CHAPTER 39

THE DEFENCE COMMENDATION SCHEME

INTRODUCTION

39.1 The Defence Commendation Scheme (the Scheme) was introduced on 1 September 2010 to formally recognise outstanding/exceptional achievement, or specific acts of bravery for which awards from within the Australian Honours System are not an appropriate medium of recognition. The circumstances attracting the award of a commendation may relate to an isolated instance or to a series of instances over a period of time. The Scheme applies to all Defence personnel.

39.2 The Scheme is hierarchically based and allows for commendations to be awarded based on the merit of the service or act. All individual commendations, except the joint Secretary and Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) Commendation, the Secretary Commendation and CDF Commendation, are awarded at three levels, these being Gold, Silver and Bronze.

39.3 The Secretary and the CDF may award commendations, either separately or jointly, to recognise performance or achievement that is considered worthy of a level of recognition above the Gold Level commendation. The Secretary and CDF may agree to award a joint commendation in those cases where the recognition is for service that is considered to have been of benefit to both the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Department of Defence.

POLICY STATEMENT

39.4 Defence has developed a process to formally recognise achievement within Defence using an integrated system of awards comprising appointments to the Order of Australia, Military Decorations, the Public Service Medal, the Australia Day Medallion, Defence Commendations and informal workplace level initiatives.

39.5 Defence Commendations are a part of the Defence system of recognition and are of lower precedence than awards within the Australian Honours System. Members whose nomination for an Australian honour has been unsuccessful may be considered for a commendation.

SCOPE

39.6 This chapter provides policy and administrative guidelines for the awarding of Defence Commendations, and is applicable to all Defence personnel.

DEFINITIONS

39.7 The following definitions apply to this chapter:

a. **Awarding authorities.** Below the Secretary and CDF there are two categories of awarding authority. These are:

   (1) **Principal Awarding Authorities**—officers authorised by the Secretary and CDF for the purposes of the Defence Commendation Scheme are:

   (a) Service Chiefs;

   (b) Group Heads (Civilian and military);

   (c) Chief Executive Defence Materiel Organisation (CEO DMO); and

   (d) Commander Joint Operations.

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39.2 Appointed Awarding Authorities—officers appointed by Principal Awarding Authorities from within their organisation to award Silver Level and Bronze Level commendations.

b. Defence personnel—includes members of the ADF and foreign exchange personnel serving with the ADF, Defence Australian Public Servants, Defence contractors and consultants and any other person deemed by an awarding authority to be providing a service to Defence.

c. Defence Support Services—includes all groups and agencies other than the Services, Vice Chief of the Defence Force, Joint Operations and Capability Development Group.

COMMENDATIONS

39.8 Commendations may be awarded to individuals or collectively to a group, unit or team. The various categories of commendations and awarding authorities are detailed in Annex A.

Individual commendations

39.9 Individual commendations, which consist of a certificate signed by the awarding authority and the relevant badge, are as follows:

a. Secretary and CDF Commendations. The Secretary and the CDF may award commendations, either separately or jointly, to recognise service considered to be worthy of recognition above Gold Level. Unless initiated by the Secretary or CDF, nominations are to be recommended by a Principal Awarding Authority (or an officer performing the duties of a Principal Awarding Authority). If the Secretary and CDF agree that a joint commendation is appropriate the commendation certificate is signed by both the Secretary and CDF and issued with the joint commendation badge.

b. Defence Support Services, ADF, Navy, Army and Air Force Commendations. These commendations have the following levels:

(1) Gold Level Commendation. Gold Level commendations are awarded only by Principal Awarding Authorities, or officers performing the duties of Principal Awarding Authorities.

(2) Silver Level Commendation and Bronze Level Commendation. Silver Level commendations and Bronze Level commendations are awarded by Appointed Awarding Authorities, or officers performing the duties of Appointed Awarding Authorities.

