



PRIME MINISTER

26 January 1986

The Federal Government has agreed on a number of new awards to enhance and develop the Australian honours system.

The new awards will be established to enable recognition of outstanding service by particular groups in the community and members of the Defence Force in operational and non-operational service.

They will be in addition to other awards already available within the Order of Australia, the Bravery Decorations system and the National Medal instituted in 1975 and the Defence Force Service Awards instituted in 1982.

The establishment of the new awards will build on the existing elements of the Australian honours system to give Australia, for the first time, its own comprehensive indigenous system of honours and awards.

This is in line with Government policy.

The Government has made no recommendations for honours and awards in the Imperial system.

The Queen has agreed in principle to the Government's recommendations for the new awards.

There will be a new range of awards for Defence Force personnel which will be common to all ranks and services.

In view of the historical importance of the Victoria Cross to Australians, the decoration will remain as the highest award for gallantry in action.

The Victoria Cross will be established within the Australian honours system by the issue of Australian Letters Patent for the award by The Queen of Australia.

Future recommendations for the decoration will be made by the Australian Government direct to The Queen for her approval as Queen of Australia.

Other Defence awards will be available in war-time to recognise gallantry and outstanding service.

Awards for non-operational service and another for nurses in the Defence Force will also be established.

Several other awards will be introduced for particular service within the community and to the nation.

They will include medals for distinguished service by members of Australian Fire Services, for extraordinary service by Antarctic expeditioners and for outstanding public service.

A new award for distinguished service by members of Australian Police Forces had already been announced last May.

The formal criteria for the new awards will be announced when The Queen approves the relevant new Letters Patent and Regulations governing the various medals and decorations.

The regulations for the National Medal will also be extended to allow members of the Australian Protective Service and Correctional and Emergency Services to qualify.

Members of Police Forces, Fire and Ambulance Services are presently eligible for the National Medal after completing 15 years diligent service.

A number of amendments to the Constitution of the Order of Australia will also be made, including:

- . removal of the provision to appoint Knights and Dames. (This will not affect existing appointees at this level);
- . provision for the representation of the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory on the Council for the Order of Australia in addition to the existing State Government representation;
- . raising non-Government representation on the Council from three to seven; and
- . a substantial increase in the annual allocation of awards available from about 400 to 700.

Australia will also move to have its own regulations governing the acceptance by Australians of foreign awards.

Some other matters affecting the administration of the Australian Honours system will also be introduced.

A schedule of the new awards is attached.

Attachment

A. SCHEDULE OF NEW GENERAL AWARDS

1. POLICE SERVICE

- . For distinguished service -

An Australian Police Medal (announced on 31 May 1985)

2. FIRE SERVICE

- . For distinguished service -

An Australian Fire Service Medal

3. POLAR EXPEDITIONERS

- . For extraordinary service in the Antarctic Region -

An Australian Antarctic Medal

4. PUBLIC SERVICE

- . For outstanding service -

An Australian Public Service Medal

B. SCHEDULE OF NEW DEFENCE FORCE AWARDS

1. FOR OPERATIONAL SERVICE

- . For gallantry in action -
 - Victoria Cross
 - An Australian Star of Gallantry
 - An Australian Gallantry Medal
 - An Australian Commendation for Gallantry

- . For distinguished service in operations -
 - An Australian Distinguished Service Cross
 - An Australian Distinguished Service Medal
 - An Australian Commendation for Distinguished Service

- . Unit citations for operational service -
 - An Australian Unit Citation for Gallantry
 - An Australian Meritorious Unit Citation

- . *For service in minor campaigns -
 - An Australian Active Service Medal

*In accordance with established tradition, separate medals will be struck for each major campaign to recognise service in major conflicts, if and when the need arises in the future.

2. FOR NON-OPERATIONAL SERVICE

- . For service in peacekeeping and other military, but non war-like operations -

An Australian Service Medal
(announced on 23 September 1985)

- . For outstanding achievement or devotion to duty (non-operational) -

An Australian Conspicuous Service Cross

An Australian Commendation for Conspicuous Service

- . For champion rifle shots -

An Australian Medal for Champion Shots of the Defence Force

3. NURSING AWARD FOR OPERATIONAL AND NON-OPERATIONAL SERVICE

- . For outstanding service by nurses in the Defence Force in both operational and non-operational situations -

An Australian Nursing Service Cross

All of the above awards will be established by new Letters Patent issued by The Queen of Australia.