

Hon. Kevin Andrews MP  
Level 1/651 Doncaster Road  
Doncaster Vic 3108

Dear Mr Andrews

**Subject: Appropriate medallic recognition for National Service defence personnel**

I am writing to you as my local representative and ask that you put forward the following submissions to the appropriate parties and in the appropriate format together any necessary supporting reference material.

As I no longer have the cognitive capacity to put together such a comprehensive and extensive submission I am relying on you as my local member of parliament, as a former Minister of Defence, as well as a Minister for the Ageing. It is time someone is able to draw a line under the Vietnam War period in our military history. I hope that person is you.

***The Vietnam War period:***

Like no other period in Australia's military history the Vietnam period is like a cancer. No one wants to know about it, talk about it. The militant demonstrations, both sides of government at each-other's throats, but the worst of all was the treatment of those who served by those they served on behalf of. Just bury it and move on. However, some of us are not able to just move on. Decades after the war was over there were those that would tweak around the edges by either changing legibility criteria for existing medallic recognition or implementing new ones.

Medallic recognition should not be confused with any entitlement to a pension or disability payment. The two are not mutually inclusive.

***Submission to be put forward:***

1. National service to be given an operational name
2. Define "support" in general and specifically as it relates to the VLSM
3. Anniversary of National Service Medal
4. Review application of "nature of service"
5. Australian Defence Medal - clasp

***1: National Service to be given an operational name:***

The Australian government received a request from a foreign government for military support. Prime Minister Menzies knew that in order to meet the military commitment he made to the South Vietnam government, the strength of our regular defence force would

need to be increased from 27,500 to, and maintained at, 33,000. In order to achieve this strength, the Prime Minister implemented National Service through an Act of parliament.

National Service would require, 800,000, 8 percent of the Australian population of the time, to register for the ballot.

Approximately 63,000 of those registered were balloted in were required to undertake active service pre-deployment training. They were liable for special overseas service including Vietnam. Approximately a third of those balloted in serviced in Vietnam while others serviced overseas on our northern borders.

In stark and perverse contrast, “Operation Resolute” as an example, currently has a force of 600 has operational status compared to the 3,000 men each year that rotated throughout the Vietnam war, do not.

- There was a request from a foreign government
- An Act of parliament was required
- There were clear short and long-term military objectives

An operational name should be given. I would suggest “Vietnam”, “Nth & SE Asia” or “Korea” for the earlier national service.

Yes, an operational name would give operational service. The existing Australian Service Medal 1945-75 could be used. Only a clasp with the operational name would need to be created. It would be medallic recognition only and not imply or give any pension or disability entitlement.

Precedent. The Australian Service Medal 1939-45 was given to all personnel completing 18 months service including those that only serviced within Australia. Even this medal was later tweaked in 1996 to require just 30 days service in lieu of the 18 months for earlier eligibility.

## ***2: Define “Support” in general and specifically as it relates to the VLSM:***

When considering what constitutes “support” in the spirit of the award it must be remembered that the Prime Minister, Mr Menzies, could not provide the required level of support to the South Vietnam government without maintaining the core strength of the ADF at the level of 33,000. Whether the troops remained at home awaiting deployment or where deployed is in fact irrelevant. Without the core strength at home or abroad Australian could not meet its obligation to the government of South Vietnam. It is for this reason that the eligibility for the award of the VLSM must be revisited, as other awards have been amended from time to time.

Many medals have been created initially with specific eligibility criteria only to have those criteria amended over time when someone revisited the circumstances for eligibility with fresh eyes.

The General Service Medal 1962 was instituted to supersede the Naval General Service Medal 1915 and the General Service Medal 1918 (Army and RAF). The GSM 1962 was issued

with clasps which define the service for which the award was made. From 24/12/1962 to 29/5/1964 this was issued with the clasp South Vietnam.

Once again, the medal criteria were tweaked. In 1968 the Vietnam Medal was issued from 29/5/1964 to 27/1/1973.

