CHAPTER 14

AUSTRALIAN BRAVERY DECORATIONS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction

14.1 The Australian Bravery Decorations were instituted within the Australian system of honours and awards, to recognise acts of bravery by members of the community who selflessly put themselves in jeopardy to protect the lives or property of others. Bravery decorations are described in Volume 2, Chapter 12.

14.2 Members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) may be nominated for a Bravery Decoration to recognise:
   a. acts of bravery while on duty in peacetime service or while serving on operations but not in action (acts of bravery, when in action, are recognised by Australian Gallantry Decorations); or
   b. acts of bravery as a general member of the community during off duty hours.

Decorations and eligibility criteria

14.3 The decorations listed below are known collectively as the Australian Bravery Decorations. The standard of action required to be performed to be considered for each decoration is also shown.
   a. Cross of Valour (CV). The CV, and bars to the CV, may be awarded for acts of the most conspicuous courage in circumstances of extreme peril.
   b. Star of Courage (SC). The SC, and bars to the SC, may be awarded for acts of conspicuous courage in circumstances of great peril.
   c. Bravery Medal (BM). The BM, and bars to the BM, may be awarded for acts of bravery in hazardous circumstances.
   d. Commendation for Brave Conduct. The Commendation for Brave Conduct may be awarded for acts of bravery that are considered worthy of recognition.
   e. Group Citation for Bravery. The Group Citation for Bravery may be awarded for a collective act of bravery by a group of people in extraordinary circumstances.

Subsequent awards

14.4 Any subsequent award of the CV, SC or BM to the same member shall be made in the form of a bar to the Cross or Medal as the case may be.

14.5 Subsequent awards of the Commendation for Brave Conduct or Group Citation for Bravery are in the form of an additional warrant. No additional insignia is issued or worn.

Postnominal

14.6 Recipients of Bravery Decorations are entitled to use the following postnominals:
   a. Cross of Valour—CV.
   b. Star of Courage—SC.
   c. Bravery Medal—BM.

14.7 Those who are awarded a bar to denote a second or subsequent award of CV, SC or BM are entitled to add ‘and bar’ or ‘and bars’ to the postnominal as the case may be.
Posthumous awards

14.8 Bravery decorations may be awarded posthumously.

Approving authority

14.9 The award of an Australian Bravery Decoration is made, with the approval of the Sovereign, by an Instrument signed by the Governor-General. The Australian Bravery Decorations Council (ABDC), which includes a Defence representative, provides advice to the Governor-General on all nominations for bravery decorations.

NOMINATION PROCEDURES FOR AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE MEMBERS

General

14.10 Nominations for Bravery Decorations are primarily a civilian matter, and higher Defence authorities should not unduly influence nominations. It should only be a matter of assessment by the ABDC. Further information on the nomination process and an electronic copy of the nomination form can be obtained from the website www.itsanhonour.gov.au.

Australian Defence Force members in normal peacetime circumstances

14.11 Nominations raised as a result of an ADF member, or members, performing a singular or group act of bravery during the course of normal duties in Australia, either on or off ADF property, should be raised as soon as practicable after the act has occurred. In these circumstances, nominations may be raised by anybody being witness to the incident. The nomination is to be prepared on the special nomination form and is to be forwarded direct to:

Secretary
ABDC
Government House
CANBERRA ACT 2600.

Copies are to be forwarded by the nominator (if an ADF member) to the relevant Service Headquarters and the Directorate of Honours and Awards (DH&A). Civilians who raise nominations for ADF members in these circumstances are encouraged to forward copies of those nominations to the authorities outlined above.

Australian Defence Force members involved in major Australian Defence Force incidents during non-warlike operational or peacetime circumstances

14.12 Nominations for bravery awards which result from a major ADF incident involving ADF personnel should be raised as soon as practicable after the acts have occurred. In these cases, the nominations are to be raised and processed through the relevant Service Headquarters, or in operational circumstances through Joint Operations Command, to DH&A. DH&A staff will process the nominations, in consultation with the relevant Service Chiefs and Chief of Joint Operations (CJOPS). Completed nominations are to be forwarded to the ABDC for consideration and determination.

Australian Defence Force members in warlike operational circumstances

14.13 In warlike operational circumstances, an act of bravery may occur which does not meet the Gallantry Decorations Regulations as occurring ‘in action’ or circumstances similar to armed combat or actual operations. An example would be risking life to save personnel from a fire that resulted from an accident during the unloading of stores from a plane at an operational airhead. In these cases, nominations are to be raised as soon as practicable after the acts have occurred and submitted through the operational chain of command to CJOPS. Completed nominations are to be forwarded through DH&A to the ABDC for consideration and determination.
Guidelines for the preparation of nominations

14.14 The following guidelines are to be considered when preparing nominations:

a. The completed nomination is to be of a high quality with all relevant aspects addressed.

b. Nominations must include as much detail as possible.

c. Service 'jargon' and abbreviations are not to be used.

d. In cases where an incident becomes a matter of a Board of Inquiry, nominations should be delayed until the findings of the Board are known.

e. The level of the bravery decoration should not be specified in the application as the ABDC reserves the right to allocate awards according to its assessment of each case.

14.15 The narrative of the nomination is to describe the act of bravery in detail and must present all the relevant facts, including:

a. time and place the act was performed;

b. duration of the act and the number of times it was performed;

c. assistance available;

d. circumstances beyond the control of those involved; and

e. conditions under which the act was performed (such as weather conditions, visibility, time of day, climate and terrain, in open or confined space, etc).

14.16 Particular attention should be given to assessing the criteria that will eventually determine the value of the act of bravery and the level of award made. The following factors, which are not exhaustive, should be considered and appropriate comments should be made in the narrative:

a. What was the nominee’s perception of the situation—one of ‘extreme peril’, ‘great peril’ or ‘hazardous circumstances’?

b. Did the nominee have the option of avoiding or staying out of danger, or was the nominee unavoidably caught up in the action in any event?

c. Was the act one of self-preservation or one of conscious acceptance of danger in the interests of others?

d. What alternative courses of action, if any, were open to the nominee to escape or avoid the peril?

e. Was the act beyond the normal course of duty and was the nominee under orders?

f. Was the act premeditated or spontaneous?

14.17 Wherever possible, signed statements from eyewitnesses should be sought in order to validate the facts and nature of the act of bravery. When an act is performed in a non-Service environment, an evaluation should be sought from any civilian authority, such as a police officer, who was either present on the occasion or who subsequently assessed the situation in which the act was performed. In the case of acts performed in a Service environment, the opinion of a Commanding Officer on the extent of the hazard or peril would be desirable to assist the ABDC. Original supporting documents, such as photographs, maps, drawings, incident reports, etc, should be obtained wherever possible.

14.18 In all cases, a statement from the member involved is to be provided addressing all the points detailed above. Such a statement is a requirement of the ABDC.