will be unique to their personal circumstances, and therefore no two experiences will be the same. The personal value placed on honours and awards is also individual in nature and can influence one's perception of the system.

Feedback on individual experiences of the Honours and Awards system is gathered by identifying trends of Honours and Awards in particular topics of interest raised through ADF members' interactions with the Directorate, stakeholder engagement with the Services, and matters raised through Ministerial correspondence.

The YourSay Workplace Experience Survey (YSWE Survey) is a continuous employee engagement survey that measures the experiences of the Defence workforce. A measure of the ADF experience with recognition more generally can be drawn from the survey. Between 2019 and 2023, approximately 45 per cent of ADF respondents to the YSWE Survey reported that they were satisfied with the level of recognition they received, while 28 per cent were not.

Operational and Service Awards

During 2023-24 Defence processed 23,690 applications received through the Honours and Awards applications portal on the Defence website, resulting in the issue of over 37,500 medals, clasps, citations and badges to current serving ADF personnel, veterans and families to recognise their service.

The wait time for an online application to be assessed is approximately 15 weeks for operational awards, 15 weeks for service awards,¹ and 16 weeks for veterans and families. Some ADF personnel who are required to submit an application to assess their eligibility for long service awards, in particular those who are ADF reservists, have expressed their dissatisfaction with the process of having to apply for their own award. There are limitations in the ability of the Defence corporate personnel and organisational system (more commonly known as PMKeyS) to capture the relevant data required to enable an automated assessment of eligibility. The Directorate of Honours and Awards is working with Defence's People System and Payroll Services and Defence Digital Group on a technical solution to rectify this issue.

In the last financial year, the Defence Service Call Centre received over 11,000 inquiries on a variety of honours and awards matters, mainly pertaining to eligibility and how to apply for an award. Of these, 8,000 were resolved directly through the call centre, with an additional 3,000 complex enquiries referred to the Directorate of Honours and Awards for response.

Eligibility for operational and service awards is determined by the criteria established through medal instruments. Subject to individual medal eligibility, these awards are available to all ADF personnel. The Directorate of Honours and Awards is responsible for maintaining records and seeking delegate approval for the issue of Defence awards from the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) or the Governor-General.

Defence Honours

In addition to operational and service awards, that have defined eligibility criteria, each year Defence recognises the significant service and meritorious achievements of ADF members with announcements in the Australia Day and The King's Birthday Honours lists. Recognising the brave, gallant, distinguished or conspicuous service of ADF personnel, alongside recipients of the Order of Australia, and other meritorious awards in the Australian Honours system is a unique privilege. In 2024, 161 ADF personnel were recognised with an honour. Comparatively, there were 1,232 honours awarded in the Order of Australia and 386 meritorious awards announced during the same period.

Nominations for honours can be initiated by any member of the ADF, however, it is usually conducted through the individual's chain of command. The Directorate of Honours and Awards provides guidelines on drafting nominations, examples of nominations and readily available support to nominators. There are rigorous levels of reviews and clearances required before the nominations are progressed to the Governor-General for consideration and approval. This includes:

- all nominations being reviewed by an Honours Board, with the board members comprising diverse representation from across the Groups or Services; and
- each nomination considered on its own merit, where the action or service of the individual is considered against the relevant medal instruments.

Additionally, the processing of nominations is to be completed confidentially and the recipient should not be aware of the honour prior to Government House seeking an individual's acceptance of the award. This is an inherent part of the process as the nomination may be considered for a different award type or level as a nomination progresses during a Board's consideration process.

¹ Service awards include the Australian Defence Medal and Defence Long Service awards (including Clasps).

Currently, the nominating chain of command is informed when a nomination is not progressed or considered for a different level of award, with the Honours Board providing advice on how to strengthen the nomination or to consider an alternative level or type of recognition.

Defence honours do not have a quota for operational service (irrespective of the nature of service of the operation); however, there is a Defence self-imposed quota for non-operational service. Unit command teams sometimes state they are frustrated when their nominations are not progressed to award, particularly when the Services do not meet their allocated quota. Honours Boards can only consider nominations presented to them, and feedback indicates that individuals may also be disadvantaged where a nomination does not provide a fulsome word picture or evidence of significant individual contribution.

Defence continues to promote nominations to be diverse, gender balanced and not rank orientated, and encourage all nominations to be advanced through the chain of command, to Service and Group Honours Boards, regardless of their outcome.

Whole-of-government Recognition

Where ADF personnel undertake part of a whole-of-government response to an emergency, eligibility for recognition may be through the award of the National Emergency Medal or the Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal. These medals, instituted under Letters Patent and Regulations, are independent from Defence, with the Governor-General determining eligibility criteria on the recommendation of the Minister with responsibility for the Australian Honours and Awards system. Defence submits nominations for the National Emergency Medal to Government House for assessment prior to the approval of the Governor-General.

Whole-of-government awards are instituted to recognise those who respond directly to significant national and humanitarian emergencies in order to protect life and property, and are only awarded for service during the response phase of the emergency. Recovery efforts are not recognised through whole-of-government awards. As such, these awards do not acknowledge the full capability effect that is collectively required by ADF personnel to deliver the outcomes requested of Defence by the Government, in particular when service is rendered during the recovery phase after an emergency.

Some ADF personnel have expressed frustration in the lack of recognition for their service when they deploy as part of a whole-of-government response or where a member provides strategic support to enable Defence to respond to an emergency or humanitarian operation. Most commonly, ADF personnel seek timely recognition and are disappointed with the delays experienced in issuing the National Emergency Medal.

Defence works closely with the Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat at Government House to address these matters.

ADF personnel have raised the issue of medallic recognition of their service during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government determined that individuals who demonstrated outstanding contributions during Australia's response would be acknowledged through meritorious service awards and recognition in the Order of Australia. However, there was no broad medallic recognition instituted by the Government for the COVID-19 response.

Review

ADF personnel may seek a review of Defence's decision to not recommend them for a Defence honour or award through the Tribunal. In undertaking its review, the Tribunal is bound by the same eligibility criteria that governed the making of the reviewable decision. The Tribunal receives approximately six Defence honours and 17 Defence awards applications per year to review.

