Information & Frequently Asked Questions

For cemeteries, crematoriums and funeral providers

As @ October 2019

The office of Australian War Graves

Information

What does the Office of Australian War Graves do?

The Office of Australian War Graves is within the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). One of the Department's key roles is acknowledging and commemorating the service and sacrifice of all those who served Australia and its allies in wars, conflicts and peace operations through commemorations, memorials, war graves and research.

DVA commemorates our war dead and post war dead through war memorials and cemeteries in Australia and overseas; and gardens of remembrance. DVA maintains these important commemorative sites in every state in Australia and through partnerships overseas.

The Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) is part of the Department of Veterans' Affairs and has three distinct roles:

- to maintain war cemeteries and individual war graves within Australia and the region, as the agent of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission;
- to officially commemorate eligible veterans who have died post-war and whose deaths are accepted as being caused by war service; and
- to provide and maintain national memorials overseas.

"There is no reason why cemeteries should be places of gloom."

Sir Frederick Kenyon, How Cemeteries Will Be Designed, 1918

The relationship between the Office of Australian War Graves and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The vast majority of the 103,000 Australians who have died serving our nation are those of the First and Second World Wars. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), of which Australia is a member nation, is responsible for the official commemoration of the Commonwealth casualties of the two world wars and the maintenance of 1.7 million commemorations at 23,000 sites in 150 countries worldwide.

CWGC's approach to commemoration is as outlined in the organisation's Royal Charter of Incorporation (1917) and Supplement Charter (1964). The CWGC stipulates the World War periods for war dead as:

- First World War: 4 August 1914 to 31 August 1921
- Second World War: 3 September 1939 to 31 December 1947.

OAWG acts as an agent of the CWGC to maintain war cemeteries, memorials and individual war graves (in Australia and the region) for members of the Commonwealth forces, who died during the First and Second World Wars. Under a formal agreement between the Australian Government and CWGC, is the authority for Australia to care for and maintain war cemeteries in Australia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands (Guadalcanal) and Norfolk Island.

More information about CWGC can be found at www.cwgc.org

Eligibility for Official Commemoration of the war dead of the First and Second World Wars

While considerable time has elapsed since both the First and Second World Wars, from time to time an individual or a group will approach OAWG with information and evidence that has led them to believe that a deceased veteran of either of the two world wars has died of causes related to his or her service within or indeed in some cases after the war period. The enquiry may be years, decades or as is the case with the First World War, a century after the service person's death.

OAWG staff research the individual in question, consulting primary source materials to identify things like their service history and cause of death prior to making a recommendation to the Director War Graves about their eligibility.

An Example

A volunteer group from an Australian cemetery presents research and evidence to OAWG that identifies the remains of an individual currently buried in an unmarked grave within the cemetery as being those of a veteran who has died during the accepted dates for either the First or Second World War. The evidence provided is checked and, if needed, further information is sought by OAWG. Where the evidence is compelling, and the cause of death can be linked to service, the grave can then be marked with the details of the person within it.

Official records held by OAWG, CWGC and the Australian War Memorial are adjusted as required.

Eligibility for Official Commemoration for those who die during operational service outside of the two World Wars

The graves of those who have fallen in or during war, conflicts and peacekeeping operations that have occurred after the period of the Second World War are not covered by the provisions of the Charter of the CWGC.

However in 1922, the Australian Government extended official commemoration to those veterans whose death post the First World War was attributable to their war service. This was later extended to those who died after the Second World War and later still, other wars, conflicts and peace operations.

As a result Australian service personnel who die during war, conflict and peacekeeping operations are eligible for an official commemoration.

Australians who die after a war or conflict

The commemoration of service men and women whose death post war has been accepted as being due to war service and in other defined circumstances is managed by OAWG for Government.

While post war commemoration draws upon the principles of commemoration established and implemented by CWGC, the program of post war commemoration is unique to Australia, and is managed separately to the business undertaken by OAWG for CWGC.

The vast majority of the business we do with cemeteries and crematoriums relates to the provision of post-war commemoration.

