

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS

10.1 In this Chapter the Working Party's conclusions are extracted from the material in the preceding chapters, which address the tasks set by the Terms of Reference and the Methodology developed to guide the conduct of the Review. The Working Party will also provide general conclusions which are relevant extensions from this coverage of the complex issue of medal recognition.

Conclusions Relevant to the Terms of Reference

Access to the Australian Active Service Medal 1945–1975 for Post-Armistice Korean Service

10.2 It is not possible to make a case for warlike service in post-Armistice Korean service. The United Nations Command measures in force were intended to prevent any military action which would put at risk the stability of the military Armistice. There is no evidence of military objectives other than the maintenance of the stability of the military Armistice.

10.3 In the light of the evidence, the Working Party could not support the proposition that the service of Australian forces in Korea after the Armistice on 27 July 1953 meets the key condition of warlike service of the criteria of eligibility for the Australian Active Service Medal 1945–1975.

Access to the Returned from Active Service Badge for Post-Armistice Korean Service

10.4 The circumstances of the deployment, taken with the conditions experienced during the demanding service in operations in Korea during the period from 28 July 1953 until 19 April 1956, meet interpretations of general and specific conditions of eligibility over the history of the Badge and the Working Party concludes that this service warrants recognition by the award of the Returned from Active Service Badge.

How Australian Servicemen and Women who served in Post-Armistice Korea should be recognised

10.5 Taking note of the encouragement to interpret the Terms of Reference freely to give effect to the wish of the Minister to be advised how those Australian servicemen and women who served in post-Armistice Korea should be recognised, the Working Party reached the conclusion that if there are to be even-handedness and fairness in the recognition of all 1945–1975 service, it needs to be recognised that conditions experienced during the more demanding service in Korea during the period from 28 July 1953 until 19 April 1956 warrant recognition beyond the Australian Service Medal 1945–75 with clasp 'KOREA'.

10.6 The Working Party has concluded that it is appropriate to institute the Australian General Service Medal for Korea. There would be no clasp, since service

in Korea for the period 28 July 1953 to 19 April 1956 would be the only service recognised by this newly instituted medal. The period of eligibility should be 30 days in the prescribed operation.

10.7 The factor of 'double-medalling' in the 1945–1975 period is well-known and this award would be justified because of these precedents.

Commemoration of Those Who Died in Post-Armistice Korean Service

10.8 Research by the Working Party has established that 18 Australian Servicemen died on Korean service after the Armistice and are buried overseas at either Pusan in South Korea or Yokohama in Japan. The Working Party has concluded that those who are not already nationally commemorated in Australia should have a commemorative plaque at a location in Australia that is appropriately respectful of their service. The Working Party also concludes that because of the dedication of the Australian War Memorial to commemorate those who died in war it would not be possible for their names to be included on the plaques in the colonnades of the Australian War Memorial, but that it would be entirely fitting for a commemorative plaque to be built and dedicated in the Sculpture Garden of the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

General Conclusions

10.9 The evidence of this Review demonstrates the importance of appropriate medal recognition for the purposes of morale for those currently serving and for the peace of mind of those who have served. It is an important conclusion that conditions of eligibility must be sufficiently flexible to permit recognition of the variety of circumstances that call for Australian Defence Force deployment overseas. At the same time medals policy and award administration must maintain the integrity of the Australian system of honours and awards, including the provision for campaign and operational medals.

10.10 The Working Party concludes that a formal and visible structure should be introduced into the processes for instituting medals and decisions on eligibility. This structure should include clear distinctions between medals eligibility and veterans' entitlements. New arrangements could also include functions to be undertaken by an independent, part-time military honours tribunal.

10.11 It also concludes that it is important that the policy and conditions of qualification for the Returned from Active Service Badge should be brought to completion and promulgation as early as practicable.