Feedback

Defence is aware that some ADF personnel, whether nominator, recipient or observer, are frustrated with honours and awards in regard to the process, timelines, medals policy, eligibility requirements, and/or an individual medal assessment outcome. Some also seek a greater range of recognition to acknowledge their service.

Defence works collaboratively across a broad range of honours and awards stakeholders to consider member feedback to explore whether medals are contemporary and fit for purpose. These discussions inform policy development, institution of new medallic recognition, and is used to improve communications practices around process and policy updates. For example, in 2023 Defence introduced new recognition for ADF service on operations in Africa, through the institution of the Australian Operational Service Medal AFRICA.

(b) The effect of Awards and Honours on Maintaining Morale within the ADF

Reward and recognition contributes to the Defence workplace experience and are key components of the Defence Employee Value Proposition. Recognition, while important, is not the only factor contributing to ADF morale. For example, promotion, pay and conditions, training opportunities, employment opportunities and the Defence Commendation Scheme increase the value exchange with our personnel and support morale and retention.

Research indicates there is a strong correlation between an individual's workplace morale and the recognition they receive. While Defence's research does not specifically ask respondents about the impact of 'honours and awards', it is reasonable to infer that ADF respondents consider the Honours and Awards system when responding to questions about recognition, given the significance of the system for ADF members.

Reward and recognition foster a positive working environment and benefit both Defence and our people by providing a return on an individual's or team's, effort, dedication and work achievements. A strategic objective of the Defence Culture Blueprint is that "Defence values the contribution of ADF, APS and Industry in achieving the Defence Mission". A measurable outcome from this strategic objective is "Defence rewards and recognises individual and team contributions". As we align Enterprise, Group, and Service culture actions under the Defence Culture Blueprint strategic objectives, we will be able to better measure the impact of reward and recognition on morale.

Recognising individual and team contributions to the workplace is an important factor in maintaining morale among the ADF. Between 2019 and 2023, approximately 61 per cent of ADF YSWE Survey respondents who were satisfied with the level of recognition they received reported high morale (see Table 1). Conversely, between 2019 and 2023, only 17 per cent of ADF YSWE Survey respondents who were not satisfied with the level of recognition they received reported high morale. More people who felt valued and recognised for their work in the ADF had high morale (65 per cent) than low morale (13 per cent).

Table 1. 2019 - 2023 YSWE Survey data for ADF, showing levels of morale by response to reward and recognition items.

	I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job.			I feel valued and recognised for the work I do in Defence.		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Low Morale	50%	23%	8%	54%	20%	6%
Moderate	33%	48%	31%	33%	50%	30%
High Morale	17%	29%	61%	13%	29%	65%

Note: totals may not be equal to 100% due to rounding.

In 2022, a Recruitment and Retention Tiger Team was established to identify ways to respond to the recruitment and retention challenges Defence faces. The team consulted extensively with Defence personnel about their experience working in Defence.

Members identified that visual recognition such as the wearing of their medals, helped to tell the story of their service. Junior ADF personnel were also seeking visible recognition that could be worn on a uniform.

In particular, some ADF members felt the Defence Commendation Scheme was considered complex, the nomination process burdensome and the approval process too long. The complexity of the system often resulted in recognition for commendable service not being achieved within a suitable timeframe. Defence has listened to feedback from ADF members and is introducing changes to the Defence Commendation Scheme, including the introduction of a new 'Command Commendation Badge' to be awarded by ADF Command appointees enabling an increase in formal, more timely, recognition at a local level. Policy changes are also being implemented to simplify the timeliness of the commendation process. For example, nominations are to be finalised within 28 days of the nomination date unless operationally impractical. The awarding authority for Bronze Commendations will also now sit with One Star and Band One officers to empower more timely and local recognition, including in the Joint Service environments. The review identified opportunities currently utilised within the individual Services that are of benefit to develop a consistent approach across Defence. These changes will take effect in Quarter 4, 2024.

Honours and awards were identified as an essential component of the tools Commanders have to maintain and improve morale in their units when administered in a timely and transparent capacity. However, if administered in a haphazard way or with apparent lack of consideration, they can have the opposite impact, greatly reducing morale in a unit. An honour or award tells a story of service and members like to see their individual and group efforts recognised.

Timely medallic recognition of service on domestic and international operations through the Honours and Awards system remains important and is a key factor in maintaining and strengthening morale and in our ADF retention efforts.

Any ADF member can be nominated for a Defence honour or decoration, regardless of their rank. To receive a Defence award, honour or decoration is a significant personal achievement. The Honours and Awards system, by its very nature, will always be emotive as some ADF personnel will consider they are more deserving whereas others will not actively seek personal recognition.

(c) Assurance of the Integrity of Awards to Senior Officers for Conduct in the Afghanistan Conflict

The Defence Pay and Conditions Manual² (PACMAN) defines a senior officer as ‘an officer who holds the rank specified in items one to five in Schedule 1 of the *Defence Act 1903* (the Act)’. The equivalent ranks classification (O-Officer and E-Enlisted) is used to refer to a cohort of equivalent rank.

The Act lists the following ranks as senior officers, (O7 and above):

Item	Navy	Army	Air Force
1	Admiral of the Fleet	Field Marshal	Marshal of the Royal Australian Air Force
2	Admiral	General	Air Chief Marshal
3	Vice Admiral	Lieutenant General	Air Marshal
4	Rear Admiral	Major General	Air Vice Marshal
5	Commodore	Brigadier	Air Commodore

Historically and in practice, Defence considers senior officers to be those holding the rank of O6 and above. When an officer reaches the rank of O6, they no longer are a member of their specialisation, rather they are a member of the General Staff and expected to lead and contribute more broadly to the Defence Enterprise. An O6 officer is equivalent to a Captain - Royal Australian Navy, Colonel - Army, and Group Captain - Royal Australian Air Force.