An Example of Post War Commemoration

A veteran of the Vietnam War has recently died. He was supported by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) via a specific type of pension that recognised he was living with illnesses or impairments that were a result of his war service. DVA notifies OAWG of the veteran's eligibility for official commemoration at the time of his passing. The Director, War Graves, extends to the veteran's spouse, next of kin or other responsible person a letter of condolence and an offer of official commemoration which is accompanied by an information brochure and a simple to navigate application for official commemoration form. The application and information brochure outlines the different types of commemoration the family of the veteran can choose from:

- Burial in a Cemetery – Monumental
- Burial in a Cemetery – Lawn
- Placement of Ashes – Niche wall or garden
- Memorial Plaque in a Garden of Remembrance (GRM) (usually chosen when private commemorative arrangements are put in place by the family).

Once the nominated contact or family has decided on the type and location of the commemoration, OAWG will then

- Confirm the location details with the cemetery or crematorium
- Request confirmation of plaque size required for location
- Arrange to have the commemoration manufactured and put in place, including the provision of all appropriate documentation as required.

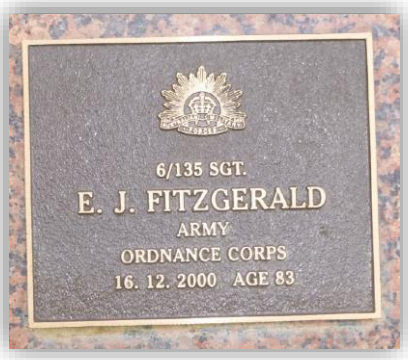
Official commemoration in Lawn and General Cemeteries

Grave Types

War Dead of the First Word War prior to the establishment of War Cemeteries in Australia

Crematorium niche or gardens placements plaques

Niche Wall Plaque



Garden plaque

Gardens of Remembrance

Victoria

New South Wales

ACT

Western Australia

Northern Territory

Launceston

Hobart

South Australia

North Queensland

Queensland

The provision of official commemoration is guided by fundamental principles based on those established by CWGC as referred to above and these are outlined below:

- that each of the dead should be commemorated individually by name either on a headstone on the grave or by an inscription on a plaque;
- that the headstones and plaques should be permanent;
- that each of the types of commemoration are uniform;
- Equality - no distinction is made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed.

An Official Commemoration may be located in a CWGC war cemetery or war plot, a civil cemetery, lawn cemetery, ashes placement, niche plaque or one of the ten Gardens of Remembrance above.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does OAWG do from the perspective of a funeral provider, cemetery or crematorium?

OAWG provides official commemoration to eligible veterans who have died after a war, conflict or peacekeeping operation has ended and whose deaths are accepted as being caused by their service.

What is Official Commemoration?

Official commemoration is the last entitlement provided to eligible veterans upon their death. The Australian Government recognises and acknowledges that the service undertaken by the veteran has caused or contributed to their death through the provision of a final and lasting memorial at the chosen site of interment.

Why are official commemorations in general and civil cemeteries and not war cemeteries?

War cemeteries were established during the First and Second World Wars. They are the final resting places of those who have died within specified war periods. Deaths outside the specified period are considered to be post-war deaths and these veterans are provided, where eligible, with post war official commemorations in general, civil and other cemeteries and plots.

Post war official commemorations can take place in locations selected by families.

What form does Official Commemoration take?

The commemoration placed for a veteran under the program of official commemoration can take the form of a memorial in a crematorium or a general or lawn cemetery.

Memorial in a cemetery

The OAWG provides a standard memorial. **PLEASE NOTE: the grave must be completely bare of all monumental work such as kerbing, plaques, and headstones before the Office can provide an official memorial.**

In a cemetery other than a lawn cemetery, the OAWG provides a standard rendered concrete memorial, consisting of kerbing, infill, headstone and bronze plaque.

In a lawn cemetery, depending on cemetery regulations, a bronze plaque can usually be provided. The OAWG provides a single plaque only for the eligible veteran.

Bronze plaques for cemetery memorials are inscribed with the Service emblem, the veteran's initials and surname, Service details, date of death, age of the veteran and an optional personal message of a certain size only and/or a religious emblem.