The Vietnam Logistic and Support Medal was established in 1993 for those who had served in Vietnam but the period of service was less than the 6 months required for the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. (How perverse that a soldier that fought at the battle of Long Tan was not entitled to the RVCMB because he was repatriated before 181 days service in Vietnam). The VLSM was to recognise those who had served in Vietnam for relative short periods. Periods up to but less than six months.

This eligibility was later revisited in 2012 to include members who had served outside Vietnam, principally Thailand at the Ubon air force base. It was further amended to include civilian fly in fly out entertainers.

The Vietnam Medal covers all those with boots on the ground in Vietnam. If the VLSM eligibility can be extended to include those members outside Vietnam it should include all members having completed active service pre-deployment training and were ready and willing to be deployed.

### ***3: Anniversary of National Service Medal:***

The word "anniversary" should be struck off the Department of Defence, Defence Honours & Awards.

The NSM is just that. A medal recognising any period of National Service. To tokenize it as some sort of participation event like a school raffle is degrading those who served during those periods. The Victoria Cross is the Victoria Cross. "It's fifty years since the last VC so let's call it the anniversary of the VC medal". I think not.

The NSM is the NSM and it's time due respect and regard should be given to those who served.

Members already have their medals (most) so it is only a matter of issuing clasps for either Korea or Vietnam. Yes, some national servicemen served outside Australia but they would have operational service medals.

### ***4: Review application of "Nature of Service":***

Warlike, Non-warlike and Peacetime. So simple yet so complex.

As mentioned earlier, the main pushback when it come NOS is the fear that recognition of some kind of service in one form or another will carry over into an entitlement for a benefit payment.

Non-warlike service. Non-warlike operations.

Non-warlike service is service of a kind that is determined to be non-warlike service by the Minister for Defence. (Therefore, the Defence Minister can make the determination as to application of the non-warlike service to a particular event)

Non-warlike operations are those military activities short of warlike operations where there is a risk associated with tasks and where the application of force is limited to self-defence. Casualties could occur but are not expected (operations in this context mean function not a designated "operation" such as Resolute or Slipper). These Operations encompass but are not limited to:

- ...
- ...
- Other operations requiring the application of minimum force to affect the protection of personnel or property.

During WW2 the ASM 1938-1945, was issued to members of the ADF who only served within Australia. However, the AASM (Australian Active Service Medal 1939-1945) would be awarded to those members who only served within Australia but who saw service during the bombing raids on Darwin.

On completing my active service pre-deployment training, I was a qualified corporal in the Provost Corps (1971-73). While my service was limited to mainland Australia I and my fellow military policemen, were required to affect the protection of personnel and property. There are those that would argue this role to be our normal daily duty. However, it needs to be remembered that these years were the darkest years in Australia's military history.

At the same time 63,000 young men were balloted to send them off to war, 300,000 militant civilians were making violent protests against the war. These were not peaceful times going about normal duties.

As MP's we were on both day and night patrols. At every night parade prior to going out on patrol we were reminded of the need for extra vigilance due to the civil unrest in the general community. On one specific occasion we were made aware that Simpson Barracks Signal Unit was a target for a mass demonstration. These were not normal daily duties and we were subject to risks which could require the application of force in protection of self and ADF property.

While Australian troop numbers in Vietnam had been significantly reduced to approximately 250 at the time of my service, Australia needed to ensure it maintained a safe withdrawal strategy. Under such circumstances the likelihood of additional military police needing to be deployed to South Vietnam was a real possibility.

I would ask that the activities of military police within Australia be declared as non-war-like for the above reasons.

**5: Australian Defence Medal – Clasp**

The Australian Defence Medal is issued to recognise those who have efficiently completed either:

- An initial enlistment period, or
- Four years' service

This medal in no way identifies the circumstances of that service, merely the passing of time.

Why have any clasps at all? These are used to recognise the circumstances of the service. Take the ASM as an example. There are some thirteen individual clasps which can be attached to the ASM. For those who received the ADM during the Vietnam War period, I believe the South Vietnam clasp should be authorised to be issued to such recipients of the ADM. The South Vietnam clasp already exists as it is the clasp for the General Service Medal 24/12/1962 to 29/5/1964.

I would ask that the activities of the military police within Australia be declared as non-warlike operations for the above reasons.

Yours sincerely

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