Officers of the ranks of O6 and above during the Afghanistan conflict were in senior command roles, including the Commander Afghanistan Task Group, the Commander and Deputy Commander and the Chief of Staff of JTF633.

Although officers of the rank of O5 deployed in command roles in Afghanistan, Defence does not consider this rank as senior officers. An O5 officer is equivalent to a Commander - Royal Australian Navy, Lieutenant Colonel - Army, and Wing Commander - Royal Australian Air Force.

Upholding the integrity of the nominations process is essential, not just for awards bestowed upon senior officers, but to every individual who is nominated and considered for recognition at a Defence Honours Board.

As part of the honours and awards process, a distinct level of assurance is provided through the institution of an Honours Board, which review each nomination on its individual merit. Robust processes establish a clear and comprehensive expectation of board members, which sets the foundations for transparent and accountable decision-making. On average, board members reflect a combined experience exceeding 3,000 days of operational service, providing a wealth of knowledge in all aspects of service, including on warlike and non-warlike operations, which is essential to determining whether service or actions warrant award, and the appropriate level of award, befitting the level of contribution.

² <https://pay-conditions.defence.gov.au/pacman/chapter-3/part-1a/div-1>

Recognising and nominating individuals for formal acknowledgement through the Honours and Awards system is a key responsibility and privilege at all levels of command. Decisions to recognise individuals of any rank for their gallantry, distinguished or conspicuous service are discretionary, and considered within the operational and strategic context in which the individual's service occurred.

Defence relies upon the experience, knowledge and operational understanding of Commanders to provide context and perspective to all honours nominations. Nominations are progressed through the chain of command function, and through internal Boards, providing an added level of oversight and assurance that each nomination is considered by more than one individual. Each nomination is considered in line with the relevant medal regulations.

Defence Honours Process

Prior to 2007, the single Service Honours Boards considered nominations for both operational and non-operational honours. Operational service nominations were raised by Headquarters Australian Theatre (HQAST). HQAST was established in 1996 as the ADF's first operational level joint headquarters, to provide the ADF with a single headquarters to command the forces of all three Services when deployed on operations. The three Services 'force assigned' their troops to Commander Australian Theatre (COMAST) for the duration of any operational deployments. Prior to the establishment of Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC) in 2004, honours nominations progressed through the Functional Command to the single Service Honours Board for consideration.

To ensure consistency, and in order for nominations to be considered alongside others in the operational context, in 2007, the Chiefs of Service Committee decided that the Chief of Joint Operations, in command of HQJOC, would be responsible for endorsing to CDF all operational honours following their consideration by the HQJOC Honours Board. As HQJOC had oversight of all ADF operations, they were appropriately positioned to review operational honours nominations. Since that time, the single Service Honours Boards have only considered nominations for honours for non-operational service.

Nomination Process

The nomination process for operational honours is the same as that for non-operational honours.

All successful honours nominations, of all ranks, are endorsed by the Chief of Joint Operations (operational service), the Service Chiefs or Chief of Joint Capabilities (for non-operational service), endorsed by CDF, recommended by the Minister with responsibility for the administration of Defence Honours and Awards, and approved by the Governor-General. The Governor-General, on the advice of the Minister, approves the award of medals, honours and decorations in the Australia Honours and Awards system.

Broadly, junior officers and enlisted ranks were more likely to be awarded a Commendation for Distinguished Service or a gallantry decoration for acts of gallant or heroic behaviour in warlike situations. This reflects the nature of their roles, including that they are more often exposed to warfighting operations and therefore appropriately recognised with gallantry decorations.

Senior officers were more likely to be recognised through the Distinguished Service Decorations, appointments in the Order of Australia (Military Division) and Conspicuous Service Decorations. This is a reflection of the nature of the leadership roles undertaken on operations, given the breadth of responsibility and accountability associated with senior levels of command.

Of note:

- More than 39,000 ADF personnel served in support of Afghanistan over the 20 year history of Australia's engagement in the region.
- 519 senior officers deployed which represent 1.3 per cent of ADF personnel.
- 569 honours were awarded.
- 1.5 per cent of all ADF personnel who deployed on operations to support the Afghanistan campaign received an honour.
- 121 awards (21 per cent) of honours were awarded to senior officers.
- No senior officers received gallantry decorations; but they were recognised through the Distinguished Service Decorations, appointments in the Order of Australia (Military Division) and Conspicuous Service Decorations.

Annex C demonstrates all honours awarded for service during the Afghanistan conflict by award and rank at the time of recognition.

Defence Awards

Australian operational and campaign awards specific to service in support of operations in Afghanistan were conferred on all ADF members, regardless of rank, provided they met the qualifying conditions for the award.³

Award name	Number issued since 2001
Australian Active Service Medal with Clasp 'ICAT'	22,132
Clasp 'ICAT' to the Australian Active Service Medal	13,360
Australian Operational Service Medal - Greater Middle East Operation	21,255
Afghanistan Medal	28,537
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Medal with Clasp 'ISAF' (International Security Assistance Force)	17,870
NATO Medal with Clasp 'AFGHANISTAN'	3,968

Tribunal Reviews

Applicants may seek a review by the Tribunal of a decision to not recommend a member for an honour or award for their service in Afghanistan. Reviews of this nature are easier for Defence to support through a robust merit based review as decision-makers and witnesses are more likely to be alive, with some still serving. The contemporaneous record keeping and documented board processes also assist Defence and the Tribunal in reviewing applications.

³ Not all recipients of these operational and campaign awards received them for service in Afghanistan. For example, the Australian Operational Service Medal - Greater Middle East Operation recognises service on operations in Iraq, in the Persian Gulf and on anti-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa; and there were periods (October 2001 to December 2002 and January 2009 to June 2014) when the Afghanistan Medal was issued for service outside of Afghanistan. The Australian Active Service Medal with Clasp 'ICAT' was awarded to personnel deployed on Operation SLIPPER, irrespective of whether they served in Afghanistan or outside of Afghanistan.

The process of reviewing honours awarded for service in Afghanistan is not an anomalous process, and Defence applies a rigorous standard and considered approach to the review of all awards issued to ADF personnel.