Can a second burial take place?

The grave of a veteran in a general cemetery may be re-opened for further burials — for example a widow/widower or other family member.

Where a full grave monument has been provided, the OAWG will restore the grave to its original condition and the family may then place a plaque for the additional burial on the infill area, in the centre or towards the foot of the grave.

The cemetery is responsible for the restoration of graves in lawn areas. An additional plaque may be placed if the lawn cemetery authorities permit. The veteran's plaque cannot be moved or changed in any way. Families are advised to contact the OAWG to discuss their options.

Memorial in a crematorium

The OAWG will arrange for the placement of the veteran's ashes in a single wall niche, sealed with the official bronze plaque, or in a garden bed.

If the ashes have been scattered or are to be retained by the family, an OAWG Garden of Remembrance memorial only is provided.

Crematorium plaques are not inscribed with a personal message or religious emblem.

Memorial in a Garden of Remembrance

There is a third and alternative option, and while it is not one that is managed by cemeteries and crematoriums it is really useful for you to know about it. Some eligible veterans and their families will choose to have a private memorial at the site of interment, but take up their entitlement of official commemoration by having OAWG place their commemorative plaque in an official Garden of Remembrance. Gardens are located in each capital city, as well as Townsville and Launceston.

In order to ensure that all veterans are commemorated equally and uniformly, all memorials provided by the OAWG:

- Are uniform in design for each type of memorial and to the area of the cemetery where the memorial is to be placed
- Remain the property of the OAWG
- May not be altered or amended in any way.

Whatever option is chosen, the commemoration is maintained in perpetuity by OAWG and remains an asset of the Commonwealth.

Can ashes be scattered in an OAWG Garden of Remembrance?

Regrettably, the scattering of veteran's ashes is not possible within official OAWG Gardens of Remembrance. In the 1960s, when official OAWG Gardens of Remembrance were established, approval was given by local cemetery authorities on the basis that the gardens would not contain remains.

Cemeteries and Crematoriums generally have areas set aside for the scattering of ashes. Another alternative may be to scatter the veteran's ashes at a site the family know the veteran frequented or enjoyed.

How long will it take to arrange an official commemoration?

The length of time to arrange an official commemoration will depend on the type of memorial requested and the location in which the memorial is to be placed.

On average, commemorations are completed within the following timeframes, from the date the completed form is received by the OAWG:

- A full grave cover will take approximately six months
- A lawn cemetery/crematorium placement will take approximately four months

- A plaque installed in a an official Garden of Remembrance will take approximately three months

Who maintains official commemorations?

The OAWG maintains official commemorations and has depots located in each State capital city, Townsville and Adelaide River (outside of Darwin).

In addition to maintaining post-war commemorations, the OAWG also maintains, on behalf of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 72 war cemeteries in Australia as well as three war cemeteries in Papua New Guinea. It also maintains individual war graves in general cemeteries.

Maintenance of official commemorations is undertaken as often as resources permit but at least once a year, except for remote areas which are visited as frequently as possible.

Does the family have any obligations?

Yes. The responsible person managing the provision of commemoration must obtain, fill in and Return a completed application form. This form is available from the OAWG. Please ensure that

- The information about the deceased veteran is correct; and
- The form is correctly signed.

The final obligation is that the family understand that the official commemoration cannot be altered without seeking permission from OAWG.

What do you mean by 'asset of the Commonwealth'?

The plaque or grave provided for a veteran is paid for by the Commonwealth and is therefore owned and cared for by the Commonwealth. If there is a need to replace or repair a commemoration, for whatever reason OAWG will arrange for the work to be carried out. It is considered for this purpose, and for the purposes of audit and insurance, as an asset. We know where every one of the more than 321,000 commemorations are located and maintain each on a schedule.

Are all veterans eligible for Official Commemoration?

No. And we need to be really careful when talking about this with families as we can inadvertently create expectations that we have trouble managing.

