



NZDF HERITAGE, COMMEMORATIONS AND PROTOCOL

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RESEARCH REPORT:  
**THE DISTRIBUTION  
OF CAMPAIGN  
MEDALS AND STARS  
IN NEW ZEALAND  
AFTER THE SECOND  
WORLD WAR**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In 2020 the NZDF conducted a survey of the military service files of C Company, 28 (Maori) Battalion, after a question was asked about why many members of the company had never received their Second World War campaign medals. The survey found that of the 980 known members of the company, medals had never been issued to 145 (15%) of them, or to their families. A follow-up survey of the 3,420 individuals known to have served in 28 (Maori) Battalion, conducted in 2021, found that this pattern held for the entire battalion.

This report found that this situation is a particular instance of a more general issue, which was the refusal by around 75% of former Army and Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) personnel to apply for their Second World War campaign medals after distribution began in March 1950. Although this refusal was primarily attributed to dissatisfaction with how and in what form the medals were distributed, the report proposes that it was likely to have been the result of a wider set of grievances, internal divisions and cultural attitudes within the veteran community, some of which predated the medals' issue. It should be noted, however, that because of a financial incentive which was available only to naval personnel, Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) veterans did not refuse to apply for their medals.

The most prominent reasons given by veterans for their refusal to apply for their campaign medals were that, firstly, First World War veterans had not had to apply for their medals but had been issued them automatically; and secondly, also unlike after the First World War, the medals were issued without names, ranks and service numbers engraved on them. The most frequently recorded reaction from veterans was that, as a consequence, the medals had been rendered valueless.

The New Zealand military departments had advised the government to adopt those courses of action because of the gigantic scale of the medals requirement and the five-year delay between the end of the war and the delivery of the medals to New Zealand after their manufacture in the United Kingdom.

Whereas after the First World War 100,000 veterans had been eligible for a total of around 240,000 medals, after the Second World War this requirement had quadrupled to closer to 394,000 recipients and over 1,000,000 medals. Engraving all these medals, it was estimated, would have taken six years.

That veterans should be required to apply for their medals was recommended because, after this long delay, the military departments had little confidence in the accuracy of the address information held on military service files; and because the majority of former RNZN and RNZAF personnel had served with British units, which made it difficult to determine medals eligibility without input from the veterans themselves.

Although the New Zealand Government accepted this reasoning, and used these arguments as justifications, it is clear that the Government was primarily influenced by the mass refusals by British, Canadian and Australian veterans to apply for their medals after they became available in 1948.

The Australian experience was particularly influential because although the Australian Government had eventually agreed to engrave Australian medals, this did not lead to an increase in uptake from Australian veterans. A policy of posting medals to Australian veterans automatically was also swiftly abandoned because of inaccurate address records. The New Zealand Government concluded that there was no case for expending additional resources on either engraving the medals or issuing them automatically.

Evidence in support of the Government's conclusion can be found in the failure of relaxations in the applications regime, such as allowing local RSAs to make bulk applications on behalf of their memberships, to significantly increase the uptake of medals. At root appears to have been a variety of cultural and other attitudes within the veteran community which made veterans highly resistant to claiming or wearing their medals. The sparse nature of the documentary evidence about veterans' attitudes, however, or of scholarly research into this issue, has prevented definitive conclusions on this subject.

The report concludes with a review of the 2021 survey of medals uptake within 28 (Maori) Battalion veterans, which is the only detailed individual unit survey ever undertaken. The survey shows that between 1950 and 1960 the uptake of medals from former members of the battalion closely conformed to the pattern established in the rest of the Army and the RNZAF, and it is likely that it continued to do so between 1960 and 2021. The survey shows that over these later decades there remained a low but steady uptake of around 0.3% per annum, although it is unclear whether this was principally by veterans or by their families after they had passed away.

# INTRODUCTION

In 2020, New Zealand Defence Force Personnel Archives and Medals (NZDF PAM) conducted a survey of the military service files of C Company, 28 (Maori) Battalion, after a question was raised about the number of Second World War medal groups which had yet to be issued to members of the company. The survey found that of the 980 known members of the company, Second World War campaign medals had never been issued to 145 (15%) of those entitled to receive them or to their families.

This survey confirmed what had long been known at NZDF PAM, which was that many of the campaign medals awarded to veterans of the Second World War, belonging to all units across at least two of the three Services, had never been claimed by either the recipients themselves or their families. The magnitude of this issue, however, and what may have led to it, has never been fully investigated. The following report is a survey of how the distribution of Second World War campaign medals was planned and implemented, and the extent to which these policy settings may have contributed to this situation.

New Zealand's only previous major experience of campaign medals distribution before the Second World War occurred between 1920 and 1925, following the First World War. In his annual report to Parliament in mid 1923, the General Officer Commanding New Zealand Forces, Major-General Sir Edward Chaytor, reported that 99,230 members of New Zealand Expeditionary Force who had served overseas during the war overseas were entitled to one or more of three British campaign stars and medals: the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal.<sup>1</sup> In common with British practice, the policy adopted in New Zealand was to engrave the medals with the rank, name and service number and to post them automatically to the last known address of each recipient or, if they were deceased, to their next of kin. Distribution of the medals, however, did not proceed entirely smoothly.<sup>2</sup>

As outlined in earlier reports beginning in 1920, instead of waiting for adequate stocks of all three medal types to arrive from the United Kingdom before issuing them, each of the medals were issued separately as they became available, which was clearly a complicating factor in their distribution.<sup>3</sup> More importantly, in a significant number of cases, medals could not be delivered because the current addresses of the recipients were unknown. As a result, around 12,400 individuals had yet to receive their medals by the end of June 1923, either because the medals had been returned via the Dead-letter Office or because no address could be found.<sup>4</sup> Some cases proved particularly intractable. By March 1923, for example, in about 80 cases where the relatives of deceased soldiers could not be traced, memorial plaques, scrolls and medal groups were being posted to local authorities in the districts where the recipients had lived prior to enlistment, to be held in trust and even placed on public display, “pending the whereabouts of the persons entitled to hold them...being discovered.”<sup>5</sup> It is not known if any were subsequently claimed.

A year later, in mid 1924, a total of 20,090 medals remained unclaimed. “All returned soldiers who have not yet received the medals to which they are entitled,” concluded the report, “should at once apply to the Defence Department for them.”<sup>6</sup> Press notices appealing to veterans or their next of kin to apply for these medals duly appeared over subsequent weeks.<sup>7</sup> This appeal appears to have had limited success. In 1925, a “considerable number” of war medals still remained unclaimed and, in the absence of the correct addresses for those entitled to them, could not be issued.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, it appears that by the end of the process something in the region of 90% of all those entitled had received their medals.

Active planning for the distribution of campaign medals after the Second World War commenced towards the end of 1946. Beginning with a series of meetings between Army, Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) and Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) representatives who lacked decision-making authority, the planning machinery eventually evolved into a more organised system of working groups reporting through the chain of command to the Principal Personnel Officers Administrative Committee (PPOAC – later PAO(P) C). This was chaired by the Adjutant General, Brigadier William Gentry. The recommendations of this committee were forwarded via the Army Secretary to the Minister of Defence and, from there, ultimately, to Cabinet.

A review of the relevant papers preserved at Archives New Zealand reveals that although it was initially assumed that medals distribution would proceed much as it had in the 1920s, the scale of the requirement, coupled with delays in procuring the medals, all of which were manufactured by the Royal Mint in the United Kingdom, led to the abandonment of this model. When Second World War campaign medals distribution commenced on 14 March 1950, following Cabinet approval the previous month, the medals were despatched through the post only to those who had applied for them, and they were not engraved. The only medals despatched without the necessity for prior application were to the next of kin of the 11,931 military personnel who had died either during the war or from causes attributable to war service in its immediate aftermath.<sup>9</sup>

# POLICY DEVELOPMENT 1946–1950

The 11 Second World War campaign stars and medals (including seven of the nine possible clasps) that could be claimed by New Zealand veterans in 1950.

Left to right and top to bottom: 1939–1945 Star (Clasp: Battle of Britain); Atlantic Star (Clasp: Air Crew Europe); Air Crew Europe Star (Clasp: France and Germany); Africa Star (Clasp: 8th Army); Pacific Star (Clasp: Burma); Burma Star (Clasp: Pacific); Italy Star; France and Germany Star (Clasp: Atlantic); Defence Medal; War Medal 1939–1945; and New Zealand War Service Medal. Individuals could receive either a star or a clasp of the same name, but not both.

NZDF.

That the distribution of the medals was likely to be considerably more complex than it had been in the 1920s was apparent to officials at an early stage. Instead of the maximum of three medals awarded for overseas service during the First World War, there were now eight campaign stars and three service medals, of which the maximum number which could be awarded to an individual New Zealander was thought to be five. The stars and medals were: the 1939–45 Star; Atlantic Star; Air Crew Europe Star; Africa Star; Pacific Star; Burma Star; Italy Star; France and Germany Star; Defence Medal; War Medal 1939–45; and the New Zealand War Service Medal.



The inclusion of separate clasps to several of the medals to denote particular types of service further complicated the already complex eligibility criteria detailed in the medals regulations.<sup>10</sup> The New Zealand War Service Medal, which did not receive final approval until September 1948, created particular difficulties. The primary purpose of this medal was to recognise reserve force and/or home guard service in New Zealand, although it was also awarded to those who served overseas. This decision massively expanded the number of potential recipients. Significant stocks of this medal, however, were not received in New Zealand until January 1950, some five years after the end of the war and approaching eleven years after its commencement. In these circumstances it was increasingly doubted that either engraving the medals or issuing them automatically would be feasible.

Another complicating factor for the planning process was that estimates about the total number of medals to be distributed, and thus the scale of the administrative machinery needed to carry out this task, were initially very uncertain. In November 1946, as the first shipments of medals began to arrive from the United Kingdom, the Army estimated that approximately 300,000 medals would need to be engraved for former Army personnel. It was immediately “appreciated that the engraving of these medals will be a considerable project”, for which additional staff and engraving machines would be required.<sup>11</sup> As the problem was studied in more detail, however, it became clear that this vastly understated the requirement. By March 1947, for example, it was estimated that the Army would need to issue 470,000 medals. Engraving them all, it was calculated, would take four years using six engraving machines, of which two had yet to be purchased and a third would need to be hired from the Post and Telegraph Department.<sup>12</sup> By early June, once it had become clear that a further 250,000 of the proposed New Zealand War Service Medal would also need to be issued, the time it would take to engrave the medals was extended to six years.<sup>13</sup>

Growing concerns about the costs and timescales involved in engraving and distributing the medals reinforced an early conclusion that the only feasible method of distribution would be by individual application. When planning began in December 1946, it was anticipated that the main issues would be: whether or not to start issuing the medals immediately or wait until supplies of all the medal types had been received; whether or not to engrave the medals; and whether the recipients should receive their medals automatically or be required to apply for them. The staff officer advising the Air Secretary believed that applications should be encouraged in the first instance because “our Records Section is not absolutely positive of the addresses of members of the Reserve” and because “quite a number of personnel will not apply for the Medals and it will lessen the work.” Once the applications had been dealt with, it was assumed, the RNZAF would then be able to work through the list of those who had not applied and begin posting the medals to them automatically. As in the 1920s, the recipients would not be consulted about whether or not they wished to receive their medals.<sup>14</sup> At a subsequent tri-service meeting a few days later, however, it was “decided” that no distribution would occur until all the medals had been received, and that all recipients would have to apply for the medals “in order that a check can be maintained on their addresses and their qualifications for the various medals.”<sup>15</sup>

Another meeting of tri-service representatives held in January 1947 confirmed this direction of travel. Medals distribution should only commence, it was re-affirmed, after stocks of all the medal types had been received, which, at that point, was not expected before November 1947. The alternative would be to issue some of the medals separately, in which case “all the records work [to confirm individual eligibility for additional medals] would have to be gone through again.” Working on the assumption that all the medals would be engraved and that it would take years to achieve this, the case for distributing the medals via application appeared overwhelming. Requiring veterans to fill in an application form detailing when and where they had served, it was advanced, would achieve three essential objectives: it would aid eligibility verification; obtain up-to-date address information for each recipient; and, just as importantly, allow applications “to be dealt with in the order in which they are received.” If this was not done “the issue would have to be done alphabetically, which is not satisfactory to men late in the alphabet who are keen to get their medals.”<sup>16</sup>

Those attending these meetings lacked authority to make such decisions, but, in the absence of direction from above, these became the default policy positions. In a minute composed at end of January 1947, the Director of Base Records, Rupert Samuel Wogan, reported that on the basis of the decisions taken at this earlier meeting, which would ensure reliable postage to confirmed addresses, he had negotiated a flat postage rate of 9d per medal group with the Post and Telegraph Department, regardless of the number of medals in each group. The only remaining issues to be resolved, he advised, were finalising the design of the application forms and the precise protocols around what was to be engraved on the medals.<sup>17</sup>

