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Recognition for Peace Keepers

The independent Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal are inquiring into the recognition for Defence Personnel who served as peacekeepers since 1947. For details of the inquiry, click [here](#) (pdf 150Kb).

DVA Christmas Hours

DVA office closure over Christmas 2009 can be found [here](#). (65Kb pdf)

The Department of Veterans' Affairs' offices will close between 5pm on Christmas Eve and 9am Monday 4 January 2010, however key services will continue to be available to the veteran community during this period, including:

- crisis counselling – VVCS–Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service offers 24-hour crisis counselling through *Veterans' Line*. This service is available toll free on **1800 011 046** to veterans and peacekeepers of all conflicts, their families and eligible members of the Defence Force;
- transport – if transport is not booked prior to the Christmas period, it will need to be paid for up-front and reimbursement can be sought from DVA at a later date;
- hospital admissions – doctors can admit DVA patients into hospital and request admissions approval, where required, when DVA re-opens on Monday 4 January 2010;
- Defence Service Homes Insurance – help with policy and claim enquiries is available 24-hours a day on **1300 552 662**, while payments can be made on **1300 304 989**, for the cost of a local call or via the website www.dsh.gov.au

Pension pay days will not be affected by the Christmas shutdown arrangements.

District Branch Newsletter

The November issue of the Sunshine Coast District Newsletter can be found [here](#).(1.9Mb pdf)

The Timor-Leste Solidarity Medal

In November 2008, the Australian Government formally accepted an offer from the President of East Timor, His Excellency José Ramos-Horta for Australian Defence Force personnel to formally accept and wear the Timor-Leste Solidarity Medal. The medal was established to recognise those men and women who provided service in stability and peace operations in East Timor from 1 May 2006. 'Our hope is that this medal will be worn proudly by soldiers ...to the farthest reaches of the globe... as an enduring symbol of strengthening ties between Timor- Leste and our many friends....it also recognises the sacrifice of these men and women ...who have been separated far from loved ones and put their safety at risk in service to their country and the Timorese people'. President of East Timor HE José Ramos-Horta.

The commencement date for the medal is 1 May 2006. The qualifying criteria are:

1. Having served a minimum of 180 days continuous or accrued service in East Timor from 1 May 2006; or
2. Nominations will be considered for personnel that have served a minimum of 120 days from 1 May 2006; or
3. Nominations will be considered for personnel who served with a start date in May or June 2006 for a period at least 90 days; or
4. The President of East Timor may consider extraordinary cases outside the above time periods. Applications for extraordinary cases must be endorsed and submitted through the Directorate of Honours and Awards (DH&A), to be considered and approved by the President.

However, service may still only count from 1 May 2006. The qualifying period is not required in the event of death in service in East Timor.

DH&A has compiled an initial list of eligible current and former serving members, which amounts to approximately 7 000 names. This list has been forwarded to the East Timorese Government for final approval by the President. Unfortunately DH&A are unable to advise of the process once the East Timorese Government receives the list. A timeframe for completion or dispatch cannot be given. If you wish to confirm that your name is on the list, please contact the Customer Response Team on 1800 111 321. Members who are not included on the list and who were force assigned to OPERATION ASTUTE from 1 May 2006, can submit the Application to Accept and Wear Foreign Awards (AD111), which is available at www.defence.gov.au/medals. If found to be eligible, your name will be submitted to the Timor-Leste Government on additional lists that are sent on a monthly basis. Once the list is returned to DH&A, the necessary steps will be taken to have the medal approved for wear by the Governor-General. Medals will be dispatched to serving personnel according to the unit address on PMKeyS.

Former serving members will have their medal dispatched to their home address as listed on the database. Former serving members are advised to contact the Customer Response Team on 1800 111 321, if they wish to update their postal address.



Christmas Wishes to Overseas Troops

Defence always welcomes the support of the Australian public for our personnel deployed on operations around the world, particularly at Christmas.

“The celebration of Christmas is an important time for all members of the Australian community but it is especially poignant for those Defence and other Australian government agency personnel and families that are separated during Christmas by operational deployments”, Director General Public Affairs, Brigadier Brian Dawson said.

Brigadier Dawson said receiving public support was important to Australia's deployed Defence personnel and a great way to express support was by sending an email message to them at messagesothetroops@defence.gov.au.

Alternatively, the RSL also accepts monetary donations so that it can continue to fund its program of sending twice yearly parcels to Defence personnel who are deployed overseas. The RSL Australian Forces Overseas Fund and its parcel initiative is an ADF supported programme.

“If members of the public want to send a personal gift to a deployed soldier, sailor, airman or airwoman in the Solomon Islands, East Timor or the Middle East they will now be able to do so using three Australian Forces Post Offices (AFPO) that have been established over the Christmas period to specifically receive gifts from the general public for distribution to deployed personnel.”

Brigadier Dawson said Australia Post had distributed the new AFPO numbers to its retail outlets. The AFPO addresses are:

1. AFPO 60 - Middle East Operations Australian Defence Force NSW 2890
2. AFPO 61 - East Timor Operations Australian Defence Force NSW 2890
3. AFPO 62 - Solomon Islands Operations Australian Defence Force NSW 2890

These AFPO numbers will close on 5 January 2010.

For additional information on the rules for sending parcels and gifts is available at: <http://www.defence.gov.au/christmas/mail/index.htm>

Seniors discount Guide

The department of Communities Discount Guide for Seniors can be found at: <http://www.communityservices.qld.gov.au/seniorcard/savings/discount-directories.html>

Pharmaceutical Benefits Review

A Review of Pharmaceutical Benefits is in the pipeline. The Terms of Reference are likely to be released before Christmas.



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