

Absolutely spot on! This deserves the widest possible support IMHO

Subject: Sacrifice and Recognition

Hi All,

Just posted a question to Libby Trickett nee Lenton at the Daily Telegraph website live blog.

1:08[Comment From Ray]

G'day Libby. Do you think it's appropriate that first time Olympic gold medal winners are awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) given most are in their late teens/early twenties?

1:10

Hi Ray. I think they are definitely deserving, even though are so young they have worked very hard to achieve their amazing results. Just because they are young, does not mean they are not deserving.

The youngest OAM Olympian is 18.

Questions sent to the Honours and Awards people at the Governor Generals office on the 4th April are still yet to be answered. Now read on.

Yours Sincerely

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We Served - We Gave - We Care

True Sacrifice and Recognition

There is no greater sacrifice than that where a man or woman gives his or her life for their country. A little over 102,000 Australian men and women have done just that in war, peacekeeping and peacetime service. Training for war is not without its costs with over 550 men and women paying the ultimate price in the ongoing service of this country.

This is not done for personal gain and accolades or in competition to beat others to become the best. It is done for a number of reasons, but not for the call of the motherland as was WW1 and WW2, and at this point in time certainly not because your number was drawn from a barrel.

King George IV recognised the sacrifice of those killed in World War One and the 1914-1918 Memorial Plaque, to be nicknamed the 'dead man's penny' was struck.

In early 1920 it was announced that the next-of-kin of all Australian servicemen and women whose deaths were attributable to the First World War would receive a memorial plaque and scroll "as a solace for bereavement and as a memento".

The memorial plaques were not uniquely Australian. In fact they were designed and produced in Britain and issued to commemorate all those who died as a result of war service from within the British Commonwealth. This however didn't follow on with World War 2, Korea, Vietnam and up to present day Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2005 nine men and women died when the SeaKing helicopter they were in crashed on the island of Nias during humanitarian assistance. When their bodies were repatriated and unloaded at the Sydney airport, the Indonesian government representative laid a medal on each casket in honour of their sacrifice. It wasn't a bravery medal as some were lead to believe. And what did our grateful government present? A sprig of wattle. There was nothing that could be presented to their next of kin.

The opinions that we didn't have something more befitting of the greatest sacrifice a man or woman could make for their country were varying. There was a lot of debate that followed regarding medals, memorials and recognition with both the Returned and Services League (RSL) and the Australian Defence Association (ADA) against a medal for those killed in service and that looking after the survivors and the next of kin was more important. Of course care is foremost and this is an ongoing aspect of most ESO's objectives.

The media reported Bill Crews national president of the RSL as saying in part:
"that tens of thousands of Australians have died on active service - mostly killed in battle - without receiving any kind of posthumous recognition."

"that armed forces personnel don't necessarily deserve a medal simply because, sadly, they are killed on the job."

And

"that people are given medals for valour or conspicuous service, but not simply for dying."

Neil James executive director ADA also stated that we shouldn't be giving medals to people just for dying doing their jobs.

Ms Kelly said she understood the RSL's concern that military medals and honours could be devalued, but there was strong community support to properly honour the nine who died in the crash taking aid to Indonesia's Nias Island.

Ms Kelly was the Minister for Veterans Affairs at that time.

The surprising thing about this is, King George IV posthumously recognised those killed in WW1. This fact is promoted on the RSL website under the symbolism link. Since the RSL is 90 years old and is so involved in commemoration and remembrance one would think they were aware of this precedence.

What finally eventuated as a result of the Sea King crash was the amendment to the Honours and Awards system that would allow previously ineligible Defence members an entitlement to the Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal (HOSM). This was only because the John Howard government was forced to fix the embarrassment that occurred. Eligibility for the HOSM for ADF members had been lobbied previously by the Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans Association (APPVA) and rejected. It should also be noted that the HOSM was introduced by the Howard government.

On top of this, those nine men and women's families would also receive the newly established Australian Defence Medal (ADM), a medal to acknowledge those who served in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The criteria enabled some one million Australians to be eligible with as little as three months training and two years part time in the case of most National Servicemen or four years reserve service.