Governmental decisions about when, how and in what form to distribute the medals tended to be driven by externalities. One of the most important of these was the confidential decision made by the United Kingdom in June 1947 not to engrave campaign medals that would be issued to British applicants, although the recipients could have them engraved privately at their own expense. Anticipating that the New Zealand Government would almost certainly decide to do likewise, the Deputy Adjutant General requested the immediate cancellation of the order for a new engraving machine which had been placed with a firm in the United Kingdom.<sup>18</sup> The PPOAC subsequently asked the Army Secretary, Francis Bernard Dwyer, to write to the Minister of Defence, Fred Jones, to advise him about the British decision, with the suggestion that New Zealand consider doing likewise or offer engraving only to those who requested it.<sup>19</sup>

In a memorandum addressed to Jones on 2 July 1947, Dwyer acknowledged that medals engraved with a “number and name ... give proof of ownership, and bestow a more personal aspect to the Star or Medal.” Nevertheless, his advice was that campaign medals be issued unengraved, arguing that this would allow distribution to proceed much more swiftly. Engraving, on the other hand, would take more than four years, and it was noted that engraving machines were proving difficult and expensive to procure. He did not support the idea, moreover, that demand could be reduced by only engraving medals on request, because as soon as this was publicised “the majority would hand in their medals for engraving.” Not engraving the medals at all, he conceded, “may create an agitation,” but this was outweighed by the fast and efficient distribution which could be achieved by not engraving.<sup>20</sup>

When this recommendation was discussed in Cabinet, however, the response was unenthusiastic, with the result that Dwyer was asked to conduct a further review. Dwyer's response on 31 July was to reissue his advice of 2 July alongside an additional report about some of the costs which would be involved in expanding engraving capacity. By this stage, Dwyer believed that the total campaign medal requirement across all three Services would be 700,000 medals. If three more engraving machines were purchased at a cost of £600, bringing total capacity to eight machines operated by 16 personnel, it would still take four and half years to engrave all the medals and cost £28,000 in wages. "In view of the above," he concluded, "it is again strongly recommended that the medals be issued unengraved, as is being done in the United Kingdom."<sup>21</sup> After some thought, presumably at Cabinet level, Dwyer was informed on or around 28 October 1947 that the Minister had approved the recommendation that the campaign medals be issued unengraved. Various handwritten notations attached to this decision further specified that this would also apply for medals issued to the next of kin of deceased service personnel.<sup>22</sup>

Although a decision not to engrave had apparently finally been made, when and how the medals were to be issued had yet to be decided. Significant pressure to resolve these issues would not be felt until 1948, and, in the interim, officials concentrated on the other major commemorative distribution produced by the war, which was the distribution of the New Zealand Memorial Cross. Closely modelled on the Memorial Cross of Canada, which was instituted in 1919 and then re-instituted in 1940, the New Zealand Memorial Cross was primarily intended as a symbol of the personal loss and sacrifice experienced by the widows and mothers of New Zealand personnel who had died as a result of active service overseas during the Second World War.<sup>23</sup>

The design of the New Zealand Memorial Cross and the regulations governing eligibility were formally instituted in September 1947. Up to two of the silver crosses could be awarded to the family of each individual, and they were impressed on the reverse with the rank, service number, initials and surname of the person commemorated. Distribution was by application and began in January 1948, but this had been preceded in December 1947 by a highly successful programme to contact eligible next of kin, establish correct address information, and solicit applications by posting out application forms. By 13 August 1948, Base Records had virtually completed the distribution of crosses to the next of kin of those who had died overseas and had begun the process of contacting the families of those who had died from war-related causes after returning to New Zealand.<sup>24</sup> By June 1949, the Chief of the General Staff was able to report that virtually all claims had been dealt with, resulting in the distribution of 12,000 crosses.<sup>25</sup> Other outcomes were the compilation of highly reliable address information for next of kin and a realistic appreciation of the Army's maximum medal engraving capacity, which turned out to be about 1,000 medals per week.<sup>26</sup> The success of this programme, it seems, also had a significant impact on official expectations about the likely success of distributing campaign medals by application.

Pressure to finalise decisions about how and when to start issuing campaign medals began to grow during 1948. The United Kingdom began issuing medals from the beginning of June 1948, followed by Australia in October. Controversially, in both countries it was announced that the medals were to be issued “unnamed” (i.e., unengraved) because of the costs and delays that engraving would impose, but this provoked little or no immediate comment in New Zealand. Far more significant for New Zealanders, or so it seemed, was the announcement made in March 1948 that the King and Queen would be visiting New Zealand in early 1949. In September 1948, this prompted Sidney Harrison, General Secretary of the New Zealand Returned Services Association (NZRSA), to write to Jones on behalf of the NZRSA’s Dominion Council Executive Committee. Anticipating that His Majesty would wish to meet members of the RSA, Harrison asked the Minister to “use your best endeavours to ensure that it is possible for World War II ex-service personnel to be able to wear their War Medals and Decorations ... during the visit of the Royal Family.”<sup>27</sup>

Jones’s reply made it very clear that there was little the Government could do. “The task of distributing these medals is one of very considerable magnitude,” he explained. “It cannot be done piece-meal for such a procedure would entail a large amount of duplication in the checking of records and handling of medals for despatch.” Distribution could not commence until all the campaign medals were received, and it was expected that “it will be some time yet” before this could be achieved. Decorations, he added, were also experiencing “abnormal demand” and production delays, with the result that they were coming to hand only very slowly. The delays in distribution, he concluded, “were beyond the control of the New Zealand authorities.”<sup>28</sup> Jones’s letter appears to be the first ministerial statement to the effect that it was New Zealand Government policy to withhold the issue of campaign medals until stocks of all the medal types had been received.

Although the King’s visit was cancelled in November 1948 because of ill health, this did not entirely end pressure to begin distribution. An internal memorandum by Army staff written in May 1949 argued that since large stocks were available of all but the New Zealand War Service Medal (NZWSM), distribution should proceed immediately, despite the increased costs and double handling that would result. Waiting for the NZWSM, on the other hand, would almost certainly delay distribution until 1950. “Restiveness at the delay,” it was opined, “... is hardly to be wondered at, particularly as the UK, Australia and ... most of the other Dominions have already commenced distribution.”<sup>29</sup> At the subsequent meeting of the PAO(P) Committee, however, Base Records, Navy, and Air Force all preferred waiting until adequate stocks of every medal were available.<sup>30</sup> In a separate minute, Wogan pointed out that if issues were to commence at the end of July (i.e., some five months before adequate supplies of the NZWSM were expected), Base Records would probably have to go back over some 20,000 service records in order to issue NZWSMs to veterans who had already applied for and received their other medals. Not only would this increase postage costs, but the flat rate postage that had been agreed, which was based on the estimated average weight for the medal groups including the NZWSM, would need to be renegotiated.<sup>31</sup> The acting chair of the PAO(P) Committee, Brigadier Gentry, summarised these views in a memorandum addressed to Jones on 10 June 1949, which requested a definitive ministerial decision on the matter.<sup>32</sup>

Army staff's nervousness about the delay in distribution may have been influenced by a trickle of press reports of the low uptake of campaign medals being experienced in the United Kingdom. By November 1948, for example, it was being reported by the New Zealand Press Association that only about 20% of the 6,375,000 British veterans entitled to medals had applied for them. Two possible causes were cited: the lack of engraving; and that the medals were made of cupro-nickel, which was perceived as being of low quality compared to the metals used to fabricate First World War campaign medals, i.e., bronze or silver.<sup>33</sup>

Such criticisms paled into insignificance, however, compared to the storm of protests that broke out in Australia. Australian issues, which were automatic and unengraved, began in October 1948, before all the medal types were actually available. They were not well received, being quickly denounced by the Ballarat Returned Services League (RSL) for their lack of engraving and because they were "shoddy ... like medals issued to school children."<sup>34</sup> Going further, Mr K. McLeod Bolton, the president of the New South Wales RSL, denounced the medals as "cheap junk, and an insult to the men and women who had served their country ... They have no names or numbers on them. As they are, they will not be worth a cracker – you will be able to buy them in a pawnshop for 6d each."<sup>35</sup> There were so many protests that issues were suspended in December 1948 while an inquiry was undertaken into the possibility of engaging private contractors to engrave the medals.<sup>36</sup> In June 1949, the Australian Government capitulated. Henceforth, campaign medals would be engraved, although veterans would have to apply for them. There would be no more automatic issues, even to the next of kin of deceased personnel.<sup>37</sup>



If the New Zealand authorities had imagined that New Zealand veterans were unconcerned about these issues, they were swiftly disabused. On 6 July 1949, Harrison wrote to Jones informing him of several of the resolutions adopted at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting of the NZRSA's Dominion Council. Resolution No. 6 declared: "That this Dominion Council views with the utmost alarm reports that in other parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations, World War II campaign Stars and Medals are being issued without particulars being inscribed thereon of the recipients' names, numbers and units. It requests [the] Dominion Executive Committee to discuss this matter with the Government as one of major importance." Medals, added Harrison, are "tangible evidence that the possessor served his country during War ... [this] purpose is being stultified and defeated if they are not inscribed."<sup>38</sup>

Jones's reply to Harrison on 5 August was conciliatory in tone, but not in substance. "Your comments on this subject are fully appreciated and the Government is, as a matter of fact, somewhat perturbed on the subject", he wrote. Reiterating the advice he'd received from Dwyer in 1947, he continued that "When it is considered that the ... number of campaign medals ... is approximately 700,000 ... you will readily perceive that the engraving ... could not be completed here with the local appliances and manpower available in less than seven or eight years." He added that the average rate of engraving of the New Zealand Memorial Crosses had been only 800 per week. Such an additional delay, four years after the end of the war, he suggested, could not be justified. "I regret," he concluded, "that there appears to be no alternative to issuing the medals and stars without any of the inscriptions ... suggested in your Association's resolution."<sup>39</sup> It seems clear, however, that Jones had been badly caught out. His reply betrayed no awareness, for example, that the Australian Government had reversed its engraving policy. As a senior Army Department official warned Dwyer, the Australian reversal could make the New Zealand Government's decision not to engrave very difficult to defend "if the NZRSA should further press the subject."<sup>40</sup> Mindful, perhaps, of the approaching general election, Jones demanded a further reconsideration of New Zealand engraving policy.<sup>41</sup>

Dwyer responded on 30 August 1949 with a detailed memorandum which outlined the Australian change in policy and restated his previous advice about the cost and the four-year delay (if engraving capacity was expanded) that engraving would entail, while pointing out that there was nothing in King's Regulations that actually required the New Zealand Government to engrave campaign medals. Dwyer also advanced a novel reason, however, for not engraving: the deteriorating international

situation. Army Headquarters advised that should this "lead to further hostilities during the next four to five years ... distribution of medals would necessarily be completely suspended ... The uncertain state of international relations renders it is strongly advisable to finalise without delay all outstanding obligations connected with the 1939-45 war." The same officials were also claiming, moreover, that it was "known that there are many ex-servicemen who would appreciate the early receipt of their medals ... and are indifferent whether or not the medals are inscribed." Any personal disappointment felt by veterans about this could be mitigated, Dwyer proposed, by enclosing a personalised certificate signed by the Minister alongside each medal group.<sup>42</sup>

The credibility of Dwyer's alarming memorandum, which was long on assertion but short on evidence, was not enhanced by the fact that the only information about the Australian policy he seemed to possess was a recent cutting from the Australian Sunday Sun and Guardian, which told its readers that the 2,300,000 Australian medals were henceforth to be engraved, and, because of this, veterans would need to apply for them. To do so, veterans needed only to provide their service numbers, full names and addresses to the relevant authorities.<sup>43</sup> Nothing was known in New Zealand, however, about how the Australian Government planned to carry this out, what it would cost and how long it was expected to take. Ministerial dissatisfaction about this state of affairs precipitated an urgent cable from Wogan to the New Zealand Joint Services Liaison Staff in Melbourne to request these details, specifying that they were wanted by the Minister of Defence for consideration by Cabinet.<sup>44</sup>

Wogan received a brief reply from Melbourne the following day, belatedly followed by a more detailed report addressed to Army Headquarters in Wellington a month later. The Australian military authorities, it was reported, had received tenders indicating that an output of 6,500 medals per week might be achievable at a cost of around 11½ d per medal. It was also estimated that it would take 20 administrative staff about five years to distribute all the medals, which would be by application. Wellington was also asked to note that “originally it was intended to issue medals automatically without being engraved. This was started but it was found that 19% of the issue [sic] were returned unclaimed due to changes in address.”<sup>45</sup>

