Long Service Awards

Medallistic recognition for long service within the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has gone through a variety of iterations since the introduction of the Australian Honours and Awards System in 1975.

Defence Force Service Awards

In 1982 the National Medal (issued since 1975 to ADF members and other eligible organisations such as the Police Force, Fire Service, Ambulance Service, Corrective Service and Australian Protective Service) was replaced for ADF personnel by a group of awards to uniquely recognise ADF Service:

- Defence Force Service Medal (all members of the Regular forces, pictured left)
- Reserve Force Decoration (Reserve officers)
- Reserve Force Medal (Reserve other ranks)

The qualifying period for these medals ended on 29 April 1999, however clasps are still awarded to eligible members.

Defence Long Service Medal

In 1998 the third iteration of medallistic recognition for long service, the Defence Long Service Medal (DLSM, pictured right), was introduced. The DLSM may be awarded to a member who has, on or after 14 February 1975, completed 15 years qualifying remunerated service in the Australian Defence Force. This includes efficient service in the Permanent and Reserve Forces.

Clasps

Clasps to the Defence Force Service Awards and Defence Long Service Medal are awarded for each further period of five years efficient service. When the ribbon is worn alone, the first four clasps are indicated by the addition of rosettes. These are replaced by a single silver Federation Star for the fifth clasp (pictured right). Additional Federation Star emblems are added for subsequent clasps. The medal ribbon, however, continues to be adorned with clasps as appropriate (pictured left), not with a Federation Star emblem.
Election to be awarded the Defence Long Service Medal

Members who qualified for the earlier Defence Force Service Awards are given the option of continuing to accumulate service towards clasps to those awards, or replacing them with the DLSM. The latter option allows members with a mix of service in various categories, such as regular Army and Army Reserve, who may not have received a medal or clasps to reflect that service, to have their total service recognised.

Explanation and Example

- Sgt Adams served 16 years in the regular Army and qualified for the Defence Force Service Medal (DFSM) in 1997
- He then discharged from the regular Army in 1998 and joined the Army Reserve, serving from 1999 to 2005 (5 years).
- Sgt Adams is entitled to elect to exchange the previously awarded DFSM for a DLSM, with 1 clasp, as the additional 6 years service (in total) takes him to the next qualifying period (20 years), for which Sgt Adam had not received recognition.

Once a member has received recognition for long service, further recognition of efficient service is available at 5 year intervals (for 20 years, 25 years, 30 years, etc.) based on enlistment years. It is at these anniversaries that the opportunity to elect to change a DFSM to a DLSM is possible. Election to the DLSM is not available without achieving a new qualifying period.

Members should apply for an Assessment, selecting Long Service Medal in the application type. Applicants are asked to write in the details field, on the application form, that they already have the DFSM and would like to exchange it for a DLSM. If an applicant is assessed to be eligible for this, they will be advised of the next steps including information on how to return the original DFSM.

For further information call 1800 DEFENCE (1800 333 362) or visit www.defence.gov.au/Medals/Australian/Long-Service/