(d) The Effect of Changes in Criteria for some Honours and Awards from 'In Action' to 'In Warlike Operations';

With the changing nature of ADF service in the operational environment, a gap was identified in recognition, and the intent of the award of Distinguished Service Decorations evolved in order to provide recognition for service in the contemporary operational context. Changes to the terminology were warranted to enable decorations to be awarded to individuals whose service on warlike operations was considered worthy of recognition.

In January 1991, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II approved the institution of seven operational awards for service in action and on warlike operations. These comprised the Victoria Cross for Australia, the Australian Gallantry Decorations (Star of Gallantry, Medal for Gallantry and Commendation for Gallantry) and the Distinguished Service Decorations (Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished Service Medal and Commendation for Distinguished Service).

In its original form, the Distinguished Service Decorations Regulations provided that awards of the Distinguished Service Cross and Distinguished Service Medal were for distinguished command and leadership, and distinguished leadership respectively, in action. The 'in action' criterion has never applied to the Commendation for Distinguished Service.

The first awards of the Commendation for Distinguished Service (six awards) were announced in November 1991 in a special honours list recognising the 1990-1991 ADF deployment to the Middle East, inclusive of the 1991 Gulf War. The first awards of the Distinguished Service Cross (two awards) and Distinguished Service Medal (one award) were announced in November 1993 in a special honours list recognising the 1992-1993 ADF operation in Somalia.

Neither the Gallantry Decorations Regulations nor the Distinguished Service Decorations Regulations define the term 'in action'. In the case of the Victoria Cross Regulations it would not be necessary because cited acts must occur "in the presence of the enemy".

Between 1999 and 2003, the ADF became engaged in a succession of armed conflicts, commencing with the Australian-led intervention in East Timor in September 1999. This was soon followed by the war on terror from September 2001 and the start of Australia's long-term military presence in Afghanistan; and the Iraq War that commenced in March 2003. A consequential effect was an increase in the number of operational awards being issued to ADF personnel, including Distinguished Service Decorations, for service in these operational theatres.

In light of concerns raised about the use of the Distinguished Service Decorations in the context of the 'in action' criterion, this increased tempo of operations identified a gap between the Distinguished Service Decorations awarded for warlike service 'in action' and the Conspicuous Service Decorations awarded for service in non-warlike situations.

In March 2007, the Chiefs of Service Committee agreed that the term 'in action' in a military context "is the engagement between opposing forces". A member must be physically in a situation involving direct conflict between opposing forces to be determined to be 'in action'. The CDF agreed at the same meeting to initiate action to expand the existing Distinguished Service Decorations by establishing a new group of award to recognise distinguished service not 'in action'.

Defence developed a proposal for a group of Meritorious Service Decorations, to consist of a cross, a medal and a commendation, to specifically recognise service in warlike situations, not 'in action'. This was supported by the then Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence who wrote to the then Prime Minister in August 2007 seeking support to establish the awards. No further progress occurred in light of the 2007 election and change of Government.

Between October 2007 to February 2008, Defence conducted the Defence Honours, Awards and Commendations Policy Review. The purpose of the review under Terms of Reference directed by the then Vice Chief of the Defence Force, was to examine policies and practices; identify anomalies, or implications, arising from current initiatives (of the time); and define contemporary service as it applied to medallic recognition in terms of contemporary operations and activities.

The Review made a number of recommendations including one to establish a family of Meritorious Service Decorations for warlike service not 'in action'.

Following consideration by the Chiefs of Service Committee, the recommendations of the Review were presented by the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support to the Prime Minister in May 2009.

The Parliamentary Secretary noted the Distinguished Service Decorations "do not reflect the reality of the range of circumstances that may occur in the operational environment".

The then Special Minister of State responded on behalf of the Government, noting "[w]hen altering the scope of recognition in the national honours system, the preference should always be to first look for ways of using or adapting existing forms of recognition, to avoid a proliferation of awards which might devalue existing awards and the honours system as a whole". The Special Minister of State agreed there was a gap in the national honours system for the recognition of outstanding performance and achievement of ADF members who, although in warlike situations, are not 'in action'. He considered the best solution to address this was to amend the Regulations for the Distinguished Service Decorations and/or the Conspicuous Service Decorations.

The Chiefs of Service Committee reconsidered the matter in November 2009. The then CDF directed Defence to pursue amendments to the Distinguished Service Decorations Regulations to remove the words 'in action' and align these awards with contemporary ADF service, so that recognition can be provided notwithstanding the circumstances, and that specific references to 'in action' would be reflected in the written citation. The Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support conveyed this outcome to the Special Minister of State in April 2010.

Following a period of consideration and consultation with PM&C and the Attorney-General's Department, the Government recommended the Distinguished Service Decorations Regulations be amended. The amendments were approved by the Sovereign on 13 December 2011. They were formally gazetted on 22 February 2012. The amendments inserted the 'in warlike operations' criterion in place of the 'in action' criterion for the awards of the Distinguished Service Cross and the Distinguished Service Medal. Since that time, the 'in action' criterion applies only to the Australian Gallantry Decorations.

The table at Annex D demonstrates all Distinguished Service Decorations that were awarded under either the 'in action' or 'in warlike operations' provisions, by year and rank, for service during World Wars One and Two, Vietnam, Timor, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan. There have been 83 Distinguished Service Decorations awarded to senior officers, with 249 awarded to all other ranks.

The data includes decorations that were awarded to individuals recommended through the Defence honours nominations process; retrospective awards granted following an historical honours review process conducted by Defence; recommendations made by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal; and recommendations stemming from Government appointed independent review panels⁴.

In order to allow for nominations to be thoroughly considered and progress through the various levels of approval, there is a significant period of time between an initial submission of an honours nomination and the date on which an award is announced in an honours list. This time delay is to ensure all nominations are considered and then progressed through the clearance process. Typically, a call for nominations for an honours list will be issued approximately 12 months before the list is due to be announced. The effect of the amendments to the Distinguished Service Decorations Regulations therefore, were not realised until the Australia Day 2013 Honours list announcement.