In the meantime, also somewhat belatedly, Jones had instructed Dwyer to make a personal approach to the Dominion President of the NZRSA, Sir Howard Kippenberger, with a view to developing a sense of what the NZRSA might be persuaded to accept. On 4 November, Dwyer reported back on both the outcome of his enquiries in Australia and what Kippenberger, “speaking privately”, had been prepared to say. If New Zealand were to engrave the medals, Dwyer now estimated, it would take 20 staff 4 ½ years and cost £105,000. If the medals were not engraved, however, the cost would fall to £10,000. When asked whether his membership would accept such a delay, Kippenberger was non-committal, saying that if Dwyer wrote to him officially, he would canvass the NZRSA’s 100-odd local associations. Dwyer’s subsequent letter to Kippenberger to this effect claimed (somewhat disingenuously) that because of a “lack of engraving equipment” it would take 4 ½ years to engrave the medals, whereas if this

was not done the medals could be distributed in less than 12 months. When Harrison replied on behalf of the NZRSA on 23 November, however, it is clear that the Dominion Executive had little confidence in Dwyer’s estimates, which as recently as 5 August had claimed that it would take seven or eight years to engrave the medals. According to the Australian RSL, said Harrison, the Australian Army expected to engrave over 7,000 medals a week. Distributing “our 700,000 [medals],” he concluded, “inscribed at the same rate as for the Australian Army, would take 2½ years.”<sup>46</sup> Further evidence of RSA unhappiness was an unfavourable report about Jones’s 5 August letter to Harrison that appeared in *The New Zealand Herald* on 30 November. “The Minister of Defence, Mr Jones, doesn’t think much of the idea of inscribing war medals”, reported the paper, “... But Australia is managing to do it – and there are a lot more medals for Australians.” The article concluded with the derisive assurance that the RSA would “get in touch with the Australian Returned Services’ League and find out how it is done. And when it finds out it will get in touch with the Minister again.”<sup>47</sup>

On 30 November 1949, Peter Fraser’s Labour Government was defeated in the general election, leading to its replacement by a National Party Government led by Sidney Holland. In one of his last acts as Minister, Jones returned Dwyer’s 30 August memorandum with the comment: “This will need to be taken up with the new Government.” In preparation, Dwyer drew up another memorandum for the new Minister of Defence, Tom Macdonald, summarising the entire history of New Zealand medals policy development since 1946, which was sent to the Macdonald on 10 January 1950.

Also provided, for the first time, was a comprehensive appreciation of the numbers of potential medal recipients and medals to which they were entitled, calculated through a detailed review of the military service files held at Base Records. This had revealed the “grand total of stars and medals for the three NZ Services and the Home Guard is ... approximately 1,090,000 divided amongst approximately 394,000 ex-servicemen and women.” Table 1 shows how these were broken down:

**Table 1: Estimates of the number of Second World War ex-service personnel and average medal entitlement.**

<b>SERVICE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF PERSONNEL / MEDAL ENTITLEMENT PER PERSON</b>	<b>TOTAL MEDAL ENTITLEMENT</b>
Army (overseas service)	105,000 / 5 medals each	525,000
Army (home service)	102,000 / 2 medals each	204,000
RNZAF	50,000 / 4 medals each	200,000
RNZN	12,000 / 3 medals each	36,000
Home Guard	125,000 / 1 medal each	125,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>394,000 / 2.77 medals each</b>	<b>1,090,000</b>

Elsewhere in the memorandum, Dwyer noted that supplies of the NZWSM were finally coming to hand (albeit in small quantities), a medals application form had been designed, and a sub-committee of the NZRSA was still considering the proposal not to engrave the medals. The case for not engraving, however, was presented as overwhelming. It was now calculated that engraving would cost £156,425, consisting of: £54,000 for engraving; £78,000 for clerical staff; £14,775 for postage; £1,000 stationary; £700 for three new engraving machines; and £7,450 as a 5% contingency. Not engraving, on

the other hand, would reduce costs to £32,315, largely attributable to the greatly reduced time it would take to distribute the medals unnamed: 12–15 months, as opposed to 6½ years. “Having regard to all the circumstances, including the considered opinion of the Principal Administrative Officers (Navy, Army and Air),” Dwyer recommended that that the “Minister approve the immediate undertaking of arrangements for the distribution of stars and medals without individual inscriptions, and that Headquarters of the New Zealand Returned Services Association be advised accordingly.”<sup>48</sup>

Macdonald, who was himself a veteran of both the First and Second World Wars, responded on 30 January with a detailed list of questions. He asked what more was known about the progress of medals distribution in Australia and the United Kingdom, what was the attitude of the NZRSA, and what percentage of New Zealand veterans were expected to apply.<sup>49</sup> Wogan replied the following day and then again direct to the Minister on 6 February, stating that he had little information about how distribution was progressing overseas, but revealing that in New Zealand the medal application forms were already being printed ready for distribution to post offices throughout New Zealand and that 48,000 NZWSMs were now on hand. As for the NZRSA, he had initially gained the impression from Harrison that the NZRSA regarded engraving as “not of paramount importance”, but this had clearly changed when it became known that Australia had reversed policy. He finished by estimating that “90% of those entitled [to campaign medals] will apply.”<sup>50</sup> Wogan’s basis for this estimate is unclear, although it is likely that the recent success of the New Zealand Memorial Cross distribution had some influence.

In fact, the NZRSA’s attitude to engraving had started to shift. The precise reasons for this are obscure, but it would appear from later evidence that after being briefed about Dwyer’s memorandum, Kippenberger was persuaded that it was now too late to change course, not least because almost none of the infrastructure needed to make engraving feasible had been put in place. Cabinet met to decide on the issues on 9 February 1950. Macdonald’s cabinet paper summarised Dwyer’s latest engraving costs and timescales, the savings that would result from not engraving, and his recommendation that distribution proceed immediately, without inscription and on application, now that supplies of the NZWSM were coming to hand.<sup>51</sup>

The decision, issued to officials two days later, was to approve Macdonald’s recommendation, and was unusual in that it revealed several details about the Cabinet discussion. These were that Cabinet believed (erroneously) that Australian veterans were being charged for having their medals engraved; and that in recent discussions Kippenberger had verbally agreed that the medals should not be engraved and that he would “recommend accordingly” to his Executive. In addition, Macdonald was tasked with amendments to the medals application forms and the “certificates” which were to be issued with the medals, as well as with drafting a public statement about how and when the medals were to be distributed “after consultation with Major-General Sir Howard Kippenberger”, who would also be asked to enlist wider RSA support for these decisions.<sup>52</sup>

NEW ZEALAND ARMED FORCES [Form C.S. & M. 1

**NAVY, ARMY, AIR FORCE**

**CLAIM FOR CAMPAIGN STARS, DEFENCE AND WAR MEDALS, AND NAVAL PRIZE MONEY**

READ CAREFULLY THE INFORMATION PAMPHLET AND THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE BACK OF THIS FORM, AND WHEN COMPLETED SEND YOUR APPLICATION TO THE APPROPRIATE ADDRESS. STRIKE OUT ADDRESSES WHICH DO NOT APPLY.

The NAVAL SECRETARY, Navy Office, Wellington.      The DIRECTOR OF BASE RECORDS, Post Office Box 3044, Wellington.      The AIR SECRETARY, Air Headquarters, Wellington.

Description of Serviceman:—

(Service No.)	(Surname in BLOCK letters)	(Christian Names)	(Fill in details of service against each item claimed)		(5)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4) Dates.		(5) For Office Use Only. Initials of Officer Confirming Claim.
				From	To	
1.	1939-45 Star (3/9/39 to 2/9/45) .. .. .					
2.	Clasp to 1939-45 Star, (Battle of Britain) .. .. .					
3.	Atlantic Star or Clasp (3/9/39 to 8/5/45) .. .. .					
4.	Air Crew Europe Star or Clasp (3/9/39 to 5/6/44) .. .. .					
5.	Africa Star (10/6/40 to 12/5/43) .. .. .					
6.	Clasp to Africa Star (8th Army, Navy, or Air Force) .. .. .					
7.	Pacific Star or Clasp (8/12/41 to 2/9/45) .. .. .					
8.	Burma Star or Clasp (11/12/41 to 2/9/45) .. .. .					
9.	Italy Star (11/6/43 to 8/5/45) .. .. .					
10.	France and Germany Star or Clasp (6/6/44 to 8/5/45) .. .. .					
11.	Defence Medal (3/9/39 to 2/9/45) .. .. .					
12.	War Medal, 1939-45 (3/9/39 to 2/9/45) .. .. .					
13.	Oak Leaf Emblem (Mentioned in Despatches) .. .. .					
14.	N.Z. War Service Medal (3/9/39 to 2/9/45) .. .. .					
15.	Naval Prize Money (3/9/39 to 2/9/45) .. .. .					

I certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief the above claim is correct.

Address to which medals, &c., are to be sent : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Claimant : \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

[P.T.O.]

The medals application form issued on 14 March 1950 was roundly condemned. Veterans were asked to self-assess their medal entitlement, but the four-page explanatory pamphlet that came with the form did little to explain the complex eligibility requirements.

*Private collection.*

Wogan had begun coordinating the design of medals application forms in 1947, as soon as it became clear that all three Services were in favour of this option. By early 1950, these efforts had produced three documents: a form for ex-Home Guard personnel claiming the NZWSM, which, because very few Home Guard service records had been retained, was essentially a self-certification declaration; and a tri-Service form intended for everyone else accompanied by a lengthy pamphlet explaining the eligibility criteria for the 14 different campaign medals and clasps which could be claimed. Claimants were required to declare the Force (i.e., Navy, Army or Air Force), operational area, and periods in which they had served against every medal and clasp to which they believed they had title. A 15th category at the bottom of the form was for those eligible to claim “Naval Prize Money.” This was a fixed sum (later assessed at £5.10s) paid by the British Admiralty to all Navy personnel who had completed at least 180 days of wartime service at sea in a naval vessel. The development of this form had occurred without any ministerial authority (although it was overseen by the PPOAC), and at no stage were veterans consulted about its design and content, which was vastly more complicated than the application forms adopted by other Commonwealth countries. In the United Kingdom and Australia, for example, applicants had to provide little more than their names, service numbers and addresses.<sup>53</sup>

It is highly likely that Cabinet's concern was about this excessive complexity, and that it desired personalised certificates to be issued with every medal group to mitigate the lack of engraving. These were certainly two of the main issues discussed by Macdonald and Wogan when they met four days later to work out the final steps preparatory to issuing the medals. In a memorandum for the Minister written the same day, Wogan admitted that a simplified form would suffice for ex-Army applicants (some 77% of all those eligible to use the form), not least because the medal entitlement of almost all ex-Army personnel had already been assessed and recorded on the covers of their military service files. Nevertheless, he advised against any modifications to the form. This was because: retaining a single form was inherently desirable; Army veterans would probably have a good idea about their entitlement, and it was unlikely to matter if they didn't fill in all of the boxes; and "in the Air Force and the Navy ... [military service files] ... do not record ... the location or area in which service was performed ... This was a security measure ... [and] the Army Department requires more detailed information [from veterans] where the issue of the Defence Medal is concerned."

Scrapping the form and its accompanying pamphlet, on the other hand, which had already gone to print, would cost £650. Issuing personalised certificates was not feasible, given existing resources and staffing levels. All Base Records had available were non-personalised "enclosure cards", which consisted of a generic message from the Minister, Prime Minister and Government "in sincere appreciation of loyal service during the war of 1939-45", printed beneath the New Zealand coat of arms. The next of kin of deceased service personnel, Wogan assured the Minister, would receive these with the names and service numbers of the deceased "neatly typed" on the bottom of each card, but this would not be done, it was implied, for living recipients. Next of kin, moreover, would not be required to apply for the medals, and the issue of cards and medals to them could proceed automatically the moment that general issue was authorised, and be completed within a month.<sup>54</sup>

As there were no changes to either the forms or the enclosure cards, it seems safe to assume that Macdonald accepted these recommendations. The priority at this point was to begin distribution of the medals as soon as possible, and so officials were asked to draw up a draft ministerial statement, to be released as soon as the Post and Telegraph Department had distributed applications forms to post offices throughout the country. Macdonald's decision may also have been affected by new information provided by the New Zealand Joint Services Liaison Staff in Melbourne, which had arrived a day too late to inform the Cabinet discussion. This indicated that, some seven months after the Australian authorities had recommenced issuing medals in June 1949, only about 800 applications a week were being received, and that the proportion of those entitled who had applied was only 8%. The proportion who had applied for the medals of deceased personnel was only 6%. This was despite the comparative simplicity of the Australian application process and the fact that all Australian medals were now being issued engraved.<sup>55</sup> It may have been far from clear to Macdonald, in other words, that any changes to New Zealand medals policy would greatly affect the uptake of medals by New Zealanders.