Not all ex-service men and women are officially commemorated. More than two million Australians have served our nation in uniform. More than 103,000 of them have died in war. Another 316,000 have died as a result of war. The remaining 1.6 million ex-service personnel are not eligible for official commemoration. The responsibility for their commemoration rests with their families. For those veterans who are not eligible for official commemoration, permission can be granted to incorporate the relevant service emblem on a privately arranged plaque or headstone.

Not every veteran or ex-service person is eligible for commemoration.

<u>This is a critical piece of information, particularly for a family who is grieving and trying to manage important decisions upon the death of a loved one.</u>

If you are assisting a family whose loved one is a veteran, or an ex-service man or women, it is best not to assume and tell your client that the Government will pay for a commemoration. In most cases, this is

not the case. Providing an expectation that neither your organisation nor ours can deliver upon can have some very serious ramifications including:

- Causing greater distress to a family who are already distressed because of misleading expectation that their loved one had an entitlement that they don't have.
- A misleading expectation that they can choose and pay for a memorial that Government will reimburse them the costs of the memorial. This too will cause them stress and possibly undue financial hardship because **OAWG does not provide reimbursements.**

Function on fact

Expectation management is absolutely critical at this time of sadness and grief. If a veteran, a spouse, next of kin or other responsible person asks you whether the Government can arrange and pay for a commemoration, please call or email OAWG or ask your client to call or email us.

We can provide information and advice about eligibility.

So, what is the eligibility criteria for Official Commemoration?

A veteran must meet one or more of the following criteria and be:

- a Victoria Cross recipient;
- in receipt of a Totally & Permanently Incapacitated pension (TPI) at the time of death and where the veteran has seen service in a war or conflict;
- in receipt of an Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) and where the veteran has seen service in a war or conflict;
- in receipt of a temporary Special Rate Pension (TSR) or Intermediate Rate Pension (INT) and where the veteran has seen service in a war or conflict;
- a multiple amputee on Section 27.1 maximum pension rate;
- an ex-prisoner of war; or
- someone whose death has subsequently been accepted as being due to war service

How does a veteran or their family know if they are eligible for official commemoration?

OAWG does not establish eligibility for official commemoration for post-war commemorations. Assessment of individual health and other concerns and records are necessarily managed by appropriate business areas within the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), against legislative requirements.

Upon the death of a veteran, DVA will make an assessment of the veteran's eligibility for official commemoration against a prescribed criteria and notify OAWG about the veteran's eligibility. Once this information has been provided, OAWG will send information and an application form for official commemoration to the nominated next-of-kin, spouse or other responsible person.

If the person you are assisting is not sure, give us a call on 1800 555 254, we can help.

How long does an assessment for eligibility take?

It is prudent to acknowledge that the decision as to the particular nature or type of service related condition, or the emergence of a new one and/or a change to the level of disability does happen. In the case of our older cohort of veterans, while many have automatic eligibility because DVA knows and is looking after them for specific conditions, some veterans may not have up to date medical records at the time of their deaths.

In most cases, an assessment can take between 2-3 weeks. In other cases where the death is complex this process can take a great deal longer.

In other cases, the veteran's current accepted conditions and status already provides them with eligibility for commemoration. In these cases we hope that OAWG is notified as soon as possible as to the veteran's death and eligibility so that an offer of official commemoration can be sent to the family in a timely manner, to assist them with their decision making around commemoration of their loved one.

With the passing of our more contemporary service men and women, many things can influence an assessment. DVA may have no current information as to the occurrence of a service related condition, or level of disability or impairment. In such cases, an assessment can take between 2-6 weeks.

Can eligibility for official commemoration be granted posthumously?

Yes.

If it is believed that a veteran's death was due to their war service, an application to have the death accepted as such may be made by writing to the Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs, GPO Box 9998, Brisbane, Queensland 4001.

The application can be in the form of a letter requesting that the veteran's death be investigated and a determination made. If the application is accepted, the veteran would then become eligible for official commemoration by OAWG and a plaque or grave could be provided. The person making the request should ensure that appropriate supporting information including a copy of the death certificate and service record accompanies the request.

