Commendation for Gallantry
for Australian Prisoners of War who were killed while escaping Japanese Prisoner of War Camps, or following recapture, during World War II.

Call for next of kin
Front cover illustration by Australian War Memorial (ART26492). Murray Griffin. Interior view of 100 metre hut, Changi, 1944, brush and brown ink wash over pencil.

Internal photographs by Australian War Memorial (AWM)
Approximately 22,000 Australian servicemen and women were captured and detained in Prisoner of War camps across South East Asia and in Japan after the fall of Malaya, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies and other territories in World War II. Over 8,000 of these servicemen and women died in captivity.¹

During World War II the Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, known as the 1929 Geneva Convention, laid down the conditions under which Prisoners of War (POW) could be kept and, subject to a number of restrictions, employed as workers.² The Convention contained no rules specifically relating to escape, other than an indication that the captor was entitled to treat an escape attempt as equivalent to a disciplinary offence³ and thus open to the usual forms of military punishment, including closer confinement of no more than 30 days.⁴

¹ Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal, Report of the Inquiry into Recognition for Far East Prisoners of War who were killed while Escaping or Following Recapture, 17 August 2017, p. 28
² Ibid, p. 29
³ 1929 Geneva Convention, Article 50
⁴ Ibid, Article 48
It is fair to state that in the British and Commonwealth Services in 1939 an attempt to escape was considered to be within the scope of a prisoner’s duty. However this was understood to be an inherently subjective decision and absolutely dependent upon individual circumstances.\(^5\)

It has been determined, by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal, that escape from Japanese POW camps was over and above what was reasonably expected of personnel in captivity\(^6\) considering the location of the POW camps, difficulties of the surrounding terrain and prevalence of enemy troops.

The Japanese War Minister issued a directive in 1943 that POWs were to be administered an oath forbidding them from making an escape. Servicemen and women who refused to take the oath were forced to do so by a variety of techniques including deprivation of food and latrine facilities.\(^7\) The penalty for escape, as provided within the 1929 Geneva Convention, was not to include “any corporal punishment...and, in general any form whatever of cruelty is forbidden”. The Japanese Regulations, however, provided that persons who escape “shall be subject to either the death penalty, or hard labor (sic), or imprisonment for life or for a minimum of seven years”.\(^8\)

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5 Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal, *Report of the Inquiry into Recognition for Far East Prisoners of War who were killed while Escaping or Following Recapture*, 17 August 2017, p. 30

6 Ibid, p. 35

7 Ibid, p. 33

8 Ibid, p. 34
In 1943, the Imperial Prisoners of War Committee determined that POWs who were killed while trying to escape should be regarded as eligible for consideration for the award of posthumous mentions in Despatches. The Australian Defence Committee affirmed this decision in 1944.\footnote{Ibid, p. 36}

On 13 November 2015 the then Assistant Minister for Defence, the Hon Darren Chester MP, directed the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal to inquire into and report on \textit{Recognition for Far East Prisoners of War who were killed while escaping or following recapture}. This is the second inquiry into recognition for Australian Far East POWs during World War II, with the first inquiry conducted...
in 2009 from which 20 Far East POWs were identified to be awarded the Commendation for Gallantry. The award of Mention in Despatches is not available under the Australian Honours and Awards System, and therefore the award of the Commendation for Gallantry has been identified as an appropriate recognition.

The Tribunal, together with the Department of Defence, have recommended 28 servicemen to receive the Commendation for Gallantry. His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) has approved the awarding of these honours and Defence is now calling on the next of kin of the servicemen to come forward to receive the honour on their behalf.
Lieutenant John Leslie APPLEBY – NX76266
2/6th Field Company
Date of birth: 5 July 1916
Place of birth: Randwick, NSW
Date of death: 6 September 1943
Place of death: Java
Aged: 27
Next of kin upon enlistment: Beryl Pulbrook of Hurstville, NSW
Parents: John Thomas and Adelaide May Appleby
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia

Corporal James Hubert ARMSTRONG – TX3283
2/40th Australian Infantry Battalion
Date of birth: 19 February 1919
Place of birth: Beaconsfield, TAS
Date of death: 12 June 1943
Place of death: Timor
Aged: 24
Next of kin upon enlistment: George Armstrong
Parents: George Henry and Florence Mary Armstrong of Launceston, TAS
No image available
Private Phillip Mowbray Frank BESSELL – WX7639

2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion

Date of birth: 27 November 1914
Place of birth: Thames Ditton, England
Date of death: 30 April 1942
Place of death: Java
Aged: 27
Next of kin upon enlistment: John Bessell
Parents: John Hulme and Janet Cunningham Bessell of Margaret River, WA
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia

Private Arthur Francis DAVEY – QX20799

2/29th Australian Infantry Battalion

Date of birth: 28 May 1905
Place of birth: Launceston, TAS
Date of death: 18 June 1942
Place of death: Burma
Aged: 37
Next of kin upon enlistment: Francis Davey
Parents: Francis Kenneth and Eva Fanny Davey of Box Hill, VIC
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia
Private John Edward DURKIN – VX19728
2/2nd Pioneer Battalion
Date of birth: 5 March 1905
Place of birth: North Melbourne, VIC
Date of death: 14 August 1945
Place of death: Thailand
Aged: 40
Next of kin upon enlistment: Violet Nelson of North Melbourne, VIC
Parents: Thomas and Lucy Durkin of Melbourne, VIC
No image available

Private James Frederick ELMORE – VX66131
2/21st Australian Infantry Battalion
Date of birth: 2 March 1922
Place of birth: Korumburra, VIC
Date of death: 23 May 1945
Place of death: Ambon
Aged: 23
Next of kin upon enlistment: James Elmore Sr.
Parents: James Frederick and Mary Ann Elmore of Kongwak, VIC
No image available
Corporal Edward Victor EMMETT – NX51899

2/10th Australian Field Ambulance

Date of birth: 15 June 1920
Place of birth: Marrickville, NSW
Date of death: 18 June 1945
Place of death: Sandakan
Aged: 24
Next of kin upon enlistment: William Emmett
Parents: William John and Ellen Tonnacliffe Emmett of Dulwich Hill, NSW
Image: Australian War Memorial

Lieutenant Wilkins FITZALLEN – TX3482

2/40th Australian Infantry Battalion

Date of birth: 17 May 1911
Place of birth: Wynyard, TAS
Date of death: 23 October 1942
Place of death: Timor
Aged: 31
Next of kin upon enlistment: Nancy Fitzallen
Parents: Alfred John and Edith Mary Fitzallen of Launceston, TAS
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia
Private Arthur Edward FORD – QX8367
2/10th Australian General Hospital
Date of birth: 16 March 1918
Place of birth: Longreach, QLD
Date of death: 17 March 1942
Place of death: Singapore
Aged: 24
Next of kin upon enlistment: Eunice Campbell of Marmor, QLD (sister)
Next of kin at later date: Edna Ford of Spring Hill, QLD
Parents: Arthur Murral and Alice Henrietta Ford of Dutton Park, QLD
No image available

Private Charles Thomas FOSTER –NX55454
2/18th Australian Infantry Battalion
Date of birth: 21 March 1919
Place of birth: Tamworth, NSW
Date of death: 17 March 1942
Place of death: Singapore
Aged: 22
Next of kin upon enlistment: John Foster
Parents: John Michael and Ethel Maude Foster of West Tamworth, NSW
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia
Private Raymond Leslie GERAGHTY – NX42478
2/19th Australian Infantry Battalion
Date of birth: 4 May 1920
Place of birth: Casino, NSW
Date of death: 17 March 1942
Place of death: Singapore
Aged: 21
Next of kin upon enlistment: Marie Geraghty
Parents: William Francis James and Marie Geraghty of Casino, NSW
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia

Private Edwin Money GOODRICK – NX27912
2/10th Australian Field Ambulance
Date of birth: 23 November 1905
Place of birth: Newcastle, NSW
Date of death: 22 March 1942
Place of death: Sumatra
Aged: 36
Next of kin upon enlistment: Anne Goodrick of Blackheath, NSW
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia
Private Robert GOULDEN – NX10420