# POLICY IMPLEMENTATION 1950–1960

An announcement by the Minister of Defence that the distribution of Second World War campaign stars and medals would commence on Tuesday 14 March, and that veterans could obtain application forms at their local post offices, “in line with the practice adopted in the United Kingdom”, appeared in the New Zealand press on 11 March 1950. The medals would not be engraved, the Minister explained, because this “would take six or more years, and there [has] already been a regrettable delay ... in their delivery.”<sup>56</sup> Some of the media reporting was initially positive. The Dunedin Post Office had received a “stream of applicants”, reported the Otago Daily Times on 15 March, although, worryingly, many veterans had also called in at the Kensington Drill Hall anxiously seeking their service records (only to be told that they were all at Base Records in Wellington) so that they could accurately fill in the forms.<sup>57</sup> “Brisk demand” was also reported in Whakatāne.<sup>58</sup> For the most part, however, the response was sharply negative because the medals were unengraved and because it was clear to many that the RSA’s own Dominion Executive Committee had endorsed this policy.

In widely publicised remarks published on 15 March, the Waikato RSA was particularly critical of their national leadership for failing to adequately respond when told that there were numerous private-sector providers who could engrave the medals. “Very few of our members will bother to apply for our medals, and the Government will have thousands of them left on their hands ... our members would rather wait four years and get their medals properly inscribed,” said the local president, Mr. S. T. Nolan. Also disliked was the fact that veterans were being required “to ask for their medals.”<sup>59</sup>

Kippenberger’s attempt to survey local RSAs about engraving, it appears, had succeeded only in arousing deep suspicions. The president of the Dunedin RSA told his members that the “Dominion Executive Committee had indicated that ... because of ... confidential information ... [it] had decided not to press for the engraving of war medals,” but had “not seen fit to pass [this] on to the Dunedin Executive.” Resolving to demand this information forthwith, the meeting went on to make unfavourable comparisons with the First World War medals distribution. Particularly concerning to the membership was that without engraving it would be impossible to detect those who “wore medals to which they were not entitled.” In common with many other local RSAs, the association resolved to look into having the medals engraved locally.<sup>60</sup>

Macdonald issued an immediate rebuttal of Waikato RSA's criticisms, which appeared in the Evening Post only a few hours later. "I can appreciate the feelings of the Waikato RSA. Their reaction approximates my own when I first examined this question," he began. Nevertheless, not engraving the medals was a decision "we were obliged to adopt owing to force of circumstances." Decentralising the engraving work to contractors was considered but would have been impractical. Significantly, Kippenberger was also quoted in the same report under the sub-heading: "Can't Be Done, Says RSA President." "It would take 6 to 8 years to engrave all the medals," he was quoted as saying. "The Waikato RSA's data concerning engraving," he continued, "is quite inaccurate." He went on to say that the "job was not merely one of engraving the medals. Lists of names had to be prepared and only a few hundred could be done daily. Machines could not do that job."<sup>61</sup>

It is clear, however, that Kippenberger and his Executive rapidly came under significant pressure to rescind their endorsement of Government policy. The "Emergency Committee" of the NZRSA, it was announced on the front page of the RSA Review of May 1950, having received numerous proposals from local associations about how to resolve the engraving issue, would "examine all the suggestions as thoroughly as possible ... This decision was made in view of the widespread disappointment at the non-engraving of the medals."<sup>62</sup> A long and defensive editorial about why the Dominion Executive had backed the Government followed on the next page. Under the headline "Hercules Has Dropped His Bundle!", the Review claimed that it was now "too late to start looking around for ways and means by which medals can be engraved", before making it plain where the blame lay: "Had Base Records approached that problem with the assiduity with which it tackled its varying [Herculean] war-time tasks, means for engraving the medals would have been in readiness long before the medals reached this country." Neither the NZRSA, nor the Holland Government, it

was stressed, bore any responsibility for "this deplorable omission." Nevertheless, the Review backed the application form because of gaps in the service records, particularly those of Air Force and Navy personnel, and because "[m]any thousands, probably the majority, have changed their address since enlistment." Anyone who had yet to do so was urged to apply, "even though he may be browned-off with form filling."<sup>63</sup>

In fact, Harrison had already written to Macdonald on 21 April with the humiliating confession that although the NZRSA "had previously agreed with the decision of the Government ... it is now admitted that that decision ... was most unfortunate." A "considerable number" of local associations, he explained, had written to the Dominion Executive to express their "protests, disapproval and dissatisfaction." The vast majority complained about the necessity to apply, the complexity of the application form and the fact that the medals were unengraved. Veterans, moreover, were well aware of the Australian policy reversal. In response, the NZRSA's "Emergency Committee", which Kippenberger chaired, had formulated a set of "constructive proposals." These were: that claimants should be allowed to submit only their names, service numbers and addresses; and that warrants should be issued to every recipient which they could spend on having their medals engraved privately. Significant savings were likely, Harrison supposed, because the Government would not need to purchase any equipment and because many veterans would either not apply for their medals or not bother to use their warrants. It was hoped, nevertheless, that these changes would "increase the number of claimants", indicating that the NZRSA was aware that there had already been a steep decline in the number of applications. The letter ended with a request for a meeting with the Minister "before the end of the month", an oblique reference to the upcoming Dominion Council Meeting scheduled for early June, during which the RSA membership's dissatisfaction about the medals' issue was expected to be given full voice.<sup>64</sup>

Macdonald replied on 8 May, promising to meet the NZRSA Emergency Committee, but only after due consideration had been given to the NZRSA's proposals.<sup>65</sup> The Army preferred the retention of the current form, although it would accept applications which did not include every detail. Asking veterans to make a self-assessment of their entitlement had proved useful, "particularly in determining entitlements to the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Clasp and the Defence Medal." The Army had no objections, however, to the idea of issuing warrants for engraving, although a standard flat rate for this would need to be determined.<sup>66</sup> The Navy Department insisted on the retention of the form because "the records available in the Navy Office of the ships ... [in which] ... personnel served are extremely sketchy."<sup>67</sup> Extraordinarily, the Air Department also favoured the form, despite the fact that it was not all that well adapted to RNZAF requirements, partly because having to apply would deter applicants and thus "materially reduce the amount of work involved." Ex-aircrew, it was felt, should also be required to fill in the form completely because service files did not show precisely when personnel became operational. Only the personal logbooks held by the aircrew themselves showed when they flew their first sorties.<sup>68</sup> Neither department, however, had any objections to the issue of engraving warrants.

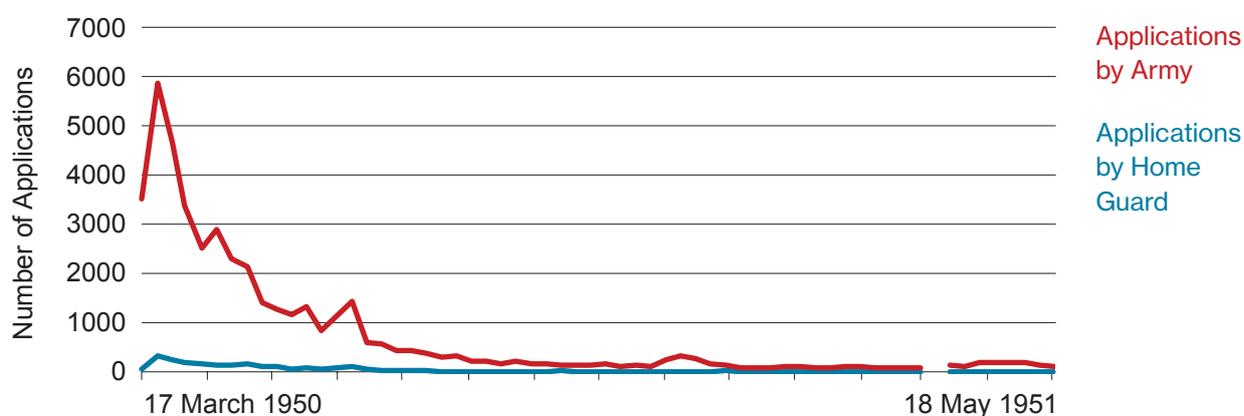
Dwyer's summary of these comments for the Minister omitted the RNZAF's advice that deterring applications might be desirable, but did contain a rough-order estimate of the likely costs of issuing warrants. The going rate for private engraving was around 2s per medal, which suggested that the entire engraving requirement might cost as little as £109,000 – a saving of £47,425 compared to the previous estimate.<sup>69</sup> This was followed up a few days later, however, with further advice about the drawbacks of a warrant scheme. Chief among these was the realisation that there was no way of ensuring that ex-service personnel who cashed in their warrants actually spent the money on engraving.<sup>70</sup>

Pressure to resolve this issue increased when Kippenberger wrote to Macdonald on 13 June, and again on 31 July, to remind him that at the annual NZRSA Dominion Council meeting, local RSA delegates had resolved to endorse the medals application system, but had also demanded that an "authority to engrave" be issued with every medal group, with priority given to the medals of deceased service personnel. This would have come as no surprise to the Minister: "The text of this Resolution, you will remember, formed the subject of a discussion between you ... and the members of my Emergency Committee," he continued, but, now that it had been passed, it "constitutes the opinion of ... 95 of the 102 affiliated local Returned Services' Associations, or 103,102 of 104,294 financial RSA members throughout New Zealand."<sup>71</sup>

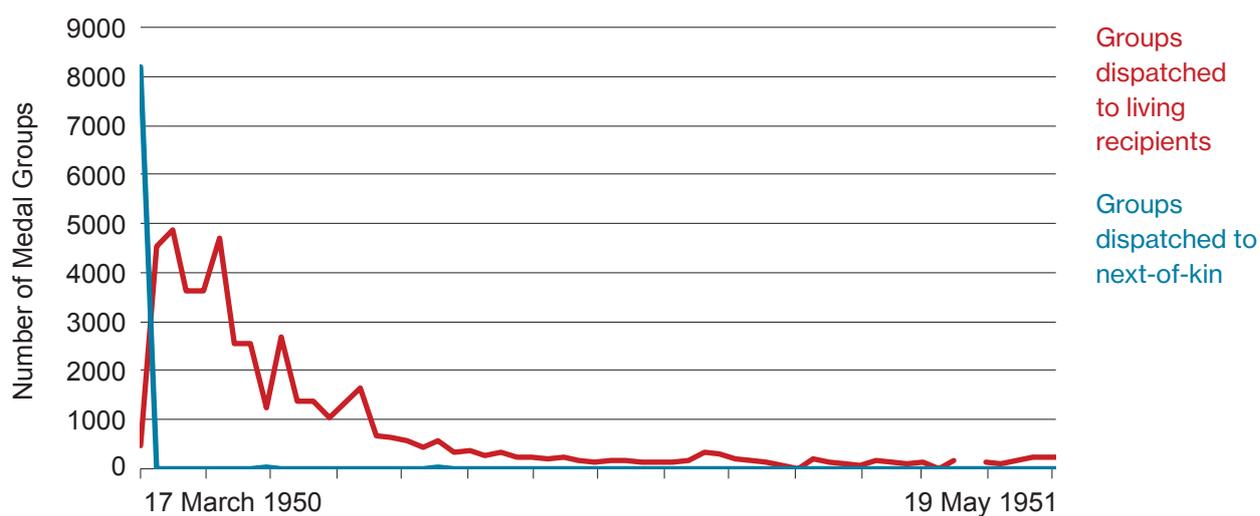
Further work by Base Records on what such an "authority to engrave" might look like was summarised by Dwyer for the Minister on 22 August. Alternatives to issuing warrants included asking engravers to send in invoices or directly reimbursing veterans who could produce a receipt. Whatever method was chosen, Dwyer advised, the costs would probably be well below the £109,000 previously quoted. This was because, "from our experience here and of the experience of other Commonwealth countries it now appears unlikely that more than half those entitled to apply will do so, and this is probably a rather high figure."<sup>72</sup>

Dwyer's dire prediction about likely future uptake was undoubtedly influenced by the precipitous decline in the number of medal applications which had been received from Army and Home Guard veterans at Base Records.<sup>73</sup> Figure 1 charts this evolution on a weekly basis over the period 14 March 1950, when issues began, to 18 May 1951, after which the reporting of weekly totals appears to have ceased. From a peak of 5,866 Army applications in the second week, applications

more than halved four weeks later. From July, the average fell to only 198 applications per week for the rest of the reporting period. The total received over these 14 months was 43,658, or 22% of the approximately 199,000 former full-time Army veterans believed to be eligible.<sup>74</sup> Particularly striking was the extremely low rate of applications from former Home Guard personnel. Only 2,699 had applied for their medals by 18 May 1951, or just 2.16% of the 125,000 thought to be eligible.



**Figure 1: Home Guard and Army Campaign Medal Applications, 17 March 1950–18 May 1951.**



**Figure 2: Medal Groups despatched, 17 March 1950–19 May 1951.**

Figure 2 illustrates the rate at which medal groups were despatched over the same period, including those sent automatically to the next of kin of deceased Army personnel.