An Example of Posthumous eligibility

A Second World War veteran who is also a client of DVA has passed away. He has been assessed as having an Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) effective since 2009. Those assessed as EDA are automatically eligible for official commemoration. DVA's Bereavement team will notify the veteran's spouse, next of kin or responsible person of the veteran's eligibility, as well as OAWG, who will then forward the appropriate in information and an application for official commemoration to the family.

Can you put ashes in an OAWG Garden of Remembrance (GRM)?

No. The walls of a GRM are solid and are a wall of remembrance only. There is no allowance for the placement of ashes either in the walls or gardens.

Can you place additional ashes in an official grave?

The answer to this question differs depending on the cemetery or authority managing the grave. However, OAWG raises no objection to the placement of additional ashes or burials in official graves. It remains the responsibility of the family to arrange for the grave to be opened. OAWG will then return the grave to its original condition.

Plaques recognising additional burials can be placed within the kerbing area of the grave. For lawn burials, we will abide by individual cemetery regulations.

It should also be noted that interment/scattering of ashes in or on a designated war grave within an official CWGC war cemetery, is restricted to immediate relatives of the casualty. This includes parents, spouse, siblings and children of the casualty. However, the grave cannot be altered or marked in any way to note that there are additional ashes in the grave.

Can a personal inscription be inscribed on a niche plaque?

No. Many ashes placement plaques are small and there is not enough space to inscribe a personal inscription or religious emblem along with the other information required.

Can the veteran have a different style of stone for my headstone? Can the veteran have marble headstone?

When official commemoration commenced in 1922 a marble headstone was provided for official commemorations in a general cemetery. However, since the early 1950's, official commemoration has been provided in the form of a bronze plaque, inscribed with the veteran's rank and service number, initials and surname, unit, date of death and age at death. The reason for this is that there are limited blanks of the same stone available and they have been prioritised for replacements in war cemeteries. The quarries where the stone was originally sourced are now closed.

If an old marble headstone is damaged or needs replacement it is current practice to replace it with a bronze plaque, unless the headstone is in a continuous line, then we may choose to replace like for like to maintain continuity.

Can the family have additional information added to the plaque or headstone OAWG is going to provide.

Unfortunately family cannot include additional information on the plaque or headstone. It is a requirement of official commemoration that all veterans are commemorated equally and uniformly. The purpose in doing so is to ensure that all are treated equally irrespective of rank, race, length of service, marital status or any other factor. In order to conform to this requirement, a standard commemoration is provided by the OAWG.

Since 1922 a standard official commemoration has been inscribed with the relevant Service emblem, Service number, rank, initials and surname, unit, date of death and age at death. As the date of birth was not recorded on First World War enlistment documents, it did not appear on the official commemorations of casualties of the war.

This practice has been extended to all subsequent official commemorations of both those who died during war or from a condition that was war caused.

Can a veteran be interred into an existing grave?

Not if the family wishes the grave to be an official commemoration. The grave plot must be <u>completely bare</u> for an official commemoration to be put in place.

Official commemoration for an eligible veteran is offered at the site of interment in a cemetery or crematorium of the family's choice only if the site is completely bare and OAWG can construct a standard grave in accordance with OAWG specifications. Should there be a private commemoration at the grave or ashes site, or if the veteran's ashes are scattered, official commemoration is offered in an

OAWG Garden of Remembrance. Official OAWG Gardens of Remembrance are located in each capital city as well as Launceston and Townsville.

OAWG does not assist with the cost of private graves, however the manufacture and installation of a plaque into a Garden of Remembrance is at no charge to the family and is cared for in perpetuity.

Can anything be added to a grave? Can the grave be altered?

No. OAWG maintains commemorations and memorials using the CWGC principles which are:

- Each of the dead should be commemorated by name on a headstone or memorial
- Headstones and memorials should be permanent
- **Headstones should be uniform** so that all eligible veterans are commemorated equally
- There should be no distinction made on account of military rank, race, creed or any other factor

'In the erection of memorials on the graves, there should be no distinction between officers and men.'

General Sir Cecil Frederick Neville Macready, November 1917

All Australian war graves, other official commemorations and Memorials to the Missing are regularly maintained and will continue to be maintained in perpetuity to established CWGC principles and standards. The particulars of each individual memorial such as the inclusion of an epitaph or religious symbol was undertaken in consultation with the families. Any alteration to graves or markers is only undertaken by OAWG with the express consent of the family. Any alteration of graves including by attachment of additional items may be not be consistent with the original wishes or intentions of the family.

Can an official commemoration in the form of a plaque be provided for a private family grave?

It is not possible to attach an official plaque to a private family grave. This policy has been in place since 21 April 1964. However, OAWG can, on occasion provide a small grave plaque, inscribed with the veteran's service emblem and details, directly to the family, for placement on the private grave.

Maintenance of the grave and the small grave plaque will remain the responsibility of the family or estate. However, the official plaque placed in a Garden of Remembrance will be maintained in perpetuity by OAWG.

What about private memorials? If it's an eligible veteran will OAWG look after it?

Neither the CWGC nor the OAWG have responsibility for the maintenance of a private memorial.

This is based on the CWGC policy that all casualties will be commemorated uniformly, regardless of the means of death and regardless of rank or station or family financial circumstances. Uniform commemoration is by way of a CWGC or OAWG headstone or plaque. If the OAWG were to take on the maintenance of private memorials, the concept of equality of official commemoration within a conflict and between conflicts would be lost.

What if that private memorial falls into disrepair?

For war dead CWGC policy allows that when a private memorial falls into disrepair CWGC/OAWG should invite the owner of the burial rights to transfer the ownership of the rights to the Commission, which will then replace the private memorial with an official headstone

OAWG recognises that some owners and families may wish to replace a deteriorated private memorial with an official commemoration. Where this arises, those wishing to apply for such a change to be made should be directed to War Graves by phone 1800 555 254 or email wargraves@dva.gov.au

Application may only be made by the family or the owner of the burial rights. Application will only be considered from a third party when no family can be identified and the owner of the burial rights cannot be located.

Applicants are to be advised that:

- the decision to place a private memorial at the grave site was a family decision, and that the OAWG cannot and would not want to over-rule that decision. Because of the sensitivity of the matter, OAWG will only take action where there is clear, widespread family support, and where the owner of the burial rights agrees.
- the principles of official commemoration are that a veteran may only be commemorated by name in one location and that the form of official commemoration will be uniform and equal. The consequence is that the private commemoration at the grave site will be removed and replaced with an official memorial. The private memorial tablets will be buried in the infill of the official commemoration.
- because of the foregoing, OAWG is unlikely to agree to establish an official commemoration where the private memorial is part of a family grave or crypt.

Some older grave/headstones of veterans in a general or civil cemetery are in really poor condition.

OAWG works across sites where heritage, conservation and preservation practices form a part of the cemetery management. Conservation is based on a respect for the existing fabric, use, associations and meanings. It requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible.

Gravestone cleaning is sometimes undertaken with the simple concept that clean is better than dirty, and the cleaner the better. There are three reasons why this generally gives a poor result, sometimes disastrously so.

Our older and historic cemeteries provide a link with the past. If a set of monuments look brand new, the whole concept of age and continuity is degraded, and much of a cemetery's charm can also be lost. Secondly, almost any cleaning process will remove a small part of the stone itself. Several successive treatments will produce a lack of crispness in the edges of inscriptions, and may loosen the lead lettering of marble monuments.

Thirdly, many forms of treatment produce unintended consequences. These may be delayed, and the cause may not be apparent, but harm may be severe. Even the use of soap can leave residue which encourages moulds and other unsightly growth. Granite is very stable, but it can be affected by chemicals, leading to pitting of certain mineral grains and a loss of polish.

In the case of older commemorations put in place prior to the establishment of War Cemeteries, or for those burials we have only become aware of recently, we manage maintenance very carefully and seek not to interfere or change the original fabric. If the original headstones becomes unreadable, we will place a brass plaque onto the grave bed itself explaining who is buried in the grave.

OAWG post-war commemorations are on a cycle of maintenance. The nature of this maintenance differs depending on the location, horticulture, soil culture and other materials.

What do we do with an official commemoration when we have to remove it?

