



# Military Brotherhood MMC Inc

SOP 10 – 05 April 2010

## Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

### 10

## Wearing of Honours and Awards and Other Commercial Items on Club Vests

### References

A: RSL Protocols at [www.rsl.org.au/](http://www.rsl.org.au/)

B: SOP 3 – Club Standards of Dress (CSOD)

### General

1. Military Brotherhood MMC mandates the wearing of Australian and Commonwealth and Allied Force decorations on Club vests.
2. However, the Club cannot and does not encourage the wearing of unofficial commemorative medals or other non-issue items in combination with official ones on the left side of the vest. Wearing unofficial commemoratives with issued medals destroys the integrity of Australia's honours and awards system, and demeans the genuine service of the wearer.
3. The following rules are to be observed by all members when wearing Australian, Commonwealth or Allied honours and awards, other military-orientated items and bike run or event badges on Club vests:
  - a. If you were awarded an honour or award by the government of the country you served, at the time you were living in that country, then those honours and awards must be worn on the **left breast**;
  - b. If you had to buy the item from a commercial outlet then you were *NOT* issued that item by the government of the country you served, at the time you were living in that country. Therefore those items should be racked separately and worn on the **right breast** preferably below any Next of Kin (NOK) medals you may be wearing;
  - c. Commercially purchased items, eg, those not issued, are *NOT* to be worn on the left breast;
  - d. To confirm the Club's position with respect to the protocols as indicated in reference A, mixing of issued awards and honours with commercially purchase items on the **left breast** is strictly forbidden;
  - e. If you served in the Australian Defence Force or a Commonwealth or Allied Defence Force, and their present Standards of Dress (SOD) indicate the wearing of a particular



## Military Brotherhood MMC Inc

SOP 10 – 05 April 2010

---

embellishment, whether on the left or right breast, then you are entitled to wear that embellishment;

- f. Motorcycle run patches and event patches are to be worn on the right side of the vest as indicated in reference B; and
  - g. If an honour or award, or any embellishment is in dispute as to where it should be worn on the Club vest, then the Club Executive – in committee - shall consider the situation and make a ruling.
4. Serving members are governed by the Defence Act on the wearing of medals. Commemoratives and Association medals are not authorised to be worn on Service uniforms by serving members.
5. Members who are no longer serving (ex-serving members) are not governed by the Defence Act, but currently accepted protocols still apply. These protocols are based on the Defence Act governing serving members. Ex-serving members can better understand the protocols as defined by the Returned Services League (RSL) at: [www.rsl.org.au/](http://www.rsl.org.au/) Click on the "Information" button and then click on the "Medal Sequence" button. Otherwise the following excerpt from RSL protocols are attached as Annex A.
6. This SOP is to be read in conjunction with reference B.



## Military Brotherhood MMC Inc

SOP 10 – 05 April 2010

ANNEX A TO  
SOP 10 - WEARING OF HONOURS AND AWARDS  
AND OTHER COMMERCIAL ITEMS  
ON CLUB VESTS

### The Correct Wearing of Medals

(Reference A: RSL Protocols at [www.rsl.org.au/](http://www.rsl.org.au/))

1. Medals are worn with the obverse side showing. Medals conferred by the Australian government are impressed or more latterly engraved on the rim (or in the case of stars and some more recent medals, engraved on the reverse) with the service number, name and initials of the recipient and worn on the **left breast**.
2. If you are wearing medals of a relative, then in accordance with reference A you would wear them on your **right breast**. For more information about the order in which you should wear specific medals, see reference A weblink. Riband bars (often erroneously called ribbon bars) generally are worn with each riband between 10mm to 13mm high and usually 30mm wide (some gallantry and older medals have wider riband than the standard 32mm), again mounted invisibly with a brooch or clutch pin fitting. Riband bars are worn **only** whilst in uniform and the length by protocol is restricted to rows of ribands with a maximum of four ribands wide.
3. Riband or ribbon bars, are worn **only** whilst in uniform.
4. It must be stated; there are no laws relating to how medals should be worn other than those applicable to serving personnel, and these are defined in the relevant orders and instructions like ASOD (Army Standing Orders for Dress) relating to each branch of the service and enforced by the Defence Force Discipline Act.
5. There are however, accepted standards called protocols which have been developed by ex-service organisations like the RSL for retired or ex-service personnel that relate to the wearing of medals with civilian dress.
6. For example; medal entitlements are worn on the **left breast**, and generally court or swing mounted on an invisible mounting brooch affixed to a jacket or coat. Often there is a requirement to wear medals **only** on a shirt (particularly in the case of currently serving military, fire, emergency services and police service personnel to name a few) in uniform.

### Improper Use of Service Decorations

7. The Defence Act 1903 (as amended) does however have penalties for those who misrepresent themselves as returned service men or women, and those penalties have been stiffened considerably. S80B of the Act states;



## Military Brotherhood MMC Inc

SOP 10 – 05 April 2010

---

- a. Subject to this section, a person shall not wear a service decoration unless he is the person upon whom the decoration was conferred.
- b. Where the person upon whom a service decoration was conferred has died, it is not an offence against subsection (1) for a member of the family of that person to wear the service decoration if the member of the family does not represent himself as being the person upon whom the decoration was conferred.
- c. It is not an offence against subsection (1) for a person to wear a service decoration in the course of a dramatic or other visual representation (including such a representation to be televised) or in the making of a cinematograph film.
- d. A person shall not falsely represent himself as being the person upon whom a service decoration has been conferred.
- e. A person shall not deface or destroy, by melting or otherwise, a service decoration.

