



Police Federation  
of Australia  
The National Voice of Policing

## **THE HISTORY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL POLICE SERVICE MEDAL**



Almost since the *Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal* was replaced by the *National Medal* in 1975 police associations and unions have been advocating the reintroduction of a police specific service award.

At the 2006 Australasian Police Commissioners' Conference, Commissioners received a submission and presentation from the Police Federation of Australia (PFA) regarding a proposal for a police-specific national medal to be awarded under the Australian Honours and Awards System.

The underpinning argument of the PFA was that the awarding of a specific medal to sworn police officers would be a substantial acknowledgement of the unique role that sworn police officers play in the preservation of peace, the protection of life and property and the maintenance of law and order throughout Australia and overseas.

The Commissioners' Conference supported the PFA's proposal and undertook to progress the award by setting up a Working Party with representatives from all jurisdictions, as well as the PFA.

In the lead up to the 2007 Federal Election the PFA sought the following commitment from all political parties –

***“The PFA seeks your commitment to replacing the current National Medal with a new National Police Service Medal specifically for sworn members of Australia's police forces.”***

The ALP won that election and incoming Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made the commitment that his government would support the proposal and enter into discussions with State and Territory Governments to seek an agreement.

A submission was subsequently provided to the Prime Minister, which he endorsed. He then approached the Queen to have the new award established. The concept received in-principle support from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 30 October 2008, the reason why this date is the operable date for the Medal.

Following that in-principle agreement by the Queen there were a series of meetings between the parties to further develop the concept, the introduction and transitional arrangements, as well as the final design of the new award. These meetings have included the PFA representing state, territory and federal police associations and unions; officials from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet; the Office of the Special Minister of State and Cabinet Secretary; their Ministerial Advisors; Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson (QLD) (as Commissioners' Representative); Detective Sergeant Vince Pannell (AFP) and Federal Agent James Cheshire (AFP).

The meetings, and more significant out of session discussions, saw the production of many reviews and position papers by the PFA for the consideration of both Government and the Commissioners. It was during these meetings that it was

agreed that the Prime Minister would again go to Her Majesty to seek approval for a variation of the original in-principle agreement, in that the new award would not be a 'service medal' but rather that it would recognise the commitment of individuals to policing in Australia. This meant that the NPSM would be awarded in addition to the *National Medal* to Australian police. This approval was received and formally announced by the Government on 19 May 2010. In their March 2011 announcement the Government recognised that, "The key proponent of the creation of the award was the Police Federation of Australia which represents police unions across Australia".

Two Ministers who deserve special recognition for their support during this process were the then Minister for Home Affairs, Brendan O'Connor and the then Special Minister of State and Cabinet Secretary, Senator Joe Ludwig and their respective staff. As the process bogged down in red tape and Honours protocols during this period, these two Ministers ensured that negotiations were maintained and that a final outcome acceptable to all parties was achieved. We are indebted to their efforts and persistence.

It was also during this process that the PFA was contacted by Inspector Rick Steinborn of the New South Wales Police Force who had, in his own time and at his own expense, designed a proposed medal for consideration. As discussion with the various interested parties continued, and various changes were made, Inspector Steinborn incorporated those changes at every step. Rick's design (front page) was formally endorsed by the Queen as the NPSM's design.

The final ribbon design accepted was that developed by Federal Agent James Cheshire of the AFP. The medal ribbon draws inspiration from police awards under both the Imperial and Australian awards systems.

Both Inspector Steinborn and Federal Agent Cheshire are formally recognised as the Medal and Ribbon designers and are congratulated for their efforts.

The creation of the *National Police Service Medal* comes about after many years of hard work by a great number of people, but principally through the efforts of the PFA, the 'National Voice of Policing' representing Australia's Police Officers, and was developed and designed by operational police officers from different jurisdictions working together for a common purpose - a principle which is at the very heart of policing in Australia today.