Please do not remove an official commemoration before you speak with OAWG.

OAWG commemorations cannot be removed, changed or disposed of without permission. Each of the plaques and headstones we provide are considered assets of the Commonwealth.

They cannot be altered or changed without permission.

If families wish to change plaques or alter a commemoration they must seek OAWG permission to do so.

Ok, but the family would like to keep the old plaque.

This is not possible. OAWG manages the replacement of plaques and the repair and refurbishment of graves. If it is necessary to alter a plaque, the old plaque must be returned to OAWG. As you would understand as an insured and valued asset it cannot be given to family or placed back on a private grave.

What about veterans and ex-service men and women who are not eligible for commemoration?

For those veterans and serving members who are not eligible for official commemoration, OAWG can provide **permission for the relevant service badge** to be incorporated onto a privately arranged and funded memorial.

While this is not an official commemoration, it does allow for all those who have served in the Australian forces to recognise their service through the use of a relevant service badge/insignia on their private memorial.

A permission letter authorising the use of a service badge/insignia for veterans of the Second World War, Korean War and Vietnam War can be downloaded from websites:

Second World War: www.ww2roll.gov.au

The Korean War: www.koreanroll.gov.au

The Vietnam War: www.vietnamroll.gov.au

Requests for permission for use of the service badge for veterans who served in conflicts other than those listed above, should be directed to wargraves@dva.gov.au. The responsible person, next of kin or spouse should include with their request a document that provides proof of service. All costs and arrangements associated with the private plaque/memorials are the responsibility of the next-of-kin or executor.

Please note, OAWG is unable to provide design advice on the layout of privately arranged plaques for veterans and ex-service personnel. The permission letters provided by OAWG for private plaques state: *While responsibility for the inscription and layout lies with the person arranging this memorial you should be aware of copyright provisions applicable to official commemoration.*

The advice OAWG provides to those arranging private plaques is that their design and layout is a matter for the person/s arranging the plaque.

Does OAWG manage the provision or replacement of medals?

We don't. Information about medals, particularly how to replace lost medals or obtain duplicates can be obtained through the Department of Defence, *Honours & Awards*, T-4, PO Box 7952, Canberra BC ACT 2610, telephone 1800 333 362 or online at http://www.defence.gov.au/Medals/Content/Applications.asp

Can OAWG provide service records?

The National Archives of Australia (NAA) is the custodian of all Australian Service Records. Many service records are have been or are in the process of being digitised. They may be available on-line at https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6375784

Does OAWG undertake exhumations?

No. To ensure the dignity of those who lie at rest in cemeteries, CWGC and its member governments are opposed to exhumation of the graves of casualties.

A long held principle of official commemoration is that the remains of those who died together as comrades should continue to rest together where they had fallen. Moreover, the CWGC and its member governments follow the principle laid down in the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention. This protocol holds that the war dead should not be disturbed except for reasons of overriding public necessity or as a means of preventing a grave being destroyed or lost. This policy has been applied consistently since the Imperial War Graves Commission (the predecessor of CWGC) was established in 1917.

Does OAWG look after all War Memorials and Memorial Walls?

Australia has many thousands of private memorials, in many forms; halls, buildings, gates and monuments, that commemorate men and women who have served and died and those who have carried the burden of the loss resulting from our nation's engagement in wars, conflicts and peace operations. Many of these commemorations are likely to have been privately placed, often by the family members or members of the communities in towns, cities and suburbs where servicemen lived and/or enlisted.

Neither OAWG nor DVA own or have authority over any privately constructed memorials or memorial walls. This includes memorials and memorial places established by ex-service groups like veteran associations, local councils and state and territory governments. As such OAWG is unable to add to, update, repair or change information on them.

How does tenure impact on official commemorations?

Limited tenure of graves and ashes placements exists in a number of Australian states, and is governed by State legislation. Tenure applies to most graves and ashes placements in South Australia and Western Australia and is gradually being introduced into other Australian states. The renewal of tenure is one of the sustainable burial practices available to State and Territory Governments and cemetery authorities, to address cemetery capacity issues and manage demand for graves and crematoria niches.