Penalty: \$3,300.

8. Service Decoration is defined under the Act as; Service Decoration — means any order, medal, badge, clasp, bar or other insignia that was or may be conferred for valour, distinguished conduct or service, long service, good conduct, devotion to duty, efficiency, participation in a campaign or other warlike operation or for any other reason on a member of the Defence Force or of any armed force of any part of the Queen's dominions or of any Power allied or associated with Australia in any war or warlike operations in which Australia is or has been engaged, and includes the ribbon of any such order, medal, badge, clasp or other decoration and any colourable imitation, representation or miniature of any such order, medal, badge, clasp or other decoration. This therefore refers to any award.
9. Official medals then are only to be worn by those to whom the medal has been conferred, generally by the Australian or British government, or those of Australia's allies. The major exception to this ruling occurs on commemorative occasions like Remembrance Day (November 11), Viet Nam Veterans' (Long Tan) Day (August 18) and Anzac Day (April 25). On these occasions, descendants wear the medals of deceased recipients but usually acceptably only on the **right breast**.
10. Medals are worn in specific order, called the Order of Precedence, and the award of some medals preclude the wearing of others. For example a Viet Nam Logistics medal is not awarded (or worn) in addition to an Australian Viet Nam medal, or in the granting of both the ASM (Australian Service Medal 1945-1975), and the current ASM (1975+) to a long-serving career soldier, sailor or airman/woman, the latter would fall second as the first recognises prior service. The accepted protocol of wearing medals on the left breast of the awardee can be traced back to the time of the crusades in the 13th century, when knights of the realm wore their badge of honour close to their heart. The left side was generally the side that was covered by the shield which was held on the left arm protecting both the heart and the badge of honour.
11. Miniature medals should only be worn at formal dress functions, after dark.



## Military Brotherhood MMC Inc

SOP 10 – 05 April 2010

---

12. Many unit, ship and squadron associations around the world have sponsored the manufacture and award of medals to commemorate service and/or action. In addition, medals have been struck to recognise service by police officers who have served less than the prescribed time for the award of long service medals and members of emergency services organisations including ambulance, fire and rescue services. Some commemoratives readily seen by the ex-service fraternity are the Regular Forces and CMF/Reserve Forces medals, Front Line medal, The Rats of Tobruk medal, the FESR (Far East Strategic Reserve) Medal, the Occupation of Japan (British Commonwealth Occupation Forces) Medal and HMAS Perth Medal to name just a few.
13. Several commemorative medals are official. Issued and recognised by government, a recent example is the Australian National Service Medal, the 80th Anniversary of the Armistice Medal which the Prime Minister personally presented to all surviving WW1 veterans and which has been in huge demand by the families of WW1 veterans in recognition of the service of the veterans, the Centenary Medal of Federation and the Australian Sports Medal.
14. When it comes to the somewhat controversial subject of wearing commemorative medals in Australia, The Military Historical Society of Australia based in Canberra in its journal of April 1978, wrote;

*From the number of inquires, there is obviously misunderstanding or lack of knowledge presently causing confusion, about what awards, private individuals may wear. In a nutshell, an individual, other than in uniform, may wear any award, foreign, private (ie; club or association) etc, that he or she has been awarded; there is no law on what may be worn, except of course for falsely wearing awards or medals, although there is a suggested order of procedure of wearing awards. A private citizen is not even bound by these rules of precedence and could wear his VC at the end of his service medals, without breaking the law.*

15. The Reserve Forces Day Council offers this advice in its Ceremonial Manual:

***Medals such as commemorative or souvenir medals must not be worn in such a way as to be confused in the public eye with officially issued campaign and service medals. The protocol ruling is that such medals should NOT be worn at all, and therefore on Reserve Forces Day Parades members should conform. Their wearing by members of Banner Parties is unacceptable and will be viewed as detrimental to the assessment process when judging Associations for annual Parade awards.***

16. We are often asked for our view, and it is this:
  - a. Commemorative medals are struck and sold all over the free world, and have been for decades - as a matter of fact longer than that. The first medals were commemorative; struck and awarded for service by private commanders in individual Roman Legions, not by the government of Rome or even the Roman Army.



## Military Brotherhood MMC Inc

SOP 10 – 05 April 2010

---

- b. We sell several commemorative medals and in fact we encourage the use of commemorative medals to be included in framed collections along with other service memorabilia as a token of service. More particularly when there is no formal official recognition available.
- c. We have supplied commemorative medals for presentations (as a mark of service and respect when no other official recognition is available) to widows and relatives of injured and deceased service people, and framed Community Service Medals for a raft of reasons, and we continue to do so.
- d. **Having stated that, we cannot and do not, encourage the wearing of unofficial commemorative medals with official ones. *Wearing unofficial commemoratives with issued medals we believe, destroys the integrity of Australia's honours and awards system, and demeans the genuine service of the wearer.***
- e. Those who are determined to wear them however (**remembering there is no law precluding the wearing of commemorative medals**), should be wearing them on a separate rack from official medals and wearers should abide by the guidelines laid down by the various ex-service organisation peak bodies.

MB MMC COPYRIGHT 2009