The Department of Defence has a full listing of all Imperial & Australian medals including images, eligibility and rules for wear. We have included a small sample of the types of medals your family might possess.

*Please note, these are not in the order of wear. Please consult the Defence Honours and Awards for the most recent Order of Wear Policy issued by the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia: http://www.defence.gov.au/Medals/Policy/Order-Wearing.asp*

**The Boer War**

Australians serving in the Boer War were initially members of the State Colonial forces. After Federation they joined Commonwealth units and those unable to join the Colonial or Commonwealth units sometimes unlisted in other nations forces such as Britain or South Africa.

Two medals were issued during this period – the Queen’s South Africa Medal, and after the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, the King’s South Africa Medal. Eligible Australians were awarded one or two medals based on their service period.

![Queen's South Africa Medal](image1)

![King's South Africa Medal](image2)

**First World War**

During the First World War Australians were awarded Imperial campaign medals and were issued the Victory Medal received by British personnel.

A total of six medals were issued for the Great War – the 1914 Star; the 1914-1915 Star; the British War Medal 1914-1920; the Mercantile Marine Medal; the Victory Medal; and Anzac Commemorative Medal.
Second World War

Australians who served in the Second World War were awarded Imperial awards that were issued to all Commonwealth personnel. They were also issued with an Australian Service Medal 1939–45.

A total of 12 medals were issued, based on the campaigns fought: the 1939–1945 Star; the Atlantic Star; the Aircrew Europe Star; the Artic Star; the Africa Star; the Pacific Star; the Burma Star; the Italy Star; the France and Germany Star; the Defence Medal; the War Medal 1939–1945; the Australian Service Medal 1939–1945.
Second World War (Continued...)

1945 – 1975

After the Second World War, Imperials medals were awarded for Australian contributions to the Korean War, the Malayan Emergency, the Indonesian Confrontation and the Vietnam War.

A total of five medals were awarded: The Naval General Service Medal 1915–62; The General Service Medal 1918–62; the Korea Medal; The General Service Medal 1962; the Vietnam Medal.
1945 – 1975 (Continued...)

Australian Awards Since 1975

A new system of Australian honours was introduced in 1975, which included the medals issued to recognise conflict and operational service. A clasp with the name of the theatre or action for which the award is made is presented with the medal.

A total of 14 medals are included in this honours system, The Australian Operational Service Medal; The Australian Operational Service Medal – Border Protection; The Australian Operational Service Medal – Greater Middle East Operation; The Australian Operational Service Medal – Civilian; The Australian Active Service Medal; The Australian Service Medal; International Force East Timor Medal; The Rhodesia Medal; The Afghanistan Medal; The Iraq Medal; The Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal; The National Emergency Medal; The Australian Defence Medal; The Anniversary of National Service 1951–1972 Medal.
The Australian Operational Service Medal - Border Protection

The Australian Operational Service Medal – Greater Middle East Operation

The Australian Operational Service Medal – Civilian

The Australian Active Service Medal

The Australian Service Medal

International Force East Timor Medal

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The Rhodesia Medal

The Afghanistan Medal

The Iraq Medal

The Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal

The National Emergency Medal

The Australian Defence Medal

The Anniversary of National Service 1951-1972 Medal
Hot Tip

Look closely at the outside edge or the back of your medal. If it is the original medal it will generally have some identifying information inscribed – their name, rank or service number. For Australian Forces they were general impressed or engraved around the edge of the circular medals or on the back for the Stars. However, some Second World War stars were originally issued without names and officers in the Boer War and the First World War did not have service numbers recorded.

Lost Medals

If you find a lost medal with a name inscribed the family might be looking for it. The Department of Defence lists lost and found medals in its Vet Affairs publication and on its website. The NSW RSL branch also has a list of lost or stolen medals on its website:


The Australian War Memorial also has advice for returning found medals: