

MEDIA RELEASE



The Hon. Bruce Billson, MP
Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence

019/2007

Wednesday, 18 April 2007

CORRECT WEARING OF SERVICE MEDALS ENCOURAGED

The Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, Bruce Billson, today warned people against posing as war veterans on Anzac Day, indicating that such behaviour was disrespectful to veterans and Service personnel and punishable by law.

In 2003 Mr Billson was instrumental in seeing tougher penalties introduced for the improper use of Service medals and decorations to falsely represent a returned Service person. His advocacy to strengthen penalties and to improve public education about the proper wearing of Service medals dates back to 1998 when he was a Backbencher.

“Across the country, Australians will gather on Anzac Day to commemorate the lives of Australians lost in war and other military operations and to reflect on the service of our Defence personnel,” he said.

“Veterans and serving personnel will wear their Service medals at commemorative events, with a growing number of people also wearing medals as a tribute to loved ones, including deceased family members.

“There is a protocol governing the wearing of medals and people are encouraged to follow these guidelines to avoid misrepresentation or disrespect to our veterans.

“Only the original medal recipient is entitled to wear medals on the left, above the heart. Relatives’ medals may be worn on the right,” Mr Billson said.

“Occasionally a person will wrongly claim to be a returned veteran and wear medals to which they are not entitled. This practice is deceitful and disrespectful to our veterans.

“Further, there are a number of unofficial medals which are sold commercially and are not recognised through the Australian honours system. These awards should not be worn at public events on Anzac Day,” he said.

Under the *Defence Act 1903* the penalties for the improper use of Service decorations and for impersonating Service personnel include a fine of up to \$3300, six months imprisonment, or both.

Recently two people have been found guilty of offences under Sections 80 A and 80 B of the Defence Act for falsely claiming entitlements to medals. Further cases, resulting from the wearing of medals for which no entitlement exists, are currently subject to legal proceedings.

Information about the correct wearing of medals can be found on the Department of Veterans’ Affairs website, www.dva.gov.au or the Defence Honours & Awards website, www.defence.gov.au/medals

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