Individual commendation award level guidelines

39.10 Except when individuals are considered for recognition at the Secretary or CDF level, the guidelines that are to be applied when awarding individual commendations are:

a. Gold Level Commendation. This commendation should only be awarded for superior achievement or devotion in the application of skills, judgement or dedication to duty.

b. Silver Level Commendation. This commendation should only be awarded for excellent achievement in the application of skills, judgement or devotion to duty.

c. Bronze Level Commendation. This commendation should only be awarded for high or noteworthy achievement.

Group commendations

39.11 Group Commendations may be awarded to groups, units or teams only by the Secretary, CDF and Principal Awarding Authorities as defined in sub-subparagraph 39.7a(1), including CEO DMO. Group commendations consist of a certificate only; no badge is issued. Individual certificates are not
normally provided although members may be given a copy of the original certificate by local authorities. Group commendations awarded by Principal Awarding Authorities are single level awards and are not distinguished by additional descriptors ‘gold’, ‘silver’ or ‘bronze’.

39.12 Group commendations are:

a. **Secretary and CDF Group Commendations.** The Secretary and the CDF may award group commendations either separately or jointly to recognise service considered to be worthy of recognition above Principal Awarding Authority group commendations. Unless initiated by the Secretary or CDF, nominations are to be recommended by a Principal Awarding Authority (or an officer performing the duties of a Principal Awarding Authority). If the Secretary and CDF agree that a joint commendation is appropriate the commendation certificate is signed by both the Secretary and CDF.

b. **Defence Support Services, ADF, Navy, Army and Air Force Group Commendations.** These commendations may be awarded by Principal Awarding Authorities or an officer performing the duties of a Principal Awarding Authority.

**Identification of appropriate category of commendation to be awarded**

39.13 The category of commendation awarded depends on the location within Defence of the awarding authority. For example, all awarding authorities located within the Navy Group would award Navy Commendations and all awarding authorities located within the Chief Finance Officer Group, Defence Materiel Organisation or the Defence Science and Technology Organisation would award a Defence Support Services Commendation. Further detail on the types of commendations to be awarded is provided in Annex A.

**Appointment of awarding authorities**

39.14 Principal Awarding Authorities are those officers holding the appointments of Group Heads, Service Chiefs and CEO DMO as nominated by the Secretary and CDF. Current Principal Awarding Authorities are listed in Annex A.

39.15 Principal Awarding Authorities are responsible for appointing commendation awarding authorities (Appointed Awarding Authorities) within their organisation. Appointed Awarding Authorities will normally be division heads or equivalent with status of at least 2 Star/Senior Executive Service (SES) Band 2. In exceptional circumstances, and only if the authority cannot be delegated to a 2 Star or SES Band 2 officer, a 1 Star/SES Band 1 officer may be appointed an awarding authority for this level.

39.16 The names and appointments of Appointed Awarding Authorities are to be promulgated within the organisation and advised to Directorate of Honours and Awards (DH&A) for recording purposes. Appointments are to be kept to the absolute minimum number required to maintain an efficient and effective award process within the Group, Service or agency.

**Awarding authority responsibilities**

39.17 When considering a recommendation, awarding authorities may:

a. reject a recommendation if they do not believe a commendation should be awarded;

b. return a recommendation to a lower level authority if it is considered that a lower level award is warranted;

c. award their commendation;

d. refer the nomination to a higher level awarding authority for consideration; or

e. in the case of Secretary and CDF, decide to award a joint commendation.
**Commendation certificates**

**39.18** The commendation certificate is to be a product worthy of the purpose for which it is issued, and suitable for framing. The certificate will:

a. be produced on good quality, parchment type paper;

b. include the word ‘Commendation’ and have a border, all in gold;

c. have an embossed crest, in gold, at the top of the paper;

d. The various crests are shown in the badge images in Annex A, and are listed below with relevant Web Forms numbers:

1. Secretary/CDF Commendation (Form AE 067)—combined ADF and Commonwealth emblem.

2. Secretary Commendation (Form AD 096)—conventional Australian Coat of Arms.

3. CDF Commendation (Form AE 151)—ADF emblem surrounded by a wattle wreath.

4. Defence Support Services Commendation (Form PH 407)—stylised Australian Coat of Arms.

5. ADF Commendation (Form PH 404)—ADF emblem.


7. Army Commendation (Form PH 404–1)—Chief of Army crest.

8. Air Force Commendation (Form PH 404–2)—General Badge of the RAAF.

**39.19** The production of blank commendation certificates will be controlled by the Defence Publishing Service which has the capacity to produce quality certificates in the quantities required. Central control will ensure consistency in the standard of the certificates.