2/9th Australian Field Ambulance

Date of birth: 18 October 1917
Place of birth: Lakemba, NSW
Date of death: 12 July 1942
Place of death: Burma
Aged: 24
Next of kin upon enlistment: Agnes Goulden of Lakemba, NSW
Parents: Frederick William and Mary Goulden of Lakemba, NSW
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia

Corporal Michael David GRACE – NX32767

2/10th General Hospital

Date of birth: 14 June 1903
Place of birth: Melbourne, VIC
Date of death: 17 March 1942
Place of death: Singapore
Aged: 38
Next of kin upon enlistment: Stella Grace of Darlinghurst, NSW (later Randwick, NSW)
Parents: Michael David and Martha Grace
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia
Private George Alfred IRWIN – VX50024

2/4th Reserves Motor Company

Date of birth: 22 July 1919
Place of birth: Prahran, VIC
Date of death: 21 August 1943
Place of death: Japan
Aged: 24
Next of kin upon enlistment: Agnes Irwin
Parents: George J.W. and Agnes May Irwin of Altona, VIC
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia

Private Jack Victor JONES – WX7928

2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion

Date of birth: 2 October 1918
Place of birth: Perth, WA
Date of death: 30 April 1942
Place of death: Java
Aged: 23
Next of kin upon enlistment: Alfred Jones of Leederville, WA
Parents: Alfred Archibald and Elise Marion Jones of Leederville, WA
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia
Sergeant Howard Thomas MANNING – WX4609

2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion
Date of birth: 14 September 1918
Place of birth: Narrogin, WA
Date of death: 30 April 1942
Place of death: Java
Aged: 23
Next of kin upon enlistment: Albert Manning of Narrogin, WA
Parents: Albert Wheaton and Emily Elizabeth Manning of Narrogin, WA
No image available

Private Norman Heather MCARTNEY – VX33158

Australian 8th Division Petrol Company
Date of birth: 15 September 1913
Place of birth: Carlton, VIC
Date of death: 12 July 1943
Place of death: Thailand
Aged: 29
Next of kin upon enlistment: Enid Hazel McArtney of South Melbourne, VIC
Parents: Robert Arthur and Sarah Elizabeth McArtney of Melbourne VIC
No image available
Private Edward MOFFATT – NX4334

Headquarters 22nd Brigade

Date of birth: 13 April 1921
Place of birth: Merrylands, NSW
Date of death: 17 March 1942
Place of death: Singapore
Aged: 20

Next of kin upon enlistment: Daisy Moffatt of Merrylands, NSW
Parents: James Hugh and Daisy Adelaide Moffatt of Merrylands, NSW
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia

Private James O’DEA (aka Whitcombe) – NX77958

2/20th Australian Infantry Battalion

Date of birth: 28 September 1912
Place of birth: Newcastle, NSW
Date of death: 17 March 1942
Place of death: Singapore
Aged: 29

Next of kin upon enlistment: Phyllis O’Dea of Swan Bay (Richmond Valley), NSW
Image: Service Record, National Archive of Australia
Flight Sergeant John Victor ORGILL – 441469

Number 21 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force

Date of birth: 22 January 1923
Place of birth: Perth, WA
Date of death: 28 July 1945
Place of death: Celebes
Aged: 22
Next of kin upon enlistment: Mary Orgill
Parents: William Gladstone and Mary Louisa Albina Orgill of East Fremantle, WA
No image available

Private Frederick Norman SCHAEFER – VX19415

2/21st Australian Infantry Battalion

Date of birth: 9 March 1902
Place of birth: Urana, NSW
Date of death: 30 April 1945
Place of death: Ambon
Aged: 43
Next of kin upon enlistment: Martha Ann Schaefer of Devenish, VIC
Parents: William and Emilie Ernstine Schaefer of Albury, NSW
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia
Squadron Leader Daryl Maxwell SPROULE DFC – 250641

Number 77 Squadron, Royal Australia Air Force

Date of birth: 3 October 1917
Place of birth: Hobart, TAS
Date of death: 16 August 1943
Place of death: New Britain
Aged: 25
Next of kin upon enlistment: Herbert Sproule of Sandy Bay, TAS
Parents: Herbert Walter and Irene Pansy Sproule of Sandy Bay, TAS
Image: Australian War Memorial