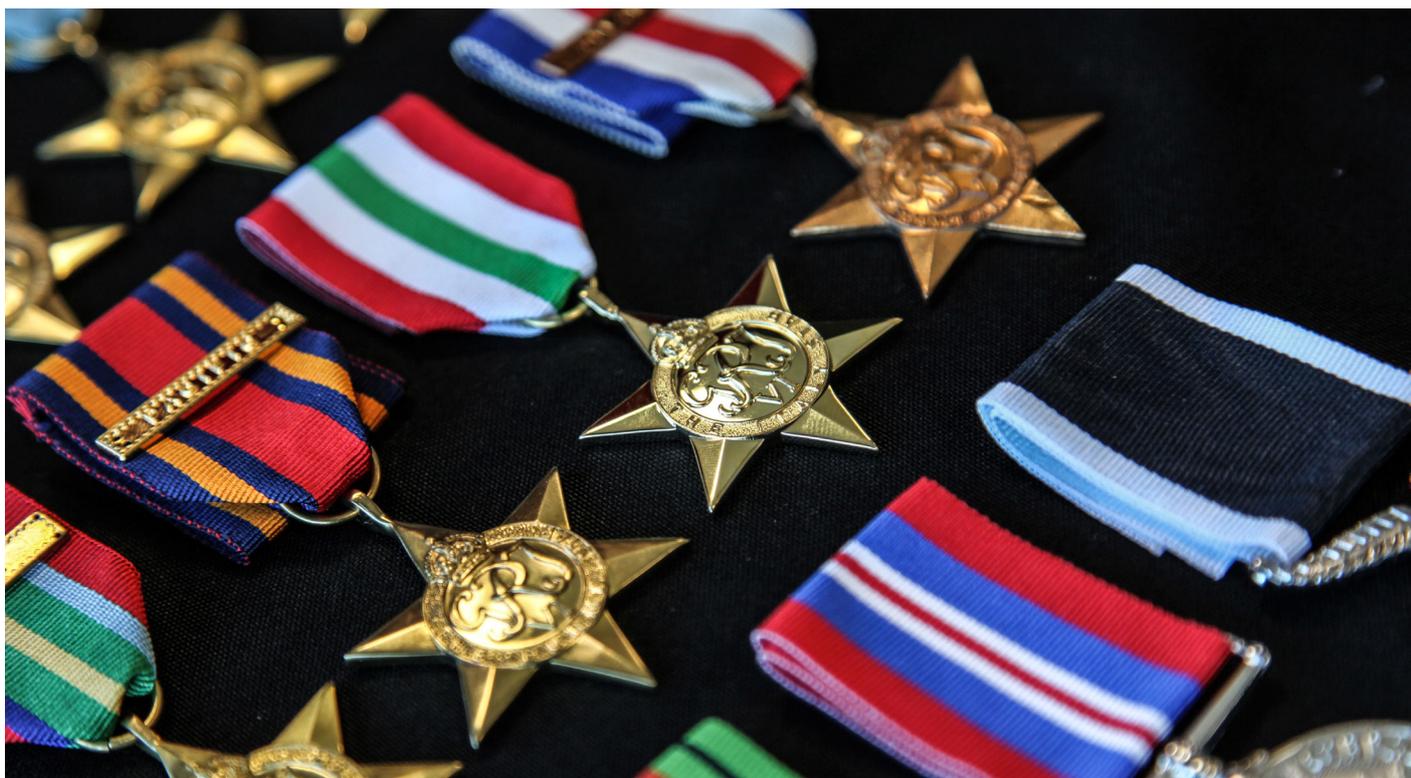
The total number of living Home Guard and Army recipients who had received their medals by the end of the reporting period was 46,355. Because of the up-to-date address information collected by Base records during the New Zealand Memorial Cross programme, 98% of the 8,321 medal groups sent to the next of kin of deceased personnel over this period were despatched in the first week.

Base Records responded to this developing fiasco by drafting a press release for the approval of the Minister on 13 July 1950. The draft candidly admitted that only “40,000 applications from ex-Army personnel have been received,” out of a possible 200,000, and although there had been strong demand at the start, this had “now fallen off considerably.” “I appeal to all those entitled to forward their applications immediately,” the Minister was quoted as saying, before reminding veterans that the application forms were available from the post office.<sup>75</sup>

Missing from this appeal was any suggestion that engraving policy was likely to change, and entreaties by the NZRSA, made in September and December, for a response to their letters about the Dominion Council’s resolutions did not receive a definitive reply until early 1951.<sup>76</sup> What this appears to signal is that Macdonald in particular, and the Holland Government in general, had failed to detect significant public pressure about this issue, which had received no sustained press coverage following the Dominion Council meeting the previous June. Macdonald may well have concluded that there was little to be gained by responding to the NZRSA until Cabinet had made a decision, which did not occur until 9 October 1950.

Macdonald’s cabinet paper strongly recommended against any change in policy, despite the changed attitude of the NZRSA:

*The whole question has again been considered and ways in which [the] cost of engraving medals could be met ... have been examined. Treasury feels that the Returned Services’ Association has not shown good reason why the Government should reverse its decision and undertake this expenditure. It seems that the vast majority of ex-servicemen are completely indifferent to the whole question of War Service Medals and that it is only a few enthusiasts on RSA Committees who are pressing strongly for engraved medals. Less than 42,000 applications have been received although 210,000 ex-servicemen are eligible (and the number of applications received is swollen by the fact that ex-Naval personnel applied for their medals at the same time as they asked for their prize money). The RSA contends that this apathy is partly attributable to the fact that the medals are not engraved and are thus impersonal, but in Treasury’s opinion it is clear that that now, 5 years after the war, most ex-servicemen are just not interested in campaign Stars and Medals, engraved or not engraved.*



No provision, moreover, had been made in the Estimate to cover the cost of engraving, and it was “considered that those men who want engraved medals could well be expected to make their own arrangements as the cost involved is unlikely to cause any serious hardship to ex-servicemen.” Cabinet agreed and Macdonald’s recommendation that the policy remain unchanged was confirmed.<sup>77</sup>

After seeking further information about the low medal uptake in Australia, Macdonald finally replied to the NZRSA on 19 January 1951. “I have to state,” he wrote, “that both this Government and its predecessor thoroughly examined the question as to whether or not medals should be engraved ... In doing so information was obtained from overseas with a view to assessing the effect which engraving had upon the demand for medals. This indicated quite definitely that there was no appreciable increase in the number of applications ... it is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the same attitude would be taken by ex-servicemen here.” As a result, he concluded, there would be no change to Government policy.<sup>78</sup>

Macdonald may also have been encouraged by the fact that press reaction to this decision, once it became known, was fairly muted. “No Engraving of Medals. Waikato RSA Expresses Disappointment”, was the headline to a brief report in the *Ashburton Guardian* on 29 November 1950, but there was no editorial comment.<sup>79</sup> Press coverage of medals over the course of 1951 and 1952, even within the RSA Review, was minimal. Cabinet had been correct to suppose, it seems, that the decision would have little political impact. Members of Parliament do not appear to have been besieged by angry constituents demanding that medals be engraved or sent through the post automatically, and Macdonald appears to have received very few submissions from his parliamentary colleagues about the issue. The last occasion in which the Chief of the General Staff, Major-General William Gentry, reported about the distribution of Second World War medals to Parliament was in June 1952, presumably because of a lack of interest. “Applications for Campaign Stars and Medals have fallen sharply to a constant weekly total of about 50. Applications actioned for the year number 4,206”, he reported. “A grand total of 57,405 persons, including next-of-kin of deceased, have now been issued with medals.”<sup>80</sup>

From early 1953, however, the announcement of a forthcoming royal visit, followed by Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in the middle of the year, rekindled calls for a change in distribution policy. Significantly, it was the small, short-lived but highly vocal 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force Association (2nd NZEF Association), rather than the NZRSA, which took the leading role, although a number of individuals and local RSAs also submitted petitions.<sup>81</sup> Unlike the NZRSA, which had endorsed the application policy, 2nd NZEF Association believed that "ex-servicemen have purposely refrained from making application for what they consider should be forwarded as of right," and urged Macdonald "to distribute these medals without the distasteful application method."<sup>82</sup> The reply drafted on Macdonald's behalf patiently explained that although fewer than 60,000 of the approximately 300,000 returned service personnel had applied, gaps in the records, particularly for aircrew and Naval personnel, a lack of accurate address information and, revealingly, major staff reductions meant that it was "not considered practicable to depart from ... requiring formal applications." Dwyer noted approvingly that "if all our letters were as good as this one, my job as 'censor' if that is the word, would cease to exist." The draft became the standard template for replies to similar enquiries.<sup>83</sup>

The matter may have rested there but for a trickle of very similar petitions from local RSAs, and, as time went by, National Party MPs, other ministers and, eventually, Prime Minister Sidney Holland himself. An uptick in press interest in the subject, orchestrated by the 2nd NZEF Association, also appears to have been influential. One of the more sensational reports appeared in *The Dominion*, under the headline "Thirty Tons of Medals The Queen Will Not See." When the Queen visited, she wouldn't see many medals, remarked a 2nd NZEF Association spokesman. Only 20% of campaign medals had been issued because the majority of veterans refused to go "'Cap in Hand' ... for decorations they are entitled to as of right." If "something is not done ... thousands of medals ... will end up on a junk-heap."<sup>84</sup>

A small but steady stream of similar petitions prompted the Deputy Adjutant General (DAG) to ask his staff if a more proactive approach, similar to that used for the New Zealand Memorial Cross, could be instituted. Cards sent to last-known addresses, he proposed, informing veterans of their entitlement and inviting them to confirm their correct addresses, might break the impasse. This ignited a remarkably impassioned debate within Army General Staff which generated minutes both for and against this proposal. The opposing minute warned that to "admit ... [fault] now would lead to a loss of face by both the Minister and the Army Department and ... undermine the confidence of the RSA." Adopting the proposal, moreover, would be costly and inefficient, and no-one had asked "if individual soldiers actually want their medals. Unless they are active members of the RSA, etc., or are prominent in public life, there is no great incentive for them to obtain their medals." Against this last was a pencilled note which objected that: "Whether they want them or not, we ... should make them take them, as we don't want them either." The matter was referred to the PAO(P)C, which decided that, as there was no staff resource to do otherwise, current policy should be upheld.<sup>85</sup>

Macdonald instructed Dwyer to prepare a statement. In obvious reference to the allegations made by 2nd NZEF Association, he particularly wanted to know “whether the rate of application has been accelerated recently, the approximate number of medals left to be issued and their weight.” Dwyer’s report included a table showing how many individuals associated with each Service, inclusive of next of kin, had been sent medals by mid-September 1953. Table 2 reproduces this information, with the addition of the percentages represented in each case.

**Table 2: Applications for Second World War campaign medals, March 1950 to September 1953.**

<b>SERVICE</b>	<b>NO. ELIGIBLE</b>	<b>NO. ISSUED (%)</b>	<b>APPLICATIONS OUTSTANDING (%)</b>
Navy	12,000	11,000 (92%)	1,000 (8%)
Army	207,000	58,702 (28%)	148,298 (72%)
Air Force	50,000	24,260 (48%)	25,740 (52%)
Home Guard	125,000	2,991 (2%)	122,009 (98%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>394,000</b>	<b>96,953 (25%)</b>	<b>297,047 (75%)</b>

The extraordinary success of the Navy, Dwyer explained, was because “prize money applications were associated with medal applications”, and it was believed that virtually all those eligible had received their medals. Army had experienced a “substantial increase” in applications just before the Coronation, which had been maintained ever since. By way of comparison, whereas 181 applications had been received in March, 476 applications had arrived in August. The corresponding figures for the RNZAF were 40 and 118 respectively. No data was available for the precise number of medals remaining in stock, but it was estimated that the total weight was between 15 and 18 tons. Holdings of the NZWSM, for which all 394,000 ex-personnel would qualify, however, were less than 70,000 as against the 297,000 who had yet to claim this medal, indicating that procurement had also been drastically curtailed.<sup>86</sup>

Nevertheless, as the royal visit became imminent towards the end of 1953, there was a ray of hope that a partial solution to the impasse over applications might be possible. The driver for this was the unilateral action of several local RSAs. One of the first to propose a way forward, albeit in the form of a *fait accompli*, was the notoriously recalcitrant Waikato RSA. Writing in September 1953, the secretary of the association told Base Records that engraving had been arranged locally and many of their membership had accordingly directed that their medals be sent to the same PO Box address in Hamilton, for collection by the RSA. "This is interesting," noted the DAG.<sup>87</sup> The logical next step was for RSAs to handle their members' applications in their entirety. The first to directly propose this was the Ohinemutu sub-association of the Te Arawa Māori Returned Services League in October 1953. "We have a membership of approximately 100 members," the honorary secretary told Base Records. If forms could not be sent, he went on, "would it be possible, if I forwarded you a list of the names of my members ... to leave it at that as to forwarding medals[?]"<sup>88</sup>