The data identifies that following amendments to the terminology made in the Regulations, there was no significant increase in the award of Distinguished Service Decorations. As nominations for Distinguished Service Decorations are considered on individual merit, it is expected that the number of Decorations which are awarded will fluctuate year on year. From late 2014, the nature of the operation in Afghanistan, and Australia's operational tempo changed with Operation SLIPPER transitioning to Operation HIGHROAD, and other operational activities in the Middle East region reverting to non-warlike status. The number of ADF personnel committed to serve on warlike operations in the region reduced significantly, that is reflected in a lesser number of awards being made during 2015 and 2016 than in previous years.

(e) The Operation of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal, including any Potential Improvements;

The Tribunal is an independent statutory body established in 2011 under Part VIIIIC of the *Defence Act 1903* to consider Defence honours and awards matters. This is the only Tribunal of its kind instituted across any of the 56 Commonwealth member countries. Other Commonwealth countries either apply an internal administrative review process or establish inquiries when required. Furthermore, there is no other independent body in place to review other awards in the broader Australian Honours and Awards system.

Defence continues to support the role of an independent Tribunal that can review decisions regarding Defence honours and awards.

The scope of reviews and who can apply for a review by the Tribunal is broad. Currently, anyone can apply to Defence for any Defence honour or award in respect to any service by a current or former serving ADF member. An unsuccessful applicant may apply at any time to the Tribunal for review of a decision refusing to recommend the ADF member concerned, where service was rendered on or after 3 September 1939. In some cases, applicants have no relationship with the affected person under consideration or the affected person's family.

⁴ Report of the Independent Review Panel of the End of War List – Vietnam 1999

Defence Honours

The Tribunal considers whether a person under consideration for an honour meets the minimum requirements of the eligibility criteria of that honour. When Defence is considering ADF personnel for honours there is a rigorous vetting process. Honours Boards apply Defence policy and consider the merits of the nomination in comparison to others to ensure only the most worthy are being recommended for honours. Taking this more rigorous approach protects the integrity of the Defence Honours and Awards system.

Defence Awards

The Tribunal considers whether a person under consideration for a service, operational or foreign award meets the prescribed eligibility criteria of the award. Both Defence and the Tribunal are required to use the medal instruments to determine eligibility for the award.

Potential Improvements

In recent years, Defence and the Tribunal have agreed that reform to the scope of the Tribunal's review function is necessary. Legislative amendments to Part VIII C of the *Defence Act 1903* are considered the most appropriate mechanism to achieve overall improvements to the function of the Tribunal. A number of themes have presented challenges for Defence and the Tribunal.

In 2017, the Tribunal completed its *Inquiry into recognition for Far East Prisoners of War who were killed while escaping or following recapture*. During the Inquiry both Defence and the Tribunal found it difficult to identify evidence through the passage of time. Recommendation Two of the Inquiry supports reform: Section 110V(2) of the *Defence Act 1903* be amended to preclude further applications for medallic recognition with respect to veterans of the Second World War from 3 September 2020. This recommendation has been accepted by the Government.

In 2020, the previous Tribunal Chair wrote to the then Minister for Defence Personnel seeking amendments to the *Defence Act 1903*. The following matters were mutually agreed to by Defence and the Tribunal, which prompted the commencement of consultation to progress Legislative reform:

- The reduction of time frames of the Tribunal's jurisdiction allowing it to focus on recognition for more contemporary service.
- Defining who can make an application to the Tribunal, being the intended recipient of the honour or award, a person in that person's chain of command, a witness, or relative.

Challenges with Historical Records and Different Processes

The Tribunal can review decisions made regarding service rendered after 3 September 1939. This period includes Imperial awards. It may review cases where the person under consideration, or the decision-makers of the day, are no longer alive to explain how or why an honour or award was not issued. Defence acknowledges that records regarding historical Defence honours are inconsistent.

Both Defence and the Tribunal have identified issues with sourcing appropriate evidence to enable contemporary decisions for historical cases. Consequently, reviews by Defence and the Tribunal are currently being undertaken through a contemporary lens where records of a decision from the time the actions are unavailable, cannot be located or do not exist.

Defence recommends that legislative amendments are progressed so that honours, operational, and service awards are only considered to be reviewable for a period of 20 years from when the service occurred or when the relevant operation ceased. This is to ensure the decision-making process and evidence is available. A living current or former serving member may seek at any time, a review for awards recognising length of service. Defence recommends that if a member is deceased, the members' family, next of kin or administrator may apply for review until the member would have reached 100 years of age.

Imperial Awards and Foreign Awards

The *Defence Regulation 2016* (the Regulation) defines the honours and awards currently reviewable by the Tribunal, inclusive of Imperial gallantry and long service awards, and exclusive of foreign awards. ADF personnel are no longer eligible to receive Imperial gallantry awards, nor Imperial long service awards. Except for a few examples of foreign campaign awards that Defence assesses and issues entitlements to, Defence has no authority to determine eligibility to an award established by a foreign government or an international organisation such as the United Nations and NATO. Defence recommends the removal of Imperial awards from the Regulation. It also recommends that foreign awards are only reviewable by the Tribunal where Defence has a formal authority to make decisions on eligibility.

Who can Apply to the Tribunal for a Review of a Defence Honour?

Current Defence policy regarding nominations for Defence honours is that:

- Nominations for Defence honours are considered as part of an in-confidence process following nomination by either an eyewitness or someone more senior in the chain of command;
- Honours are to bestow recognition on the individual who has given service worthy of recognition; and
- Honours are a discretionary gift from the Sovereign and there is no entitlement to an honour.

An application from a member for a Defence honour for their own actions does not align with the above policy position and intent nor with the values of service in the ADF.

Accordingly, Defence is of the view that a person should not be able to 'self-nominate' for an honour and recommends that a refusal to consider a 'self-nomination' should not be a reviewable decision.

