THE WEARING OF AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

AFA Guidance

Air Force Association™

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THE WEARING OF AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. Air Force veterans have served their nation and earned the honour to wear the RAAF uniform and awards and decorations with pride. However, the wearing of awards and decorations as an Air Force Association member brings obligations and responsibilities to protect the reputation and honour of the member, the Association, the Air Force, and the awards and decorations. The inappropriate wearing of awards and decorations can adversely impact the reputation of the organisation and the individual, and in some cases it is illegal. The aim of this instruction is to clearly articulate how and when AFA members should wear awards and decorations. It is relevant to all AFA members including former members of the RAAF, current serving members of the RAAF who are members of the Association and AFA members who have not served in the RAAF.

WEARING OF RAAF UNIFORM, AWARDS AND DECORATIONS BY SERVING RAAF MEMBERS IN THE ASSOCIATION

2. AFA Members who are serving members of the RAAF (either Permanent or Reserve) are to wear uniform, awards and decorations in accordance with RAAF regulations. Such members should only wear uniform when on duty or for specific ceremonial events (Anzac Day, Remembrance Day).

WEARING OF RAAF UNIFORM BY FORMER MEMBERS

3. In accordance with the Air Force Dress Manual, former members of the RAAF who were not discharged under adverse terms may wear the RAAF uniform as follows:

    a. Invited to an official service related function where the wearing of uniform is appropriate.
    b. Attending a funeral where the wearing of uniform is appropriate.
    c. Attending Anzac Day, Remembrance Day or other official commemorative ceremonies.

4. The wearing of uniform by former members is not mandatory and suitable civilian clothing may be worn if desired. When wearing Air Force uniform, former members are to adhere to Air Force grooming standards and ensure the uniform is of good fit and well maintained. Former members are permitted to purchase certain items of dress from clothing stores. However, it is acceptable for former members to wear the style of uniform and accoutrements that were in use at the time of their separation from the Air Force.

5. At all times, the uniform should be worn with pride and dignity as it represents an organisation with a distinguished history of service to the Nation.

THE WEARING OF AWARDS AND DECORATIONS WITH CIVILIAN ATTIRE BY EX-SERVING MEMBERS

6. Medals may be worn by ex-serving members with civilian attire for specific events and activities as follows:

    a. **Anzac Day.** Dawn services, marches, gunfire breakfasts and commemorative services.
    b. **Remembrance Day.** Commemorative services
    c. Other official commemorative events
    d. Military funerals or memorial services
    e. Official parades and ceremonies where military dress is worn.
    f. Events and activities where the organiser has specifically indicated medals may be worn.

7. Medals awarded to the recipient are worn on the left side of the chest or jacket. This includes campaign medals, bravery medals, and service medals issued by the Australian Government and foreign awards authorised by the Governor-General for wearing. They should be worn in the correct order of precedence dictated by the Governor-General and not include unauthorised medals. Medals should be worn in a horizontal line, with the top of the medals positioned at a consistent level. Ribbon bars should not be worn with civilian attire. State issued medals are worn on the right breast and should not be combined with Australian Government approved awards.

8. **Medal Clasps.** A clasp is a metal bar worn on a medal ribbon to signify additional service or a new event for which the same medal has been awarded. Clasps are worn in the order in which the events occurred. The first (oldest) clasp is placed at the base of the ribbon, and any subsequent clasps are mounted above it, in chronological order. All clasps are worn on a single ribbon for that medal.

9. **Miniature medals:** Miniature medals are worn on occasions when evening dress or a dinner jacket is worn at a black-tie function as follows:

    a. Formal military dinners and mess functions.
    b. Black-tie events where the dress code specifies the wearing of decorations.
    c. Formal receptions and evening galas hosted by military or government organisations.

10. If miniature medals are being worn by forebears, they can be worn on the right, any time of day.

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11. **Citations.** Unit Citations are awarded to a group for a collective act of gallantry or distinguished service. Australian Army and Royal Australian Air Force Unit Citations are worn on the right side of the chest, above the pocket. The exception is a Group Bravery Citation worn on the left side, roughly one centimetre above the medal rack. The Royal Australian Navy has followed a historic tradition where its Unit Citations are worn on the left side of the chest, positioned below the individual's medals. State-specific citations for a specific event (e.g., Bushfires) are worn according to the guidelines of the awarding agency and are not authorised for wearing on Defence Force uniforms.

12. **Defence Commendations.** Commendation Badges such as the Chief of Defence Force Commendation or the Chief of Air Force Commendation are worn on the right above the medals. Commendation badges are not familiar to many outside the ADF and so are not normally worn with civilian clothing. However, they may be worn on civilian coats and jackets on ADF related occasions where the recognition of the award of a commendation would be appropriate (e.g. at a memorial service held on a Defence base). No more than three commendations should be worn.

13. **Individual Commendations:** If a person has been personally commended for an act of bravery, such as receiving The Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct, this is worn directly on the coat on the left side of the chest, after any medal ribbons.