**39.20** The responsibility of printing each commendation certificate with the recipient’s details and citation is the responsibility of each awarding authority. Stocks of blank certificates are to be managed within each group.

**39.21** The certificate is to be completed as follows:

a. Recipient details and citation are to be typed in Times New Roman font size 12 with the text in italics similar to the sample in Annex B. The PMKeyS number is placed before member rank and name details, except in the case of Navy commendations where the PMKeyS number follows the member’s surname.

b. The category and level (if applicable) of commendation is to be clearly shown eg ADF, Bronze Level.

c. The wording is to be in the first person, dignified and concise along the lines shown in Annex B.

d. The signature blocks of the Secretary and Defence Support Services commendations certificate are to include ‘Department of Defence’ to provide context for the Australian Coat of Arms used on the certificate in accordance with Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet direction.
Commendation badge emblems

39.22 Commendation badges have a raised emblem in the centre of the badge which matches the crest on the accompanying commendation certificate. Annex A includes images of all commendation badges.

Supply of badges

39.23 CDF, ADF, Navy, Army and Air Force commendation badges are available through the Defence supply system. The additional badges introduced with the Scheme (Secretary and CDF Badge, Secretary Badge, and the three Defence Support Service badges) will, until they become available through the Defence supply system, be available from DH&A.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Eligibility restrictions

39.24 Personnel are not to be nominated for a commendation if they are currently the subject of disciplinary or adverse administrative action.

39.25 Personnel are not to be nominated concurrently for an award for the same service within the Australian Honours System.

39.26 Service previously recognised by either a Defence commendation or an award from the Australian Honours System is not to be used to support a nomination for another award unless clear evidence of additional performance or achievement is provided.

Wearing of badges

39.27 ADF personnel are to wear commendation badges in accordance with single-Service dress orders. Civilians and ADF personnel in civilian dress should wear their commendation badges in a dignified manner such as on a coat lapel or similar.

Retrospective issue of badges for Service Commendations

39.28 Individual Service commendations for ADF personnel. In 1983, the Chiefs of Staff Committee, now known as the Chiefs of Service Committee, agreed to the introduction of a Service Commendation Scheme. Initially, only commendation certificates were issued. In 1993, Army introduced commendation badges, followed in 1994 by CDF, Navy and Air Force. Members awarded individual Service commendations, prior to the issue of badges, may seek retrospective issue of the appropriate commendation badge by writing to the original awarding authority and providing a certified true copy of their commendation certificate. In cases where the awarding officer appointment no longer exists, applications are to be sent to the most appropriate single-Service or joint headquarters.

39.29 Group commendations. During the period 8 December 2004 until 1 September 2010, commendation badges were issued to all personnel who were part of a unit or group which received a group commendation under the Service Commendation Scheme, and the commendation was recorded on the individuals' PMKeyS records. Retrospective recording on PMKeyS and issue of group commendation badges therefore only applies to group commendations awarded during that period.