Defence recommends that applications to the Tribunal to review a decision by Defence should only be accepted if it is submitted by someone who is or was more senior in the chain of command, or who witnessed the relevant action. For the review process, the initiator of the review may be required to provide the consent of the person being considered for the honour, or an immediate family member of the person. The inclusion of an immediate family member also covers circumstances where the affected person may require emotional support, is deceased or is otherwise unable to give consent.

Tribunal Powers

The *Defence Act 1903* enables the Tribunal to make an extensive range of recommendations. Currently, it reviews and makes recommendations about matters that are not strictly related to the decision-making process for Defence honours and awards, including nature of service⁵, or the reason for a person's discharge⁶. These matters are generally extrinsic to Defence decisions regarding Defence honours and awards.

⁵ [Inquiry into medallic recognition for service with Rifle Company Butterworth](#) includes the Tribunal's recommendation on Nature of Service.

⁶ [Newton and the Department of Defence re: Mallett \[2022\] DHAAT 2 \(21 March 2022\)](#), includes the Tribunal's determination of 'mistreatment'.

Considerations regarding nature of service and the reasons for a person's discharge require a rigorous administrative process and senior levels of approval before they can proceed. Under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* the Minister determines the nature of service of Defence operations under the recommendations of Defence. These determinations establish eligibility to condition of service and repatriation entitlements.

A 'Nature of Service' classification is based upon the exposure of ADF personnel to the risk of harm from hostile forces and must be determined for all ADF operations to enable ADF personnel to access appropriate conditions of service, including veterans' benefits. Nature of service classification are currently 'peacetime', 'warlike' and 'non-warlike'. In accordance with the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* and the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*, the Minister for Defence is responsible for determining 'warlike' and 'non-warlike' nature of service for ADF operations. There is no direct correlation between the nature of service classification and medallic recognition. For example, if 'non-warlike' or 'warlike' classification is deemed appropriate for an operation, Defence makes the recommendation to the Minister for Defence for approval. A separate process is then instigated to determine the conditions of service package for the operation (conducted by Defence People Policy and Employment Conditions), and any medallic recognition that may be applied is then considered separately again (by the Directorate of Honours and Awards).

Defence is of the view that the Tribunal was established specifically to review eligibility for Defence honours and awards; it was not established to review the nature of service of ADF operations or the reasons for a person's discharge.

Accordingly, the Tribunal should make recommendations to the Minister only about whether the reviewable decision for a Defence honour or award was consistent with the eligibility criteria at the time the reviewable decision was made. Defence is of the view that decisions regarding the nature of service of ADF operations or a person's discharge are not within the Tribunal's jurisdiction.

(f) Any Potential Improvements to the Defence Honours and Awards System

To ensure awards are fit for purpose, contemporary and reflect the changing nature of Defence service, Defence regularly consults with relevant stakeholders to review avenues available for medallic recognition for ADF personnel, and administration and policy matters.

Relevant areas within Defence work closely to review current operations that may meet the threshold for medallic recognition. Notwithstanding the benefits of medallic recognition to the Employee Value Proposition and morale, each operation is unique and the circumstances under which service is rendered can differ greatly. Operations are considered in isolation, and consideration of the nature of service, operational assignment and external conflicts occurs to ensure medallic recognition is appropriate.

Recommendations or amendments to awards that Defence administers must align with recognition principles in the broader Australian Honours system in order to maintain the prestige and integrity of awards.

Defence liaises with its counterparts in the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand in regards to the administration of their respective Honours and Awards systems and when considering policy amendments or new recognition.

Review of the Defence Honours and Awards System

The Defence Honours and Awards system has matured since its inception, to adapt and change specifically in response to a fluid operational tempo. Since its introduction, there have been a number of independent reviews into medallic recognition, and reviews by Defence and the Tribunal, some signifying change in the guidelines and policies for the issue of medals.

Awareness of Honours and Awards

Defence acknowledges that there is a requirement to expand the opportunities to raise awareness of honours and awards among ADF personnel at all levels. This would assist in broadening the understanding of the Defence Honours and Awards system, inform and demonstrate best practice to increase transparency and further provide assurance of the integrity of the nomination process. Subsequently, increased awareness may give effect to increased diversity of nominations across gender and rank, and therefore an increase in nominations.

The Defence Honours and Awards Manual provides overarching advice to Defence on honours and awards matters. The manual is currently being refreshed and will transition to a Defence Honours, Awards and Recognition Policy document, providing contemporary updates to provide clear and consistent policy advice for ADF personnel and decision-makers.

Separating Medals and Financial Benefits

Honours and awards are established and instituted under Letters Patent and Regulations approved by the Sovereign. They are entirely independent of conditions of service, nature of service and repatriation entitlements. Successive governments, Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs have long held the position that the nature of service classifications, veterans' entitlements and medallic recognition are each distinctly separate matters. Medallic recognition and veterans' entitlements are made under independent regulations and legislation and subject to differing conditions.

Succeeding the Australian Active Service Medal (awarded for service on warlike operations declared in the medal Instruments), and Australian Service Medal (awarded for service on non-warlike operations declared in the medal Instruments), the Australian Operational Service Medal (AOSM) framework was introduced in 2012.

The AOSM was instituted to recognise service on warlike, non-warlike and hazardous peacetime operations, and to dissociate the link between medals and benefits. Since the establishment of the framework, six awards have been introduced: AOSM Border Protection, AOSM Greater Middle East Operation (GMEO), AOSM Civilian (awarded with Clasps to denote operations), AOSM Special Operations, AOSM Counter Terrorism/Special Recovery and AOSM Africa. Each of these awards recognise ADF service across operations of varying nature, therefore no distinction can be drawn to associate nature of service conditions with the award of the AOSM.

Affirming Defence's policy that there is no alignment or direct linkage between medallic recognition and conditions that attract associated financial benefits, including veteran entitlements, provides clear guidance to ADF personnel and the veteran community seeking to create a nexus between the two matters.

Legislative Reform

Continuing to recognise the service and sacrifice ADF members make is vitally important. Critical to this is a contemporary review body that can rely on accurate records and decision-makers of the day to assist in completing merit based reviews. The current Act provides for reviews of decisions made after 3 September 1939. Challenges in obtaining accurate records or the option to speak with decision-makers of the day impacts the ability to review actions and service up to 85 years ago.