Official commemoration is provided by OAWG for war dead and those eligible for post-war commemoration. War dead are those who have died within specified periods in accordance with Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) and Australian Government guidelines. The official commemorations of war dead are maintained in perpetuity and OAWG is responsible for ensuring that tenure renewal occurs, at no cost to the family, when tenure expires. Australian service personnel who have died post war are entitled to the same type of commemoration, however, the burial tenure remains the responsibility of the family.

In cases where tenure is not renewed by the family and the grave plot is reused, the official commemoration is transferred to an OAWG Garden of Remembrance.

The imposition of tenure is a State Government issue and varies from state to state. The OAWG has no power to influence decisions made by independent authorities, nor does the Federal Government have any discretion to review or intervene in any decisions made by State Government.

A client has a relative with a private grave in our cemetery but the relative's official commemoration is in the State Garden of Remembrance. They would like to have the grave changed to be an official commemoration?

It is only possible to place an official commemoration on a bare grave site. For OAWG to provide an official commemoration at the grave any existing memorial work must first be removed by the family. The Garden of Remembrance plaque would also be removed as only one official commemoration can exist for an eligible veteran. Of course, cemetery approval would also need to be obtained.

Where are those members of the Royal Australian Navy who have no known grave commemorated?

Australian Naval casualties of the Second World War are officially commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, United Kingdom. This reflects the nature of our nation's service and the relationship between the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Navy during the Second World War.

Can we use or refer to 'Mentioned in Dispatches' on an official commemoration?

No. Official commemorations can include awards and honours bestowed upon a veteran. If a service person has been mentioned in dispatches it is not classified as a having been awarded a mention.

A person is not "awarded a mention in despatches", a person is "mentioned in despatches".

Can we use or refer to 'Mentioned in Dispatches' on a private commemoration?

Yes. It is not usual to note the mention in despatches of a veteran on private memorials but if the family is going to include on their memorial, then just for information they might like to know that the word "despatches" in the name of the form of recognition is still spelled in the old-fashioned way, with an "e" rather than an "i".

In terms of writing about the mention, the accepted protocol is that it should either be written in full as "mention in despatches" or "mentioned in despatches" or abbreviated as "MID" or "M.I.D.", depending on preference.

Wrecks and Shipwrecks of the First and Second World Wars

The Australian Government claims ownership of both ships and aircraft belonging to the Royal Australian Navy and Royal Australian Air Force in line with the United Nations 'Convention of the Law of the Sea' (UNCLOS).

In the case of Australian Naval vessels, although a wreck may be resting in the territorial waters of another country, it is usually considered to be the property of the Royal Australian Navy. The Department of Defence, through the Chief of Navy's office, closely monitors concerns raised regarding wrecks, with a view to preventing the unauthorised removal of items or materials from Australian and other nation's sunken ships.

But aren't' wrecks and Shipwrecks war graves?

CWGC does not consider a shipwreck to be a war grave. A war grave under the CWGC Charter is defined as official commemoration by interment of remains in an established grave with a regulation headstone. In all other cases, official commemoration is by inclusion of the casualty's name on a Memorial to the Missing.

So where are those who die aboard such ships or aircraft commemorated?

Australian Naval casualties of the Second World War who died aboard a sunken vessel are officially commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, United Kingdom, reflecting the nature of our nation's service and the relationship between the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Navy during the Second World War.

Australian Air force casualties of the Second World War are where possible, commemorated by the interment of remains in an established grave with a regulation headstone. In all other cases, official commemoration is by inclusion of the casualty's name on a Memorial to the Missing.

Where are we?

The Office of Australian War Graves has depots alongside our war cemetries in all state capitals and in Launceston and Townsville. We also have a team within the Department of Veterans' Affairs office in Canberra. If you have any questions, DON'T HESITATE TO CALL US on **1800 555 254** or email us wargraves@dva.gov.au

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintain cemeteries and memorials at **23,000 locations** in more than **150 countries** around the world. Information about Australian burials of the two world wars can be found on their website www.cwgc.org or directed to their enquiries team enquiries@cwgc.org