Although it appears that forms were sent in this instance, the idea that RSAs should simply send in lists of names and addresses was clearly in the air. When the Hastings RSA made a similar request, it was refused, but the Gore RSA took matters into its own hands: "[K]nowing full well that members themselves will not make applications, we include a list of 2nd NZEF members of our Association, and on their behalf, my Executive makes application for [the] Medals due to them," wrote the secretary on 16 October. Significantly, a draft reply refusing this request was not approved after Dwyer conceded that for Army personnel a service number, name and address would usually suffice. Dwyer subsequently wrote to the Air and Naval secretaries, informing them "that the Minister wishes these lists to be acted upon" and that the medals administration in this case should be expedited.<sup>89</sup>

Macdonald undoubtedly realised that allowing RSAs to act as face-saving intermediaries between their members and the military departments would remove a major barrier for many veterans. Dealing with such requests, however, was proving administratively burdensome. Because of this, he told his Cabinet colleague, Bill Sullivan, in March 1954, "it is desired that these departures from the normal procedure be not publicized as it is not desired that encouragement should be given to other bodies to follow a similar course."<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, he was prepared to offer discreet advice about the matter when a Christchurch National Party organiser, J.M. Cronin, alleged that the "distasteful" application policy had been deliberately designed by Defence staff to avoid work. Macdonald replied with a sharp rebuke, but he went on to say that if Cronin was averse to filling in forms, he should consult his local RSA as "some branches ... have already acted in this particular matter on behalf of ex-servicemen."<sup>91</sup>

Despite Macdonald's desire for no publicity, news that the military departments were willing to accept lists of names spread rapidly, leading to a minor flood of bulk requests from RSAs beginning in December 1953. As the Invercargill RSA told the Air Secretary, "this method is the only practicable one in which distribution will be accomplished."<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, the overall impact remained negligible. In June 1955, questions raised at a meeting of the Auckland Division of the National Party prompted the Prime Minister to ask for a "full report" on the progress of the medals distribution. Macdonald's report reiterated the standard reasons for adhering to current policy, particularly because of the addresses problem. Even recent Korean War veterans were proving difficult to track down, with 9% of medals packages being returned unclaimed. Applications, however, remained low, with Army receiving only 162 over

the last month and Air Force only 40, despite the bulk applications "on occasion" being made by "some of the smaller branches" of the RSA. Some 295,000 applications were believed to be outstanding, which was only an infinitesimal advance on the position reached two years earlier. Soon after, another discouraging report was provided by the RNZAF in response to a press gallery enquiry, which showed that the Air Department's 1953 estimate of 24,260 applications (or 48% of the 50,000 eligible) had been significantly overstated. The revised figure for 16 August 1955 was 21,201 (or 38%) out of a revised estimated total of 56,000, of which 3,864 had actually been automatic issues to next of kin, 1,754 to Regular Force personnel and 400 to Territorial Air Force and Active Reserve personnel. Only 15,183 applications (or 30% of the approximately 49,982 eligible) had been received from non-active reservists and discharged personnel, broken down as follows:

**Table 3: Medals applications from ex-RNZAF personnel, March 1950 to August 1955.<sup>93</sup>**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>APPLICATIONS FROM NON-ACTIVE RESERVES AND EX-RNZAF PERSONNEL</b>
1950	10,930 (22%)
1951	1,194 (2%)
1952	781 (1.5%)
1953	1,327 (2.6%)
1954	744 (1.5%)
To date 1955	207 (0.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,183 (30%)</b>

Macdonald eventually compiled a more comprehensive report on 9 September, which included data for all three services. It was now reported that 101,726 claims out of an estimated total of 394,000 individual entitlements had been satisfied, leaving 293,274 yet to make application. The annual rate, inclusive of automatic issues to serving personnel, Active Reserves and next of kin, had been as follows:

**Table 4: Individuals issued with Second World War medals, March 1950 to 9 September 1955.<sup>94</sup>**

YEAR	INDIVIDUAL CLAIMANTS
1950	77,596 (20% of those eligible)
1951	8,457 (2%)
1952	3,748 (1%)
1953	6,731 (1.7%)
1954	3,234 (0.8%)
To date 1955	1,960 (0.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>101,726 (26%)</b>

If the 125,000 eligible ex-Home Guard personnel were discounted because so few had or were ever likely to apply, the success rate among the remaining 269,000 eligible personnel was less than 38%. One of the interesting features of this result is how closely it matched the Australian experience. By May 1954, the Australian Minister for the Army admitted that only 34% of the approximately 700,000 Australian Army veterans had claimed their medals.<sup>95</sup>

The modest impact of RSA bulk applications was indicative, perhaps, of the reduced membership of the RSA by the mid-1950s, which had fallen significantly from a peak of 136,000 in 1947 to around 93,000 by 1953, after which it stabilised.<sup>96</sup> By the mid-1950s, it is likely that most RSA members who wanted their medals, or indeed veterans generally, would have already obtained them. This is the conclusion which seems to have been reached by the Government, as the collection of annual distribution statistics appears to have ceased after 1955. In November 1957, the New Zealand Post Office concluded likewise, and asked the Army Secretary to agree to the withdrawal of the medals application forms. "Stacks of application forms are still held by Post Offices throughout NZ," noted Dwyer, "and P&T now want to be shot of them. The call for them at present averages only about 10 per month (all POs)." Dwyer replied that the Post Office should destroy the remaining forms and direct enquirers to apply direct to the relevant authorities by letter.<sup>97</sup>

In October 1958, in response to a press enquiry about the number of medals and applications which were still outstanding, the Ministry of Defence could only supply information about the remaining stocks. In addition to 18,000 unclaimed medals from the First World War, the number of Second World War medals held by the armed forces stood at 272,974, of which the most numerous were 111,992 examples of the War Medal 1939-45. It is unlikely that this was sufficient to supply outstanding entitlements, indicating that procurement had slowed or ceased.<sup>98</sup> In May 1959, Phil Connolly, the Minister of Defence in the second Labour Government and himself a veteran of the war, subsequently explained to another reporter that the policy was to retain these stocks against future demand, which it was hoped would grow as the veterans grew older, and to replace medals which had been lost or destroyed.<sup>99</sup>



Anzac Day parade, Manurewa, 1985. Even 40 years after the end of the war, many veterans refused to apply for or wear their medals.

*Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections Footprints 00567.*

Nevertheless, in September 1959 Connolly informed the General Staff that he was “anxious to make a final effort to get rid of the medals we are still holding”, by means of a national advertising campaign in the press, with the support, if it could be obtained, of the NZRSA. Veterans, he suggested, should be reminded that even if they were not all that interested in the medals themselves, their families “would be proud to have them.”<sup>100</sup> The application process, moreover, was to be radically simplified, with veterans now required to supply only their names, addresses, Service and Service number. Scheduled for release in November 1959, in its final form the advertisement consisted of a simple coupon beneath a photograph of the available medals, on which veterans could enter these details and send to a single PO Box address in Wellington. By 21 December, over 3,000 applications had been received: 2,600 from ex-Army, 60 from ex-Navy and 400 from ex-RNZAF personnel.<sup>101</sup> A final report on the success of this campaign, however, was not supplied to the Minister until May 1960.

After attending the Anzac Dawn Parade at Whanganui with some 1,600 veterans, Connolly asked his staff: “How is the medal distribution going? At the Dawn Parade ... I doubt if 1 in 20 were wearing medals. It looks as though the effort should be intensified.” The Army Department replied that since the launch of the advertising campaign in November, 95 applications had been received from Whanganui, leading to the despatch of 400 medals, and that nationally 30,000 medals had been distributed: 22,500 by Army, 7,000 by Air and 500 by the Navy and Marine departments. Applications were still being received at a rate of 100 per week.<sup>102</sup>

Judging from the number of medals despatched, the November 1959 campaign had demonstrated that it was still possible to attract around 7,000 new applications, or around 2.6% of the approximately 269,000 eligible former full-time service personnel. Further campaigns, carried out periodically, it was hoped, would produce similar results. If further data was collected, however, it has not been located.



Medal wearing in some RSAs, on the other hand, was clearly more prevalent. Members of the Papanui Returned and Services Association march on Anzac Day, Christchurch, in 1987.

*Christchurch Star Archives. CCL-DW-82901. CCL-StarP-03481A.*

# COMMENT AND ANALYSIS



The rancour and dissatisfaction with which Second World War medals were initially received, expressed through press statements, RSA resolutions and private correspondence, shows that many believed they had been short-changed compared to the veterans of the First World War. Whereas the latter received their medals engraved and automatically, “evidently our effort of more recent times was not considered worthy enough,” as two ex-members of 19 Battalion put it to the editor of the RSA

Review.<sup>103</sup> The dominant discourse held that Second World War medals were thereby rendered valueless. A letter sent in August 1951 to the Prime Minister, Sidney Holland, from the mother of four ex-servicemen, is a typical example: “Nearly all” of her four sons, she wrote, had said that “if [the medals] ... can’t be sent to them, they are not worth anything.”<sup>104</sup> Exactly why engraving and applications were considered to be so important, however, was rarely explicitly stated.

## ACTION AFTER RETURN TO NEW ZEALAND OR DISCHARGE ABROAD.

Nature of Document issued.	Date.	By	Address sent to	Pay Office advised.
N.Z. 822 Cert. Dischg. No. 7837	4.5.48	P/S	SR. No 1571	W.G.
<del>M.I.D. ENDLEM</del>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ITALY STAR	Appn. No.....	
<del>1939-45 STAR</del>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	France & Germany Star	Date.....	
<del>ATLANTIC STAR</del>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	DEFENCE MEDAL	Initials.....	
<del>AFRICA STAR</del>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	WAR MEDAL, 1939-45		
<del>6th ARMY CLASP</del>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N.Z. War Service Medal		
<del>PACIFIC STAR</del>				
Assessed by <i>C.T.</i>		Checked by <i>[Signature]</i>		

2,000 [units/12/42-5842] BASH-REC-114

Medal entitlement stamp on the military service record of a veteran who never claimed his medals. The medal entitlement in this case would have been the Italy Star, War Medal 1939-45 and the New Zealand War Service Medal.

NZDF.

Anger about the lack of engraving arose not only because it was a break with precedent but because it was held by many to be indicative of an elite disregard for the rank and file or the value of their service and sacrifice. This was clearly what was implied in a letter from the NZRSA to Macdonald in December 1950, following the Government's second refusal to mandate engraving. In the context of massive revenue surpluses and a booming economy, implied Harrison, the Government's attitude looked distinctly mean spirited.<sup>105</sup> Also at play, however, were more longstanding grievances about perceived inequalities in the way the burden of the war had been shared. The most famous expression of this was the "Furlough Mutiny" of 1943-44, during which soldiers on home leave in New Zealand refused to return to the front when they discovered that upwards of 35,000 able-bodied men of military age, by virtue of their employment in "essential industry", had been able to avoid conscription.<sup>106</sup> Although the Fraser Government eventually took steps to address this inequality, echoes of this episode could be heard in the widely expressed fear that unengraved medals could easily be worn by imposters. Hoping, perhaps, to deflect such criticisms, the NZRSA both warned and reassured its membership on several occasions that it was a "punishable offense" to sell war medals.<sup>107</sup>

The negative reaction to application was undoubtedly fuelled by the Government's rigid adherence to its needlessly complicated application form, which dovetailed into popular tropes about out-of-touch and workshy Wellington bureaucrats. Most complaints, however, centred around "having to go cap in hand" for that which had been earned and which should have been awarded as of right. Underlying this narrative, however, was a deeper perception that it was vainglorious or dishonouring to apply for one's medals. In a remarkable letter to Macdonald sent in December 1950, Donald Croft, a former gunner who had been taken prisoner by the Germans in Greece in 1941, explained at length why this was so distasteful. After years of form filling, queuing and dealing with military bureaucracy while in uniform, ex-servicemen believed that "it is now time that we become individuals again and have the authorities approach us for once." "Quite apart from this," he continued,

*A man is apt to feel that it appears conceited to publicly ask for his medals ... I know that I, like many others, would not think of wearing my medals when all my comrades would know that I had asked for them ... the authorities have made a serious blunder in overlooking this important psychological factor.<sup>108</sup>*

Missing from the record, however, is an exact sense of how decisive or representative these attitudes really were.<sup>109</sup> From the foregoing, it is abundantly evident that the New Zealand Government made only minimal attempts to engage with or consult veterans before the distribution policy was announced. That policy should also satisfy tikanga Māori was never even considered. Nevertheless, the New Zealand Government clearly anticipated a negative reception. The Fraser Government's frequent requests for policy reviews, and the Holland Government's last-minute (but only partially successful) efforts to enlist the NZRSA and inject a personalised element into the distribution process demonstrate this. At no point, however, were substantive changes to either the application requirement or engraving policy seriously entertained, despite the fact that both could have been achieved with a fairly limited investment. This is undoubtedly because Ministers did not believe that either engraving or attempts to actively solicit applications would have any appreciable effect.