Applying a time limit on when reviews can be undertaken and who can apply, will assist with reviews and strengthen the integrity of the Honours and Awards system by ensuring decision-makers are strongly supported by records. The proposed legislative reform to amend aspects of Part VIIIIC of the *Defence Act 1903* will ensure a contemporary fit for purpose review body remains accessible for ADF members, veterans, eye-witnesses, their families or next of kin.

While proposed reform to the Tribunal will see historical service removed from reviews, it does not diminish any historical service or the ability for the Government and all Australians to honour and remember veterans' service.

Both the Tribunal and Defence agree reform is required. Proposing a boundary on who can apply, what period of service is reviewable and what recommendations the Tribunal may make are practical measures that can be implemented in the near future.

The Government is considering amendments to the *Defence Act 1903* in relation to these matters.

(g) Any Related Matters

The opportunity for Defence to recognise the unique demands of service through honours and awards is a privilege. The Defence Honours and Awards system has a substantial and positive effect on ADF culture by providing formal acknowledgement of an individual's commitment to serve, and the outstanding work, leadership and behaviours of ADF personnel.

While this submission is primarily focused on honours and awards, alongside reward and recognition, the Defence's Employee Value Proposition contributes to a member's individual experience of service in the ADF, including workplace experiences, career and personal development opportunities, pay and benefits.

Defence is charged with, and is committed, to ensuring the appropriate policies and practices are in place to support accountable decision-making, in order to provide a platform for assurance in upholding the integrity of the Honours and Awards system.

Defence remains available to assist the Senate Inquiry Committee to respond to any related matters raised during the course of the Inquiry.

Defence Recognition through the Australian Honours and Awards System

The Imperial System

From pre-Federation to 1975, Australians were recognised through the United Kingdom's Imperial system of honours and awards. The Imperial system applied across many Commonwealth countries, but was administered independently by each country.

Under the Imperial system, Australians were recommended for awards or decorations by Australian authorities but the final arbiter for the award of decorations was the British Crown and its representatives.

Breaking from the Imperial System

In December 1972, the Whitlam Government announced it would cease making recommendations for Imperial honours for Commonwealth service, including for service in the Australian Defence Force. In February 1975, the Government introduced the Australian Honours and Awards system, marking the first step of Australia's departure from the Imperial Honours and Awards system.

Between 1975 and 1992, both the Imperial and Australian systems operated in tandem, as the Australian States maintained their links to the Imperial system. In 1976, the Fraser Government re-introduced Imperial honours and awards for Commonwealth service, resulting in Australian Defence Force personnel receiving awards under each system. That policy was ended by the Hawke Government in 1983, and by 1992 all of the Australian States had agreed to cease making recommendations for Imperial Honours and Awards and to exclusively use the Australian Honours and Awards system. The 1990-91 Gulf crisis was the first conflict for which awards were issued entirely under the Australian Honours and Awards system, including some honours and decorations.

The Australian System today

The Australian Honours and Awards system recognises citizens, including military members for their excellence, achievement or meritorious service and contributions to our society. It is administered across three portfolios: the Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat at Government House, the Parliamentary and Government Branch at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Directorate of Honours and Awards at the Department of Defence.

The system was established in February 1975 through the creation of the Order of Australia, the Australian Bravery Decorations and the National Medal. The Australian system has now grown to include 60 awards and will mark its 50th anniversary in February 2025. There are several categories of honours and awards that a civilian or military member may receive.

These include:

- Awards and appointments within the Order of Australia;
- Australian Gallantry Decorations;
- Distinguished Service Decorations;

- Conspicuous Service Decorations;
- Australian Bravery Decorations;
- Meritorious Awards;
- Operational and Service Awards; and
- Unit Citations

There is no overarching Act of Parliament in Australia that governs the administration of honours and awards. Each medal in the Australian Honours and Awards system has associated legislative instruments. These include Letters Patent, Regulations, Declarations and Determinations. These instruments define and determine the qualifying criteria for each individual medal and associated devices such as bars and clasps.

Amendments to Letters Patent and Regulations require approval of the Sovereign. Amendments to medal instruments such as Declarations and Determinations may be approved by the Minister responsible for the administration of Defence honours and awards and the Governor-General where delegated.

The only Australian legislation that deals specifically with honours and awards is the *Defence Act 1903* (the Act). Part VIIIIC of the Act establishes the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal as an independent statutory body to consider Defence honours and awards matters. Part VII of the Act prescribes certain offences including the improper use of service decorations.

The Role of Defence

Defence issues campaign and service medals for Australian Defence Force personnel for service from World War One to the current day. These medals are issued under both the Imperial and Australian honours systems to eligible members, veterans' and families.

Defence is responsible for recommending, rather than approving, Australian Defence Force personnel for the National Emergency Medal and the Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal.

Defence is also responsible for recommending, rather than approving, Australian Defence Force personnel for honours in the twice yearly honours lists announced on Australia Day and The King's Birthday.

The delegation to award Imperial campaign medals for Australian service in the period commencing with World War One and ending with the Vietnam War, is vested in the Director Honours and Awards.

The delegation to award the Australian Defence Medal is vested in the Chief of the Defence Force.

The Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia approves all other awards with the exception of the Victoria Cross for Australia, which is approved by the Sovereign on the recommendation of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Prime Minister and the Governor-General.

