CHAPTER 3

HONOURS AND AWARDS ADMINISTERING ORGANISATIONS

Background

3.1 The Australian system of honours and awards is a comprehensive and complex system covering all areas of employment and endeavour at all levels of society. The size and scope of the system requires a number of organisations such as Defence to accept responsibility for the management of those parts of the system which are relevant to them. The primary authority for control of the system is the Governor-General and within the Governor-General’s organisation a secretariat has been established to administer this responsibility. The Government also has a role in the development and implementation of honours policy.

3.2 In summary, the Australian system of honours and awards is administered by the following bodies:

   a. Honours Secretariat within the Office of the Official Secretary of the Governor-General.
   b. Honours, Symbols and Territories Branch of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C).
   c. Directorate of Honours and Awards in the Department of Defence.
   d. Other Government departments and agencies.

Honours Secretariat

3.3 The Australian Honours Secretariat is located at Government House in Canberra. The Secretariat was established within the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General in 1975 when the Australian Honours System was instituted. The role of the Secretariat is to provide the support necessary for the Governor-General to carry out those responsibilities relating to the independent administration of the Australian honours and awards system.

3.4 The Secretariat also supports the Council for the Order of Australia and the Australian Bravery Decorations Council, which consider nominations and make recommendations to the Governor-General for awards. The Official Secretary to the Governor-General is the appointed Secretary of the Order of Australia and Secretary of the Australian Bravery Decorations Council.

3.5 Further information on the background to the establishment of awards within the Australian Honours System including the Council for the Order of Australia and the Australian Bravery Decorations Council may be found on the Australian honours website www.itsanhonour.gov.au.

3.6 The Secretariat plays an important role in maintaining the high standards of the honours and awards system by ensuring that thorough and comprehensive information and comment is available for the relevant advisory councils on the nominations made for awards. This includes obtaining comment from referees suggested by nominators as well as seeking out further information about nominees and their achievements to enable the respective advisory bodies to decide whether an award should be recommended and at what level. Nominations are researched in order of receipt and after completion are submitted to the next available Council meeting.

3.7 The Secretariat is also responsible for administering some 50 other awards that comprise the Australian system of honours and awards. The tasks involved include:

   a. process recommendations for approval for Defence campaign, operational, meritorious and long service awards;
   b. ensure the timely manufacture and availability of insignia for award ceremonies; (note that this responsibility is being assumed by Defence which is contracting for the supply and dispatch of all Defence awards for current and discharged personnel);
   c. prepare warrants for presentation to recipients; and
   d. publish booklets on the various awards.
Finally, the Honours Secretariat is responsible for maintaining the registers of all honours conferred within the Australian Honours System since it commenced in 1975.

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet—Honours, Symbols and Territories Branch

The Honours, Symbols and Territories Branch is a branch of the Government Division of PM&C that is the senior advisory body to Government on the honours and awards system.

The roles of PM&C include:
- advise the Government on policy issues relating to Australian and foreign honours,
- support committees that recognise outstanding service, and
- promote recognition of outstanding service.

PM&C directly administers the following awards within the Australian honours and awards system:
- Civilian Service Medal 1939–1945.
- 80th Anniversary of Armistice Medal.
- Australian Sports Medal.
- Centenary Medal.
- Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal.

PM&C chairs the Interdepartmental Committee on Honours and Awards.

Department of Defence—Directorate of Honours and Awards

The Directorate of Honours and Awards (DH&A) is a directorate within the Defence People Group of the Department of Defence and has responsibility for the administration of honours and awards for both serving Australian Defence Force and ex-service personnel.

The roles and tasks of DH&A include:
- assess entitlement and dispatch medals to eligible recipients;
- contribute to the definition of policy applicable to Defence honours and awards;
- draft new and updated instruments of declaration and determination for awards;
- liaise with the Honours Secretariat, PM&C, ex-service organisations, overseas honours organisations, and other organisations and individuals involved with honours and awards;
- conduct historical research; and
- provide response to Ministerial representations.

Other Commonwealth departments and organisations are responsible for administering those elements of the Australian honours and awards system which apply specifically to the members of those departments or organisations. These include:
- Public Service Commission.
- Department of the Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Australian Antarctic Division.
- Australian Federal Police.
Interdepartmental Committee on Honours and Awards

3.16 The Interdepartmental Committee on Honours and Awards consists of representatives of those organisations and departments involved with honours and awards. The committee provides an advisory function based on the views of representatives.

Government agencies and State and Territory governments

3.17 A range of awards are issued by government agencies and the State and Territory government departments to recognise service to those organisations. These awards are not part of the Australian Honours System and are not normally worn on Commonwealth uniform. The administration of these awards is the sole responsibility of the issuing organisations and all enquiries on eligibility for those awards should be referred to the appropriate organisation.

The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal

3.18 On 05 February 2011 the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal (the Tribunal) was formally established under the Defence Act 1903. Before that date, many of the functions of the Tribunal were undertaken by the Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal (the old tribunal), which operated administratively from July 2008. The Tribunal has responsibility to review decisions made in relation to certain Defence honours and awards on appeal by individuals. The Tribunal may also be directed by the Minister to review and make recommendations on other matters relating to Defence honours and awards. The Tribunal’s functions are set out in section 110UA of the Act. Contact details for the Tribunal are included in Annex A.

Annex:
A. Points of contact for Administering Organisations