As already outlined, by the time the definitive decisions were being made, overseas experience had already demonstrated that engraving the medals would not persuade the majority of ex-service personnel to claim them. It was also far from obvious that having to apply, in and of itself, was the only or even the main reason for this, as even some of the veteran community were grudgingly forced to admit. Ministers were fully aware that when something was truly desired, having to apply for it was not a significant barrier. By the end of June 1949, for example, Base Records estimated that only 4,886 ex-service personnel had yet to claim their war service gratuities. By March 1952, this had fallen to about 4,300, of whom about 90% were thought to be owed amounts ranging from £1 to just a few shillings. In contrast, 239,000 (or about 98% of all those estimated to be eligible) had applied for and received their entitlements, which could run to several hundred pounds.<sup>110</sup> It would also not have escaped notice that demand for New Zealand Memorial Crosses had not been significantly curtailed by having to apply for them. It is difficult to avoid the impression that it was not the distribution or engraving policies that were the real issues, but something to do with the campaign medals themselves.

The official explanation for the lack of demand for campaign medals was that ex-service personnel were simply "indifferent" to them, not least because aside from Anzac Day or RSA functions there was little occasion to wear them. War medals and medal wearing in general, it would seem, had yet to become firmly embedded in the New Zealand cultural landscape. Even the South African War Veterans' Association had some difficulty in persuading its members to wear them.<sup>111</sup> Those involved in formulating policy about the medals themselves, moreover, would have been acutely aware that cultural resistance to medal wearing was not the only issue.



The medals worn by an RNZAF veteran of the North African and Italian campaigns during the 75th anniversary of the Battles of Cassino commemorations held in Italy in 2014. Army veterans of these campaigns were awarded similar groups.

NZDF.

*Your classic story of the disgusted Maori who told the Waac, “Stone the crows, they’ll be giving them to the donkeys next,” raised a laugh ... [but] it points the finger as to why so many medals are unclaimed. Granted that the Tuis ... did a good job, but why put them in the Africa Star category? Why not a medal similar to the one awarded to the Home Guard?*

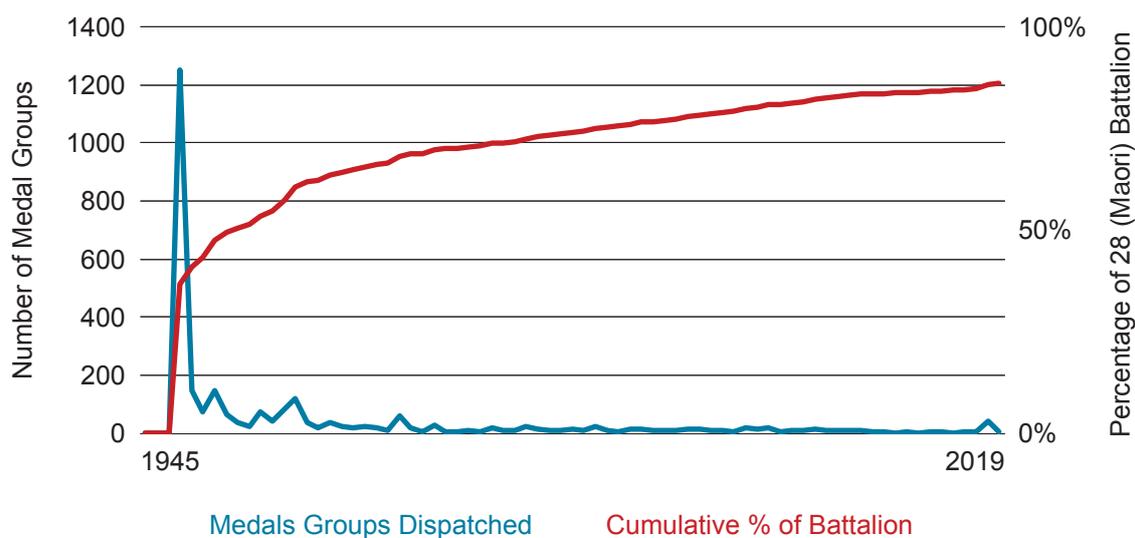
What some of these other issues were was revealed in a letter to the editor entitled “Those War Medals!” which appeared in the RSA Review in January 1957 in response to an earlier article about the low uptake of medals in New Zealand and Australia. Unhappiness about engraving and applications were not the only or even the most important reasons, wrote the anonymous author: “Talking this subject over it seems clear that many ex-servicemen feel the medals were awarded rather indiscriminately and are not worth the trouble of collecting”. Particularly disliked was the award of campaign stars to members of the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC):

Also “cheapened”, according to the author, was the 1939-45 Star, which had originally been instituted as the 1939-43 Star, intended only for those who had served through “the hard and hazardous years when everything was going against us”. In an echo, once again, of the resentments about wartime burden sharing, extending the qualifying period made it “available to far too many types who were raked out of safe jobs at home by the manpower committees and pitchforked overseas. That took the shine off it”. Because of “bungled” decisions such as these, he finished, “a lot of us ... [are] not surprised there is a casual attitude to war medals. Who wants to clank around like a Portuguese admiral anyway?”<sup>112</sup>

Anecdotal evidence gathered during the research for this paper supports the view that many of the medals were believed to be either unfair, too broad in scope or just far too generally available to make them valuable. Controversy surrounded the much-sought-after 8th Army Clasp to the Africa Star, for example, because the qualifying service began on 23 October 1942, the date of the Battle of El Alamein. It was therefore denied to all those who had fought in 8th Army during the gruelling North African battles of 1941 and earlier in 1942, but who, for one reason or another, were not classed as being part of 8th Army thereafter. Particular disparagement seems to have been reserved for the NZWSM, or “Peter Fraser’s Iron Cross” as it was derisively nicknamed because of its Germanic-looking black and white ribbon. Also resented was the lack of particular recognition for the Greece and Crete campaigns. The daughter of one veteran remembers that the medal her father was most proud of was the Greek War Medal 1940-41. This medal was issued by the Greek Government direct to New Zealand Greece and Crete veterans in 1980 but was never officially recognised by the New Zealand Government. Two of the most longstanding grievances, which concerned the lack of separate recognition for Arctic service and Bomber Command, both of which had witnessed horrific casualties, were not resolved until 2013.

Anecdotal evidence also indicates, however, that it is probably unwise to generalise too broadly about individual motivations. The reasons for medals hesitancy given by veterans, as remembered by their families, were anything but homogeneous. Personal communications to the author have cited: bitterness about perceived unfairness in the award of gallantry decorations; survivor guilt, particularly in cases where a serving sibling had died; deep psychological trauma; shame at having been discharged for “Lacking Moral Fibre” by the Air Force; or, most commonly, because the medals were simply regarded as old-fashioned or patronising. This last reason is a pointer, perhaps, to what seems to have been a modernist and forward-looking spirit among returned service personnel during the 1950s. The pages of the RSA Review during this period, for example, were chiefly concerned with practical issues – veterans’ benefits, resettlement, restarting stalled careers, raising young families and building houses. Women’s fashions and children’s toys featured prominently among the advertisements. Something of the same spirit was also detectable in the movement to create “living” war memorials – sportsgrounds, parks, community centres and halls – rather than traditional structures to commemorate the Second World War.<sup>113</sup>

The only data available about the issue of campaign medals to New Zealanders after 1960 is a survey of the 3,420 individuals known to have served in 28 (Maori) Battalion which was carried out by NZDF PAM in 2021. The results of this survey are summarised in Figure 3.<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 3: Despatch of 28 (Maori) Battalion medal groups, 1950-2021.**

The issue of medals to 28 (Maori) Battalion up to 1960 closely conforms to the pattern established for the rest of the armed forces. An important difference, however, is the relatively high uptake recorded in 1950 (36.7%), which is attributable to the high number of automatic issues to the next of kin of deceased men, who accounted for 661 (19.3%) of the survey sample. Similar patterns were almost certainly replicated in the other New Zealand infantry battalions, which suffered similarly high casualty rates. Also evident is the slight increase in uptake in 1953 (4.3%), coinciding with the expected royal tour. Thereafter, the rate of applications is most likely to have been driven by factors particular to 28 (Maori) Battalion. The relatively high demand between 1957 and 1961 (averaging 2.3% per annum), for example, may be connected to the foundation of the 28 (Maori) Battalion Association in 1958 and its politically significant early meetings. Between 1971 and 2019, however, average annual demand

fell to only 0.3%, and in the later decades it is likely that it was families, rather than the men themselves, who made most of the applications. The increase recorded in 2020 (1.2%) was the direct outcome of a community-led drive to trace the families of C Company men who had never claimed their medals. Just over 86% of the medal groups due to the battalion had been claimed by end of November 2021.

If an 86% issue rate is typical for the rest of the armed forces who served overseas (approximately 155,000 personnel), this would imply that something close to 22,000 individuals never applied for their medals. If the home-service forces are included, this is likely to rise by many tens of thousands.

## Matthew Buck

Senior Advisor Heritage  
13 December 2021

## ENDNOTES

- 1 There were, in fact, two other campaign or war service medals for which New Zealand service personnel could qualify: the 1914 Star and the Mercantile Marine War Medal. Only four New Zealand service personnel are known to have been awarded the 1914 Star, which they received for prior service with the British armed forces in France and Belgium in 1914. New Zealand members of the Merchant Navy who had undertaken one or more voyages through designated areas during the war could qualify for the Mercantile Marine War Medal.
- 2 New Zealand Defence Forces. Annual Report of the General Officer Commanding, for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> July 1922 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 1923. *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives (AJHR). 1923 Session I-II, H-19*, p5. British medals distribution policy and implementation, the total number of medals issued in Britain and the huge difficulties Britain experienced in automatically distributing the medals because of out-of-date address information were widely reported in the New Zealand press. See, for example, 'War Medals', *Manawatu Standard*, 23 June 1923, p10.
- 3 *AJHR, 1920 Session I, H-19*, p3.
- 4 *AJHR, 1923 Session I-II, H-19*, p5.
- 5 "Disposal of War Medals also Memorial Plaques and Scrolls Issued on Account of Deceased Soldiers Whose Relatives Cannot be Traced", 13 March, 1923, Ministry of Defence Headquarters (AALJ), series 7921, W3508/ 223, 248/3/1, part 1, (R17189224), Archives New Zealand (ANZ).
- 6 *AJHR, 1924 Session I, H-19*, p6. At the end of 1923, General Headquarters in Wellington reported that an additional 30,766 "unstamped" (i.e., yet to be engraved) campaign medals remained in stock; "War Medals", 10 December 1923, Army Department (AAYS), series 8638, AD1/935, 48/94/3, (R22433112), ANZ.
- 7 See, for example, "Records of the War. Medals and Scrolls", *Feilding Star*, 20 September 1924, p5.
- 8 *AJHR, 1925 Session I, H-19*, p9. "War Medals Still Unclaimed", *New Zealand Herald*, 5 September 1925, p13. According to numerous New Zealand press reports, similar issues were experienced in Britain, Canada and Australia, where large stocks of medals remained unclaimed into the late 1920s.
- 9 This statistic is derived from Commonwealth War Graves Commission data.
- 10 A summary of these medals and clasps is available in Geoffrey P. Oldham and Brett Delahunt, *Orders, Decorations and Medals Awarded to New Zealanders* (Auckland: Geoffrey P. Oldham, 1991), pp55-59.
- 11 "Engraving of War Medals and Stars", 4 December 1946, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1 (R22436969), ANZ.
- 12 "Issue of Campaign Stars – Medals", 21 March 1947, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 13 "Engraving of Campaign Stars and Medals", 5 June 1947, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 14 "Issue of Campaign Medals", 13 December 1946, Air Department (ADQA), series 17211, AIR1/318, 11/2/14, part 1 (R21073636), ANZ.
- 15 "Re Issue of Campaign Medals", 19 December 1946. ADQA 17211, AIR1/318, 11/2/14. Part 1, ANZ.
- 16 Minute, Captain Fitchett to DAG2, "Medals – Issue and Engraving", 14 January 1947, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ. That the medals assessments would have to be managed alphabetically was presumably because this was the way in which military service files were arranged at Base Records. Similar issues may have influenced Australian policy when the decision was made in 1949 to engrave Australian campaign medals.