Defence Honours and Awards

Imperial Awards

- 1914 Star
- 1914-15 Star
- 1939-45 Star
- Anzac Commemorative Medallion
- Africa Star
- Air Crew Europe Star
- Arctic Star
- Atlantic Star
- Australia Service Medal 1939-45
- British War Medal 1914-20
- Burma Star
- Defence Medal
- France and Germany Star
- General Service Medal 1918-62
- General Service Medal 1962
- Italy Star
- King's South Africa Medal
- Korea Medal
- Mercantile Marine Medal
- Naval General Service Medal 1915-62
- Pacific Star
- Queen's South Africa Medal
- Victory Medal
- Vietnam Medal
- War Medal 1939-45

Defence Honours and Decorations

- Commendation for Distinguished Service
- Commendation for Gallantry
- Conspicuous Service Cross
- Conspicuous Service Medal
- Distinguished Service Cross
- Distinguished Service Medal
- Medal for Gallantry
- Meritorious Unit Citation
- Nursing Service Cross
- Order of Australia – Military Division
- Star of Gallantry

- Unit Citation for Gallantry
- Victoria Cross for Australia

Australian Service and Operational Awards

- Afghanistan Medal
- Anniversary of National Service 1951-1972 Medal
- Australian Active Service Medal (with clasps)
- Australian Active Service Medal 1945-1975 (with clasps)
- Australian Cadet Forces Service Medal
- Australian Defence Medal
- Australian General Service Medal for Korea
- Australian Operational Service Medal - Africa
- Australian Operational Service Medal - Border Protection
- Australian Operational Service Medal - Civilian (with clasps)
- Australian Operational Service Medal - CT/SR
- Australian Operational Service Medal - Greater Middle East Operation
- Australian Operational Service Medal - Special Operations
- Australian Service Medal (with clasps)
- Australian Service Medal 1945-1975 (with clasps)
- Champion Shots Medal
- Defence Force Service Medal
- Defence Long Service Medal
- International Force East Timor Medal
- Iraq Medal
- Reserve Force Decoration
- Reserve Force Medal
- Rhodesia Medal
- Vietnam Logistic and Support Medal

Foreign Awards

- Multinational Force and Observers Medal
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization Medal with Clasp 'AFGHANISTAN'
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization Medal with Clasp 'ISAF'
- Pingat Jasa Malaysia
- Republic of Korea War Service Medal
- Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal
- Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation
- Saudi Arabian Medal for the Liberation of Kuwait
- Timor-Leste Solidarity Medal
- United Nations Service Medal (Korea)

Whole of Government Awards

- Australian Sports Medal
- Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal (with clasps)
- National Emergency Medal (with clasps)
- National Medal
- Public Service Medal

Badges

- General Service Badge
- Operational Service Badge
- Returned from Active Service Badge

HONOURS AWARDED FOR SERVICE IN AFGHANISTAN¹ BY AWARD AND RANK²

	VC	AO	SG	DSC	AM	CSC	NSC	MG	DSM	CSM	CG	CDS	OAM	BY RANK
General (E)														0
Lieutenant General (E)				1										1
Major General (E)		1		11		1						3		16
Brigadier (E)		2		6	6				8			27		49
Colonel (E)				7	3	2			12	1		32		57
SUB-TOTAL³		3		25	9	3			20	1		62		123
Lieutenant Colonel (E)				22	4	4			7	1		36		74
Major (E)				9				1	34	1		49	1	95
Captain (E)				1	4			1	30			25		61
Lieutenant (E)									2			3		5
Warrant Officer Class One (E)						1						2	3	6
Warrant Officer Class Two (E)								2	7	2		14	2	27
Sergeant (E)			3	1				6	13	1	3	24	1	52
Corporal (E)	3						2	13	10	1	14	31	1	75
Lance Corporal								4			2	2		8
Able Seaman/Leading Aviator														0
Private (E)	1		3					8			16	15		43
SUB-TOTAL	4	0	6	33	8	5	2	35	103	6	35	201	8	446
TOTAL AWARDS⁴	4	3	6	58	17	8	2	35	123	7	35	263	8	569

¹ Data is representative of all awards issued, including the award of Bars to the Distinguished Service Decorations

² Data is representative of the ADF member's rank at the time of being awarded the medal

³ Total awards made to senior officers holding the rank of O6 and above

⁴ There will be discrepancies between this data and information on Afghanistan honours that are publicly available. Due to operational sensitives and individual discretion not all awards are made available

AWARD CODES

Award Code:	Award Name:
VC	Victoria Cross for Australia
AO	Officer of the Order of Australia
SG	Star of Gallantry
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross
AM	Member of the Order of Australia
CSC	Conspicuous Service Cross
NSC	Nursing Service Cross
MG	Medal of Gallantry
DSM	Distinguished Service Medal
CSM	Conspicuous Service Medal
CG	Commendation for Gallantry
CDS	Commendation for Distinguished Service
OAM	Medal of the Order of Australia

Distinguished Service Decorations¹ awarded to Senior Officer and Other ranks

Year	DSC		DSM		Total
	Senior Officers	Other ranks	Senior Officers	Other ranks	
1991	-	-	-	-	-
1992	-	-	-	-	-
1993	1	1	-	1	3 (Somalia)
1994	-	-	-	-	-
1995	-	-	-	-	-
1996	-	-	-	-	-
1997	-	-	-	-	-
1998	-	-	1	21	22 (Vietnam)
1999	-	-	-	-	-
2000	1	5	-	6	12 (Timor)
2001	1	1	-	3	5
2002	1	4	-	4	9
2003	2	4	1	10	17
2004	-	1	-	2	3
2005	3	-	-	5	8
2006	2	1	-	3	6
2007	1	4	-	5	10
2008	2	6	1	10	19
2009	2	6	-	7	15
2010	-	4	-	16	20
2011	3	1	-	12	16
2012	4	4	1	14	23
2013	1	4	1	14	20
2014	3	3	5	10	21
2015	2	1	2	6	11
2016	4	1	1	4	10
2017	7	2	5	6	20
2018	2	2	4	7	15
2019	4	3	4	8	19
2020	3	1	1	4	9
2021	-	-	2	1	3
2022	1	1	3	6	11
2023	-	2	1	1	4
2024	-	-	-	1	1
TOTAL	50	62	33	187	332²

¹ Letters Patent and Amendments of the Regulations governing the award of the Distinguished Service Decorations Approved by the Sovereign on 13 December 2011, Gazetted 22 February 2012

² Data is representative of all awards issued, including the award of Bars to the Distinguished Service Decorations.