



# PRIME MINISTER

13/95

**STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP**

**RECOGNITION FOR WWII DEFENDERS OF DARWIN AND VETERANS OF THE SYRIAN CAMPAIGN**

27<sup>th</sup> Feb, 1995

I am pleased to announce that defenders of Darwin during the Japanese bombing, and previously unrecognised Australian servicemen who took part in the Syrian Campaign are to receive campaign awards.

As we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, it is fitting that these two groups of Australian veterans will at last receive their due recognition and that Australia will thereby reclaim some of the history of her involvement in World War II.

Her Majesty The Queen has, at my request, approved the expansion of conditions under which two campaign stars, the 1939-45 Star and the Africa Star, are awarded. Eligible veterans should be able to receive their awards by Anzac Day this year.

Expanding the conditions for the awards was one of the recommendations of last year's Committee of Inquiry into Defence and Defence-related Awards chaired by General Peter Gration AC OBE.

The Committee considered there were parallels between the intense air war fought over Darwin and the Battle of Britain and Malta. Australian aircraft were often outnumbered and expected to repel an enemy believed at the time to be intent on invading Australia, and like Malta, Darwin was isolated, difficult to supply and under prolonged attack.

Personnel who served in the Darwin area during the time of the Japanese bombing (19 February 1942 - 12 November 1943) and who meet eligibility requirements will receive the 1939-45 Star, a medal which they have been seeking for 50 years.

It is fitting that approval to issue this medal has occurred so recently after Australia remembered the 261 people who were killed in air raids on Darwin which began on 19 February 1942.

The committee also recommended that all Australian servicemen who participated in the Syrian Campaign (8 June - 11 July 1941) and who did not otherwise receive the Africa Star should now receive the medal.

Because of its brevity, the Syrian Campaign had been excluded as qualifying service for the award. The Committee of Inquiry found that the intensity and importance of the campaign more than compensated for its brevity, and the Government has now taken steps to ensure that the Africa Star will be awarded to the campaign's veterans.

**CANBERRA**

**27 February, 1995**

**ATTACHMENT**

Persons who wish to lodge claims for either the 1939-45 Star or Africa Star should contact the appropriate Service Records Office as follows:

**Army**

Medals Section  
Soldier Career Employment Management Agency  
Central Army Records Office  
GPO Box 393D  
MELBOURNE VIC 3001      Tel: (03) 326 5633

**Airforce**

Directorate  
Administrative Review  
Air Force Office  
Department of Defence  
PO Box E33  
Queen Victoria Terrace  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Attention HA1 (E-3-14)      Tel: (06) 265 2388

**Navy**

Director  
Naval Personal Services  
Medals Section  
Navy Office  
Department of Defence  
D-3-32A  
Russell Offices  
CANBERRA ACT 2600      Tel: (06) 265 3321

**Merchant Mariners**

Marine Crews  
Maritime Safety Authority  
PO Box 272  
World Trade Centre  
MELBOURNE VIC 3005      Tel: (03) 685 5777  
Fax: (03) 685 5700