Relationship with informal recognition systems

39.30 The Defence Commendation Scheme is a formal system that extends the existing Service commendation system to all Defence personnel (as defined in subparagraph 39.7b. above). In the past, and in the absence of a suitable Defence award, some groups implemented informal internal award schemes. In addition, some officers issued their own forms of commendation. There is no provision in the Defence Commendation Scheme for retrospective conversion of former awards to a Defence Commendation. A request may be made for such informal recognition to be recorded on PMKeyS Recognised Achievement screen. If a suitable code does not exist on the Recognised Achievement panel, a request for the creation of a new code may be submitted using Form AD 840—PMKeyS Achievement Table Update Request.
Replacement of lost or damaged badges

39.31 Lost or damaged badges will not be replaced at Defence expense. Personnel may purchase replacement or additional commendation badges from clothing stores on presentation of the appropriate commendation certificate or extract from PMKeyS.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Nomination preparation

39.32 Form AD 112—Nomination for Defence Commendation for Service, which can be found on the Defence Intranet Web Forms System, is to be used for all nominations for commendations.

39.33 Nominations are to be annotated ‘STAFF–IN–CONFIDENCE’ and must be endorsed by a recommending officer of, at the minimum, 1 Star/SES Band 1 officer. Each nomination is to include:

a. a covering page (Form AD 112) providing the nominee(s) PMKeyS No(s), rank/title(s), full name(s), branch/corps/mustering/specialisation(s), appointment(s) and the signature blocks of the nominating and recommending officers in the commendation chain;

b. a narrative providing full details of the service to be recognised; and

c. a draft citation formatted in accordance with the example provided in Annex B.

Processing of nominations

39.34 Nominations are to be processed through the nominee’s chain of command to the level of the awarding authority consistent with the level of the commendation (noting that awarding authorities may change the level or recommend change of level). A list of all personnel to be recognised by a group commendation is to be provided with group nominations.

Presentation of commendations

39.35 Personnel from the awarding authority’s office are responsible for preparing commendation certificates and arranging the presentation of awards. A badge set consisting of a full size badge and a miniature badge, is issued in conjunction with a commendation certificate. Because of the ceremonial and uniform requirements of the ADF, two badge sets are issued to ADF members whereas civilians receive one badge set. Additional badge sets may be purchased from clothing stores on the production of a commendation certificate or extract from PMKeyS.

39.36 Whenever possible, the commendation certificate and badge should be presented personally to the recipient by the awarding authority with appropriate publicity and due ceremony. In cases where the Secretary and CDF are not able to personally present their commendations, the respective commander or group head is responsible for arranging presentation on an appropriate occasion.

Recording of awards

39.37 Personal records. Details of commendation awards are to be recorded in a recipient’s personal records. Unit or human resource personnel from within the awarding authority’s office/branch are responsible for recording the details on PMKeyS Recognised Achievements screen. To ensure correct reporting on PMKeyS awards summaries, the same date (the date of approval on the Form AD 112) is to be recorded in the ‘Approval Date’ and ‘Awarded Date’ fields. Annex C lists the reporting codes to be used. Recipients should check their PMKeyS record to ensure that their award is recorded.

39.38 Recording of previous Service Commendations. Individual commendations awarded prior to 1 September 2010 under the Services Commendation Scheme will be entered as historical awards on a member’s PMKeyS Honours and Awards Panel by DH&A. Requests for recording of historical awards are to be submitted, with supporting evidence of the commendation, to Staff Officer Honours and Decorations, Directorate of Honours and Awards. In the case of any other form of commendation, for example, Commanding Officer’s commendations, justification may be made to have these included on the PMKeyS achievement screen. Personnel who were members of units/groups that were awarded a group commendation during the period 08 December 2004 until 1 September 2010 may also have
this recorded to enable the issue of badges. Members of a unit/group that was awarded a group commendation prior to 8 December 2004 will not have the commendation recorded in their individual PMKeyS records.

39.39 **Defence records.** It is important that Defence maintains a record of all awards made within the Department. Accordingly, awarding authorities are to maintain a record of all commendations awarded and submit a six monthly consolidated return to DH&A by 31 May and 30 November each year.

**Implementation date**

39.40 The Defence Commendation Scheme was implemented on 1 September 2010.

**Annexes:**

A. *Awarding Authorities for Defence Commendations*
B. *Sample commendation format*
C. *PMKeyS commendation reporting codes*