Corporal Kenneth STEWART – WX6574

2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion

Date of birth: 23 June 1915
Place of birth: Yanderup, WA
Date of death: 30 April 1942
Place of death: Java
Aged: 26
Next of kin upon enlistment: James Stewart of Mount Lawley, WA
Parents: James Alexander and Amelia May Stewart of Mount Lawley, WA
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia
Corporal Henry Francis THOMPSON – WX4113
2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion
Date of birth: 10 April 1917
Place of birth: Marylands, WA
Date of death: 30 April 1942
Place of death: Java
Aged: 25
Next of kin upon enlistment: Helen Thompson of Bridgetown, WA
Parents: Henry Thomas and Helen Thompson of Bridgetown, WA
No image available

Private Sidney Arthur WEBBER – NX53777
2 Company, Australian Army Service Corps
Date of birth: 18 July 1917
Place of birth: Auburn, NSW
Date of death: 18 June 1945
Place of death: Sandakan
Aged: 27
Next of kin upon enlistment: Arthur Webber of Parramatta, NSW
Parents: Arthur Verey and Reta Emily Webber of Parramatta, NSW
Image: Australian War Memorial
Sergeant Bertram John WEST – TX3397
2/40th Australian Infantry Battalion
Date of birth: 19 May 1915
Place of birth: Wynyard, TAS
Date of death: 23 October 1942
Place of death: Timor
Aged: 27
Next of kin upon enlistment: Joyce Mary West of Wynyard, TAS
Parents: Bert and Eva Isabell West of Wynyard, TAS
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia

Sergeant Henry WHITTON – WX4758
2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion
Date of birth: 11 October 1906
Place of birth: Perth, WA
Date of death: 30 April 1942
Place of death: Java
Aged: 35
Next of kin upon enlistment: Delse Whitton of Inglewood, WA
Parents: Thomas James and Minnie Whitton
Image: Service Record, National Archives of Australia
The next of kin of all of these servicemen can register by calling 1800 333 362 or writing to:
honours.awards@defence.gov.au; or

Directorate of Honours and Awards
Department of Defence
PO Box 7952
CANBERRA BC  ACT  2610

Which next of kin can receive the honour?

Persons listed below in the immediate family of a deceased member are entitled to be granted unissued awards. This list is in descending priority of entitlement:

- Spouse/defacto spouse (relationship to the member at time of death)
- Child
- Grand child
- Parent
- Sibling

If there are no surviving members of the above list, other family members can apply for this award. They should clearly outline that there is no one from the above list surviving, that they are the closest surviving relative, and if they hold the members service medals.

For more information visit www.defence.gov.au/medals/FEPOW or call 1800 DEFENCE (1800 333 362)
In 2009 a similar public appeal was launched to locate the next of kin of 20 servicemen identified by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal, recommended by the Minister and approved by the Governor-General to be awarded the Commendation for Gallantry. As a result of this, 18 commendations have been presented to eligible family members.

There are two servicemen who are yet to have next of kin come forward to receive the honour on their behalf, they are:

**Sergeant Joseph Kenneth BELL – VX34637**

4 Anti Tank Regiment

*Date of birth:* 28 June 1918  
*Place of birth:* Gateshead England  
*Date of death:* 16 September 1942  
*Place of death:* Kuala Lumpur  
*Aged:* 27  
*Place of enlistment:* Royal Park, VIC  
*Next of kin upon enlistment:* J Bell  
*Parents:* Joseph and Frances Maud Bell of North Melbourne, VIC

**Major Alan MULL – NX12243**

Headquarters 8th Australian Division

*Date of birth:* 8 April 1897  
*Place of birth:* Lahou, India  
*Date of death:* 10 March 1943  
*Place of death:* Burma  
*Aged:* 47  
*Place of enlistment:* Paddington, NSW  
*Next of kin upon enlistment:* Edith Mull of Maroubra, NSW  
*Parents:* Arthur and Effie Mull of Maroubra, NSW