In light of the RSL's stand on Honours & Awards for military service and the need to maintain its integrity it seems that it has failed and allowed hypocrisy to take over.

If the RSL see a medal for service death as devaluing the system what is its stance on the system of awards for military members doing their jobs at present?

OAM's, AM's, AO's, AC's and even CSC's have been awarded for what can only be described as questionable reasons. Some examples are listed as follows.

Conspicuous Service Medal (non operational) - For outstanding service as Chief of Staff at Headquarters Air Lift Group. For outstanding service as Officer Commanding and Music Director of the Australian Army Bands Sydney and Melbourne. For outstanding service in recruit entry and specialist seamanship training. For outstanding service as a Rifle Section Commander of Alpha Company, the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment.

OAM (non operational) - For meritorious service as a Regimental Sergeant Major in the Australian Regular Army and the Army Reserve. For meritorious service as a Chief Petty Officer Electronic Technician in the Royal Australian Navy.

Conspicuous Service Cross (non operational) - For outstanding achievement as the Director of Personnel Capability - Army. For outstanding achievement as the Commanding Officer/ Chief Instructor of the Melbourne University Regiment. For outstanding as Deputy Director Remuneration Reform Project 2007 within Air Force Headquarters Personnel Branch. For outstanding achievement as the Deputy Command and Chief of Staff, Joint Task Force 636 for Operation ACOLYTE. (Note: Operation Acolyte was ADF support to the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth games. 2600 medallions were presented to ADF members involved). For outstanding achievement in the remuneration of Australian Defence Force personnel.

AO (non operational) - For exceptional service to the Australian Army as Assistant Commander 2nd Division and as Commander 5th Brigade. In recognition of service to the Army as Assistant Chief of the General Staff - Material.

Centenary Medal - For outstanding contribution in the repair and maintenance of the Leopard Tank.

One would think that a promotion and/or a posting into a particular job would be appropriate recognition of a job well done.

Now considering the selfless sacrifice of our ADF personnel to serve and the unfortunate loss of life that has cut short some 102,000 lives, a unique medal/medallion to show gratitude would be cherished by the families. It would not be worn with other medals on either left or right breast pocket.

Let's compare the fore mentioned with sacrifice of a different kind.

Our sportsmen and women are often referred to as heroes. People who have made great personal sacrifice such as swimming lap after lap at 5am day after day. And what is this 'sacrifice' for? To be the best and win a gold medal at the Olympics.

Most people who indulge in this glory seeking path are purely driven for to be known as the best swimmer, runner, jumper, hockey team and so on. The Holy Grail sought is the gold medal. To stand upon the dais with a gold medal around your neck would be the pinnacle of your effort and sacrifice. But wait there's more. What else could you get for winning an Olympic gold medal? Well if it's your first, you'll also receive an Order of Australia Medal (OAM).

The Order of Australia medal was created in 1975. Olympians who won gold medals starting 'winning' the OAM as early as 1988.

The small example of recipients, their age at time of the OAM and the reason for the OAM is as follows:

John Anderson gold medallist 1972 Munich games. OAM awarded 1987.

Libby Trickett, nee; Lenton. Received OAM 26/1/05 at age 20 for service to sport as a gold medallist at the Athens 2004 Olympics.

Leisel Jones. Received OAM 26/1/05 at age 20 for service to sport as a gold medallist at the Athens 2004 Olympics.

Alice Mills. Received OAM 26/1/05 at age 18 for service to sport as a gold medallist at the Athens 2004 Olympics.

Grant Hackett. Received OAM 26/1/01 at age 21 for service to sport as a gold medallist at the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

Adam Pine. Received OAM 26/1/01 at age 25 for service to sport as a gold medallist at the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

Kerri Pottharst & Natalie Cook. Beach volleyball Sydney 2000 Olympics.

Steven Bradbury. Received OAM 26/1/07 for service to sport as a Gold Medallist at the Salt Lake City 2002 Winter Olympic Games (known as accidental hero when all other competitors fell).

Louise Dobson. Received OAM 26/1/97 in recognition of service to sport as a gold medallist at the Atlanta Olympic Games 1996. Note: Louise was member of women's hockey team.