- 17 Minute, R. S. Wogan to Army Headquarters, "Issue of Campaign Stars, Defence and War Medals", AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 18 Minute, "Engraving Machine", 11 June 1947. AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 19 "Schedule No.6 of the Meeting of the PAO (Personnel) Committee held on Wednesday 18 June 47", AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 20 Memorandum, Army Secretary to Minister of Defence "Re: Engraving of Campaign Stars and Medals", 2 July 1947, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 21 Memorandum, Army Secretary to Minister of Defence, "Engraving of Campaign Stars and Medals", 31 July 1947, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 22 Memorandum, Dwyer, "Engraving of Campaign Stars and Medals", 28 October 1947, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 23 Aubrey G. Bairstow, "The New Zealand Memorial Cross", *Orders & Medals Research Society Journal* Vol.35, No.2, Summer 1996, pp. 89-92.
- 24 "New Zealand Memorial Cross and Memorial Scroll", 13 August 1948, Headquarters New Zealand Defence Force (ABFK), series 7281, W4266, Box 98, 11/12/13 (R20218842), ANZ.
- 25 *AJHR, 1949 Session I, H-19*, p11.
- 26 R.S. Wogan, *A treatise on the pay and records procedure inaugurated, developed and maintained for the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Forces (Records) within New Zealand during the war years 1939-1945 and afterwards* (Wellington: Army Department, 1948), pp145-146. Other sources suggest that the average output was closer to 800 medals per week.
- 27 Harrison to Jones, 13 September 1948. AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1 (R17190061), ANZ.
- 28 Jones to Harrison, 29 September 1948. AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 29 Memorandum, "Medals of World War II – Issue of", 2 May 1949, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 30 Minutes of the PAO (Personnel) Committee Meeting held at Army Headquarters on the 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1949, "Campaign Medals: Issue of", AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 31 "Notes on the Issue of Campaign Stars and Medals – Army Personnel", undated AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 32 Memorandum, "Issue of Commemorative Medals and Stars of World War II", 10 June 1949, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 33 Clipping, "Little Interest in Second World War Medals", *NZPA Special Correspondent*, London, 8 November 1948, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ. New Zealand and the United Kingdom were the only major countries in the Commonwealth to issue medals manufactured by the Royal Mint. Australia, Canada, South Africa and India all manufactured their own medals using dyes supplied from the United Kingdom.
- 34 "War Stars Shoddy", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1948, p1. The RSL's official name between 1940 and 1965 was The Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia.
- 35 "Ex-Soldiers Dub Campaign Stars as 'Cheap Junk'", *Gisborne Herald*, 20 October 1948, p5.
- 36 "Engraving of Medals", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 December 1948, p3.
- 37 "Campaign Stars, Medals to be Engraved", *The Uralla Times*, 30 June 1949, p7; Trevor Turner, "A distinction almost denied: the naming of Australia's Second World War Medals", *Orders & Medals Research Society Journal*, September 2018, pp148-157.

- 38 Harrison to Jones, 6 July 1949, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 39 Jones to Harrion, 5 August 1949, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 40 Warnes to Dwyer, 8 August 1949, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 41 Dwyer to Warnes, 26 August 1949, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 42 Memorandum, "Campaign Stars, Medals, etc. – Engraving of", 20 August 1949, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 43 Cutting, "War Medals to carry names of servicemen", *The Sunday Sun and Guardian*, June 12 1949, n.p., AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 44 Cable, Base Records to NZJSLS Melbourne, 27 September 1949, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 45 New Zealand Liaison Office Report, "Campaign Stars & Medals Engraving", 25 October 1949, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 46 Memorandum, "Engraving of Campaign Stars and Medals", 4 November 1949; Dwyer to Kippenberger, "Campaign Stars and Medals – Engraved", 11 November 1949; Harrison to Dwyer, "Campaign Stars and Medals", 23 November 1949, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 47 Cutting, "Inscriptions on War Medals", *The New Zealand Herald*, 30 November 1949, n.p., AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 48 "Engraving of Campaign Stars, Medals, etc., 1939-45 War", 10 January 1950, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 49 Dwyer to Wogan, "Engraving of Medals", 30 January 1950, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 50 Wogan to Dwyer, "Engraving of Medals", 31 January 1950; Memorandum, "Engraving of Campaign Stars and Medals", 6 February 1950, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 51 Cabinet Paper CP (50) 48, "Engraving of Campaign Stars, Medals, etc., 1939-45 War", Cabinet Office (AAFD), Series 807, 2/j, CM (1950)5 (R21922384), ANZ.
- 52 Memorandum, "Engraving of Campaign Stars and Medals, etc., 1939-1945 (CM (50) 5)", AAFD 807, 2/j, CM (1950)5, ANZ.
- 53 For the British form, see "The Historical Background to the Manufacture and Distribution of the Campaign Medals for WWII", <http://www.bbrclub.org/The%20Historical%20Background%20to%20the%20Manufacture%20and%20Distribution%20of%20the%20Campaign%20Medals%20for%20WWII..htm>, accessed 21 July 2021.
- 54 Memorandum, "Campaign Stars, Medals, etc., 1939-45", 13 February 1950, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 55 Report, "Engraving of Military Decorations", 10 February 1950, AAYS 8638, AD1/1222, 248/1/6, part 1, ANZ.
- 56 "Issue of War Medals", *Evening Post* (Wellington), 11 March 1950, p5.
- 57 "War Service Distribution of Awards", *Otago Daily Times*, 15 March 1950, p5.
- 58 "Brisk Demand for Service Medals & Campaign Stars", *Bay of Plenty Beacon*, 20 March 1950, p5.
- 59 "RSA Protest at Blank Medals Plan", *Evening Post* (Wellington), 14 March 1950, p12.
- 60 "Move by Dunedin RSA, Confidential Information Sought", *Otago Daily Times*, 22 March 1950, p6.
- 61 "Engraving of Medals Decision Was Made 'With Reluctance'", *Evening Post* (Wellington), 15 March 1950, p10.
- 62 "Engraving of War Medals", *RSA Review*, May 1950, p1.
- 63 "Hercules Has Dropped His Bundle!", *RSA Review*, May 1950, p2.
- 64 Harrison to Macdonald, "War Stars and Medals", 21 April 1950, ABFK W4266, 7281, Box 98, 11/2/13, ANZ.

- 65 Macdonald to Harrison, 8 May 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 66 Dwyer to Naval Secretary and Air Secretary, "RSA Proposals – Issue and Engraving of Medals", 9 May 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 67 Naval Secretary to Army Secretary, "RSA Proposals – Issue and Engraving of Medals", 15 May 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 68 Air Secretary to Army Secretary, "RSA Proposals: Issue and Engraving of Medals", 19 May 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ. A further complicating factor was that most former RNZAF personnel had served in RAF squadrons, the records of which were held in the UK. The RAF appear to have had similar difficulties in determining exactly when personnel became "operational".
- 69 Memorandum, "Issue of Medals – RSA Proposals", 25 May 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 70 Memorandum, "Issue of Medals – RSA Proposals", 31 May 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 71 Kippenberger to Minister of Defence, "World War II Medals and Stars", 31 July 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 72 Memorandum, "Engraving of Medals", 22 August 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 73 An almost complete series of the weekly returns are in ABFK W4266, 7281, Box 98, 11/2/13, ANZ. The RNZN and RNZAF do not seem to have compiled weekly totals.
- 74 Over 8,000 of the 207,000 wartime Army personnel had died during the war. The medals of these deceased men and women were sent to their next of kin automatically.
- 75 Memorandum, "Issue of War Medals", 13 July 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ. A search of the National Library of New Zealand's online "Papers Past" database did not reveal any press uptake of Macdonald's remarks, which may have never been released.
- 76 Harrison to Macdonald, "World War II Medals and Stars", 12 September 1950; Harrison to Macdonald, "World War II Medals and Stars", 6 December 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 77 "Engraving of Campaign Stars, Medals, etc., 1939-45 War", CP(50) 1045, 5 October 1950; "Engraving of Campaign Stars, Medals, etc., 1939-45 War", CM (50) 70, 11 October 1950, AAFD 807, 16/a, CM (1950)70, ANZ. Macdonald's figures evidently refer to Army personnel only.
- 78 Adjutant General to NZJSLs Melbourne, "Engraving of Medals", 19 December 1950; Macdonald to General Secretary, NZRSA, 19 January 1951, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ. The NZJSLs reply to Macdonald has not been located, but his letter to the NZRSA suggests that its report was not encouraging.
- 79 "No Engraving of Medals", *Ashburton Guardian*, 29 November 1950, p2.
- 80 *AJHR*, 1952, Session I, H-19, p10.
- 81 "Veterans' associations", in Ian McGibbon (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp556-557.
- 82 J.F. Sloan to Macdonald, 6 May 1953, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 83 Draft letter, Macdonald to Dominion Secretary, 2<sup>nd</sup> NZEF Association, 20 May 1953, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 84 "Thirty Tons of Medals The Queen Will Not See", *The Dominion*, 17 July 1953, p8.

- 85 Note, DAG to A3, "Distribution of Medals", undated; Minute, SCSO A3 to DAG, "Distribution of 2nd World War Medals", 21 July 1953; Anderson, Minute Sheet for Army Secretary, "Distribution of War Medals", 31 July 1953; Schedule 5 to the Minutes of the Meeting of the PAO (Personnel) Committee Held on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1953", AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 86 Memorandum, "World War II Stars and Medals", 16 September 1953, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 87 Waikato RSA to Base Records, 7 September 1953, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 88 Ohinemutu sub-association of the Te Arawa Māori Returned Services League to Base Records, 1 October 1953, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 89 Gore RSA to Macdonald, 16 October 1953; Dwyer to Navy and Air Secretaries, "Issue of 2nd World War Medals: Gore RSA", 11 November 1953, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 90 Sullivan to Macdonald, 9 March 1954; Macdonald to Sullivan, 25 March 1954, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 91 Cronin to Holland, 16 November 1954; Macdonald to Cronin, 10 December 1954, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 92 Invercargill RSA to Air Secretary, 18 December 1953, ADQA 17211, AIR1/318, 11/2/14, part 2, ANZ.
- 93 Minute, "Campaign Stars and Medals – 1939/45", 16 August 1955, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 94 Macdonald to Mentiplay, 9 September 1955, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 95 "Unclaimed War Medals", *Cootamundra Herald*, 27 May, 1954. The average number of unclaimed medals per Australian army veteran was estimated to be 3.1.
- 96 Stephen Clarke, *After the War. The RSA in New Zealand* (New Zealand: Penguin Random House, 2016), pp145-147.
- 97 Anderson to Dwyer, "Applications for Campaign Stars and Medals", 8 November 1957; Dwyer, file note, 15 November 1957; Huggett to Anderson, 20 November 1957, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 98 "Bulk Stocks Campaign Stars and Medals as Held by MOD at 31 October 1958", AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 99 Connolly to Ewart, 5 May 1959, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 100 Minute, "Distribution of Campaign Stars and Medals", 10 September 1959, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 101 An example of this coupon is preserved in ADQA 17211, AIR1/319, 11/2/14, part 2, ANZ.
- 102 Wells to Army Secretary, 5 May 1960; Army Department to Minister of Defence, "Distribution of War Medals", 17 May 1960, AAYS 8638, AD1/15537, 323/5/37, part 2 (R22444079), ANZ.
- 103 "Decision on War Medals", *RSA Review*, March 1958, p14.
- 104 Evitt to Holland, 28 August 1951, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 105 Harrison to Macdonald, "World War II Medals and Stars", 6 December 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 106 "Furlough Affair", in Ian McGibbon (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History* (Auckland: OUP, 2000), p189; Jonathan Fennell, *Fighting the People's War. The British and Commonwealth Armies and the Second World War* (Cambridge: CUP, 2019), pp370, 379-390.
- 107 "How a well-dressed Kiwi will wear his Medals", *RSA Review*, June 1950, p11; "Correct Order to Wear Medals", *RSA Review*, April 1956, p9. This restriction was not removed until the mid-1970s.

- 108 Croft to Minister of Defence, 4 December 1950, AALJ 7291, W3508/303, 323/5/37, part 1, ANZ.
- 109 Donald Croft, for example, appears to have softened his attitude, applying for his medals in 1954. Personal File, 24896 Donald George Croft, NZDF PAM.
- 110 Memorandum, Dwyer to Minister of Defence, "War Service Gratuity", 29 June 1949; Draft memorandum, Dwyer to Minister of Defence, "War Service Gratuities, 1939-45 War", n.d., ABFK 7281, W4266/118, 24/12/2, part 3 (R20219100), ANZ.
- 111 "Veterans Should Wear Medals", *RSA Review*, April 1952, p3.
- 112 "Those War Medals!", *RSA Review*, January 1957, p3. Such views were not, however, universal. A subsequent letter protested that the WAACs were fully entitled to their stars: "In Defence of the WAACS!", *RSA Review*, February 1958, p3.
- 113 Jock Phillips, *To the Memory. New Zealand's War Memorials* (Nelson: Potton & Burton, 2016), pp168-195. I am indebted to the members of the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion NZEF Facebook Group for much of the information in this and the preceding paragraph.
- 114 NZDF PAM, "28th Maori Battalion Nominal Roll – Correct as at 11 November 2021."



**HEI MANA MŌ AOTEAROA**  
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New Zealand Government