14. **Pins and Badges.** Personal pins and badges should generally be worn on the left, typically on the lapel, and positioned above medals. Badges should only be worn by the person entitled to wear them and only when appropriate.

    a. **Qualification and Charge Badges.** These are professional qualifications worn on the left side of the chest, above any medals or ribbons and below Combat Badges (if applicable). A person wearing civilian clothes should only display a single Qualification or Charge Badge.
    b. **Association Badge (e.g. AFA, RSL):** Association badges are usually worn on the left side, on the lapel. AFA members can wear other badges if desired and appropriate but when representing AFA or attending an Air Force specific commemoration or event, AFA members should defer to wearing the AFA Badge when desiring to wear an association badge.
    c. **Combat Badges:** Combat badges, such as the Infantry Combat Badge are worn in a unique and prominent position on the left side of the chest, centred above the ribbon bar or medal set.
    d. **Flying Badges.** A Flying Badge may be worn on civilian attire, in conjunction with medals on appropriate occasions. Where members qualify for more than one flying badge, only one flying badge should be worn as per Air Force Manual.
    e. **Covenant Lapel Pin:** The Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant Lapel Pin should be worn on the left lapel and provides the opportunity for veterans to be easily identified when not wearing their medals or uniforms.
    f. **Returned from Active Service Badge.** The Returned from Active Service Badge is worn on the left lapel when medals are not being worn, generally above an association badge.

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THE WEARING OF AWARDS AND DECORATIONS OF A FAMILY MEMBER

15. It is appropriate to honour the service of a family member by wearing their respective medals at a commemorative event. In such cases, the following should be applied:

    a. The medals of the family member should be worn over the right breast to indicate they are not being worn by the original recipient and the person is honouring a member of their family.
    b. One should not wear a relatives' neck medals, unit citations, commendations, or association badges. These are personal to the individual who earned them.
    c. It is respectful to wear one family members medals only. This ensures that the focus remains on the individual's service, rather than a display of multiple family honours.
    d. It is not appropriate to wear the uniform of a family member
    e. With the veteran's permission, and as long as they are worn on the right side of the chest, it is appropriate for a family member to wear the medals of a living veteran. The practice of wearing replica medals is a meaningful way for family members to show their respect and pride in a living veteran's service. Replicas are often worn by children or grandchildren and it allows the veteran to see their legacy being honoured by the next generation. Many veterans and their families commission a replica set for this very purpose.
    f. Serving members in RAAF uniform may wear the medals of a family member on major commemorative events such as Anzac Day.

THE WEARING OF UNOFFICIAL AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

16. Over the years various organisations have created and distributed 'commemorative' or unofficial medals to mark specific military service. Likewise, AFA members may have received unofficial awards from organisations for other service. These awards and decorations have no official status and should not be worn at ceremonial or commemorative functions. If Commemorative Medals are worn, they should be positioned on the right breast and not mixed with Service Medals or Decorations. Only those medals, decorations and honours, which have been created under the prerogative of the Crown, have official status.

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THE WEARING OF ROSEMARY AND POPPIES

17. Rosemary and Anzac Day. Rosemary is the traditional symbol of remembrance worn on Anzac Day in Australia. This is because rosemary grows wild on the Gallipoli peninsula, giving it special significance. A sprig of rosemary is appropriate to be worn on the left lapel or above one medals on their left side.

18. The Poppy and Remembrance Day. The red poppy became a symbol of remembrance due to its association with the battlefields of World War I. After the war, poppies were among the first flowers to bloom in the devastated landscapes of northern France and Belgium. This striking image inspired Canadian doctor Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae to write the famous poem "In Flanders Fields" in 1915, which reflects on the sacrifices made by soldiers and the resilience of the poppy amidst destruction. A single poppy is appropriate to be worn on the left lapel or above one's medals on their left side.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

19. It is an offence to falsely represent as a serving or ex-service member of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The Defence Act 1903, Sections 80A and 80B, makes it an offence for a person to wear a service decoration that was not conferred on them. However, the wearing of a family member's medals on the right side allows one to follow correct protocol not in violation of this law.

20. Misrepresenting service is not only an offence but is also considered poor taste, immoral, not in accordance with the values of AFA or our Nation and an insult to those who have served and sacrificed for our nation. Fraudulent wearing of medals attracts penalties under Federal regulations and may attract administrative action by the respective Air Force Association Division or Branch. When AFA members are seen to be wearing awards and decorations inappropriately, they should be immediately requested to remove the offending items.

RESPONSIBILITIES

21. AFA Leadership. The AFA leadership at all levels is responsible for the adherence to the correct and appropriate wearing of awards and decorations by their members and at ceremonies, events and activities.

22. AFA Members. It is the responsibility of all AFA members to adhere to the correct requirements of wearing of medals and decorations and to correct members where required on incorrect wearing.

CONCLUSION

23. Air Force veterans have served their nation and earned the honour to wear the RAAF uniform and awards and decorations with pride. However, the wearing of awards and decorations as an Air Force Association member brings obligations and responsibilities to protect the reputation and honour of the member, the Association, the Air Force, and the awards and decorations. Air Force Association members should know where, when and how they can wear awards and decorations with pride with civilian attire. Adhering to the requirements and guidance of this Instruction will ensure they will wear awards and decorations appropriately with the pride and honour they have deserved.

Joe Iervasi
President
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Annex:
A. Wearing of Awards and Decorations Example

How to wear your Awards and Decorations

Medals level, coat buttoned up

Images courtesy of Department of Defence

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