Clint Robinson. Received OAM 26/1/93 for service to sport as a gold medallist in the k1 1000 metres canoeing event at the Olympic games Barcelona 1992.

Women's hockey team. Received OAM 12/6/89. In recognition of service to the sport of hockey. (As gold medallist Seoul 1988. 11 of the 12 members received the OAM).

Women's hockey team Atlanta 1996. Received OAM 26/11/97. In recognition of service to sport as a gold medallist at the Atlanta Olympic Games 1996. (Rechelle Hawkes received OAM as a member of the gold winning hockey team in 1988).

So by this stage we can say without any doubt that the men and women who have died in times of war and peace have been left without true reverence.

The current system dictates that with the ADM, the next of kin can apply for it if the person dies in a compensable situation prior to the 4 year eligibility mark. Unfortunately the ADM fails to truly recognise service especially where death occurs due to the order of wearing honours and awards. According to the website 'It's an Honour' the ADM comes after the Australian Sports Medal and Centenary Medal in order of precedence.

It appears our Olympic gold medallists are recognised better than some killed in the service of their country.

There are many who believe those killed in service should have a form of special recognition. One that is so restrictive in criteria that its integrity will remain steadfast.

What are the options? The reintroduction of a memorial plaque? The establishment of a new medallion?

Eligibility for this would be for those killed in warlike/operational service, peacekeeping and peacetime service whilst performing their duties. Travel to and from work, suicide and death by mis-adventure etc would be excluded and the type of service could be indicated by the colour of the ribbon.

This honour could only be presented to the next of kin by the Prime Minister thus ensuring the reverence of the occasion and loss of life.

It is realistic and contrary to the RSL and other detractors, a needed recognition of military sacrifice.

The following images are accompanied with a description and a proposed design for Australia by Eric Stein.

Whether in the form of a cross or a medallion and whatever the name, the intention is to honour the memory of a sailor, soldier, airman or officer who has lost their life in the service of their country.

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National President
Injured Service Persons Association (Peacetime Injuries)

Memorial Plaque



It was decided during World War One that all next of kin of Empire service personnel who lost their lives as a result of the war would be presented with a memorial plaque and commemorative scroll from the King and country.

World War 2



This badge/medallion was issued to the nearest female relative of any Australian Serviceman/woman killed as a result of war service during WW2. Each "star" on the bar represented a close family member killed in action. Too many had more than 1 "star".

New Zealand Memorial Cross



Instituted: 12 September 1947 by King George VI. Awarded to the next-of-kin of NZ service personnel killed on active service (since 1995, this includes deaths during peace-keeping operations). Award is made to the nearest female relative - if there is both a mother and a wife 2 Crosses are awarded.

Proposed Australian Memorial Cross



Canadian Silver Cross

The Memorial Cross, the gift of Canada, was issued as a memento of personal loss and sacrifice on the part of widows and mothers of Canadian sailors and soldiers who laid down their lives for their country during the war;
The Memorial Cross (more often referred to as the Silver Cross) was first instituted by Order-in-Council 2374, dated December 1, 1919. It was awarded to mothers and widows (next of kin) of Canadian soldiers who died on active duty or whose death was consequently attributed to such duty.

Recent events have (including the Blackhawk Disaster and the Sea King crash in Indonesia) again highlighted the fact that the Australian Awards system has fallen behind our needs particularly as it relates to use of the Military in non-military, non-warlike Operations. One major flaw is the lack of a way of commemorating service by personnel killed in action or in training accidents.

References:

<http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwi/articles/deadmanspenny.aspx>

<http://www.diggerhistory.info/pages-medals/memorial-cross.htm>

<http://www.rsl.org.au/>

http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/memorial_scroll/plaque.asp

<http://www.theage.com>

[au/news/Opinion/Medalling-with-our-long-history-of-sacrifice/2005/04/13/111321680535.html](http://www.theage.com.au/news/Opinion/Medalling-with-our-long-history-of-sacrifice/2005/04/13/111321680535.html)

Per

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PS. Food for thought. And time some people showed they are capable of doing more than feeding from the trough of the blood of the dead:

