

# **THE CORRECT WEARING OF NATIONAL MEDALS, SERVICE MEDALS, ACCOUTREMENTS, RETURNED FROM ACTIVE SERVICE BADGE (RASB), PINS, NAME PLATES AND CIVILIAN BADGES**

## **Introduction**

For 300 years (Waterloo Medal 1815) medals within the Imperial (British) honours system have been regularly awarded by a grateful nation to recognise service by members of its armed forces. This tradition has continued with the Australian honours system since 1975. This service may be campaign/operational service, long service, gallantry and distinguished service or meritorious peacetime achievement.

This paper provides details of the rules and protocols that are designed to ensure the integrity and value of official medals, and to assist those who wish to 'do the right thing' when wearing service medals, military accoutrements, and other items such as the Returned from Active Service Badge (RASB), civilian badges and lapel pins, with civilian attire.

## **Legislation and protocols**

The *Defence Act 1903*, Sections 80A and 80B provide that it is an offence for a person to represent themselves as a returned serviceman or to wear a service decoration that was not conferred on that person.

If you were not issued an official medal - such as the Vietnamese Campaign Medal - you are not entitled to wear it. To do so is a Commonwealth offence. If you believe you have a legitimate claim to an award, pursue this through the appropriate authority. Don't wear it unless and until it is approved.

Beyond these cases, there are no enforceable rules. There are, however, protocols and guidelines established for the wearing of medals. While our Association can't force our members to abide with traditional protocols that apply to these matters, we should all have enough personal pride to wear only what we were officially awarded, in the proper fashion, without trying to enhance our service with 'unawarded bling' and 'tinnies'.

The Services have published rules for wearing of medals and accoutrements on uniform. While these have limited application to civilian dress, they do provide a useful standard for former members.

Traditions evolve over time, and what we have represented here is the currently accepted best practice.

## **Full-size medals**

The full-size medals of national and approved foreign awards are worn on the left breast with the top of the ribbons midway between the shoulder and breast pocket. Females wear their medals in similar fashion depending on style of dress worn.

These medals are worn during daylight events on occasions shown below:

- At ANZAC Services, including the Dawn Service, and Marches.
- On Remembrance Day Services and Marches.
- At Unit and/or Association Commemorative events e.g. Vietnam Veterans Day, Long Hai Day.
- At the funeral of a serviceman or ex-serviceman when requested by the member's family.
- As an invited guest at a military parade where the troops on parade are wearing ceremonial dress and wearing medals, unless requested otherwise.
- At official functions such as award or naturalisation or Australia Day ceremonies, formal lunches etc.

## **Miniature medals**

Miniature medals are worn to dinners or events such as Regimental Dining-In Night or other formal dinners that occur after 6 pm and when evening dress, mess dress, dinner jacket or lounge suit or equivalent female attire is ordered or requested.

Miniatures of national awards are worn on the left, generally on the lapel, although if the number of medals makes this inconvenient, they should be worn on the coat or jacket in the same position as full-sized medals.

## **Accoutrements**

Accoutrements are non-medallic awards such as the Infantry Combat Badge (ICB), Army Combat Badge (ACB) and insignia of Unit Citations. The ICB/ACB is worn centrally above the medals. The insignia of Unit Citations have no specified position, but the Army dress instructions state that they are worn on the right breast in uniform. In civilian dress members and former members of the Army wear the insignia on the right, on the lapel of the suit coat or jacket. Navy members should conform to their Dress Manual. Accoutrements are NOT to be worn other than with medals.

## **Medals worn by the Next of Kin (NOK)**

The NOK of a deceased serviceman or woman may wear official medals on the right breast on appropriate commemorative occasions when medals are worn.

Decorations worn as a neck badge must not be worn by NOK at any time.

## **Returned From Active Service Badge (RASB)**

The RASB indicates that the wearer has been on Active Service. The RASB is NOT worn with medals, as the medals themselves make such service plainly evident.

## **Lapel pins representing awards**

Lapel pins are provided with some awards in the Australian Honours System, for example, the Order of Australia. These are worn with civilian clothing to indicate that the wearer has received an award. When the actual award is worn, the lapel pin is not worn, as the award itself is then self-evident.

Only one pin, the most senior, or the pin most appropriate to the occasion, is worn.

## **Nameplates**

Nameplates are worn at informal association gatherings to help our members in identifying each other after long absences. They are NOT worn in conjunction with medals.

## **Unit and Ex-Service Organisation (ESO) Badges**

While it has historically been discouraged, there is growing trend for Unit or ESO badges to be worn with medals and accoutrements.

We suggest you select one badge for the left lapel that is most appropriate to the occasion. This might be the most senior organisation or a unit badge should the event involve the unit association.

## **State awards**

Awards made by States and Territories to members of uniformed organisations such as Police, Ambulance, Fire Brigade and Emergency Services, or for bravery, are worn on the right breast. Government House advice is that only awards listed in the [Order of Wear](#) should be worn on the left, so check the Order of Wear and the State regulations. It is known that some states are allowing their awards to be worn on the left by their uniformed organisations. This may also apply to civilian dress in those cases to avoid having separate medal sets.

## **Foreign medals**

There are many examples of foreign medals being approved for acceptance and wearing by Australian servicemen and women. Under the current guidelines that are published on the website of the Governor-General those awards listed in the schedule of approved awards may be worn by those who have been awarded these medals. While not all foreign medals may be approved by the Chief of the Defence Force for wearing on uniform, such restrictions do not apply to civilian dress, except for serving members wearing civilian dress on duty.

While many in the US claim that the South Vietnamese Government-In-Exile approved all to wear the medal of the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, this is not the case in Australia. To wear this award unlawfully is to denigrate the service of those who were officially awarded for acts of gallantry and consequently recognised by the Australian Government.

## Privately or commercially produced medals

Privately or commercially produced medals are not part of the official national honours system. They probably originated with the memento medal produced by the 'Rats of Tobruk'. This was later followed by the 'Front Line Service Medal' that was intended as an unofficial recognition of those who had rendered front line infantry service. There are now many of these types of medal available world-wide. Some were originally devised when there was no recognition of, for example, National Service.

These purchased, commemorative, or so-called 'vanity' medals are NOT to be worn in conjunction with issued medals. These make nice mementos, but they are not part of our official awards system, so leave them at home, they denigrate the awards that you DO have. The <http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au> website suggests if you must wear them, they are to be worn separately on the RIGHT.

## Other badges and symbols

It is appropriate to wear other badges and symbols such as the Long Tan Cross, Agent Orange teardrops and so on, on a denim jacket or similar, in an informal setting. It is NOT appropriate to wear them in conjunction with authorised medals and accoutrements.

A sprig of rosemary is now often worn on ANZAC Day, and a red poppy on Remembrance Day.

## Further information

Further information is available from the following online sources:

Defence Honours and Awards: <http://www.defence.gov.au/medals>

Government House: <https://www.gg.gov.au/australian-honours-and-awards-secretariat-0>

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet: <http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au>

## Summary

Full-sized medals	Daylight hours, worn on the LEFT by those awarded
Miniature medals	Evening, on the LEFT by those awarded
Accoutrements	Only when medals are worn, conform to Service placement.
Next of Kin	Medals worn on the RIGHT
RASB	Only when medals are NOT worn,
Lapel Pins	NOT with medals, wear one pin only, the most senior or appropriate
Nameplates	NOT in conjunction with medals
Unit/ESO Badges	Choose one
State/Territory Awards	On the RIGHT, but check the Order of Wear and State rules
Unearned Awards	NOT to be worn. It is a Commonwealth offence to do so
Purchased Awards	Really? Separately on the RIGHT if you feel you have to wear them
Other badges, symbols	Rosemary or poppy only, otherwise NOT in conjunction with medals.