

We The People
Program 389 July 13, 2020
We the People 389 The Farce of the Australian Honours & Awards System



Good day to you. Twice a year largesse is bestowed upon the favourites of the nation in the form of the Australia Day and Queen's Birthday honours lists. The system of imperial honours dates back to mediaeval times when a crafty old king tired of giving away lands and riches to favoured nobleman, decided to gift medals and membership of chivalric orders instead. **It was a lot cheaper**, and the nobility were hardly in a position to quibble that the gift was inadequate, otherwise they might find themselves housed in the Tower of London. For a few centuries, the honours went only to nobility or top military brass. That changed in WW1 when the first Orders of the British Empire were awarded deservedly to men and women who made a major contribution to the war effort.

The contemporary Australian honours and awards system consists of honours – the chivalrous classes of the Order of Australia and of decorations and medals for valour, gallantry, bravery, and distinguished or meritorious service. Some have quite marvellous names which perfectly describe them, such as the Champion Shots medal. Others are more nebulous, which leaves it open to award them across a wide range of disciplines of community activities. Although historically sparingly gifted, in recent decades the number has exploded, with almost 2,000 awarded this year. Whilst many awards go to very deserving candidates who have made invaluable contributions to their communities or the nation, an increasing number of the more prestigious awards seem to go to people who are getting them **just for doing their jobs, such as judges, politicians, their mates and political party hacks**. Even failed Qld Premier Campbell Newman got an AO for *"distinguished service to the people and Parliament of Queensland, particularly as Premier."* He was in parliament total of 3 years! What a joke. If that's is not bad enough, we have something called the Public Service Medal which is bestowed upon public servants at the rate of 100 per year for, amongst other things, **service excellence to the public, improved productivity and the achievement of more efficient processes**. By whose measure, you might ask. By the measure of committees stuffed with public servants. **Its real Sir Humphrey – Yes, Minister stuff.**

I don't know about you, but it's been a while since I encountered anything approximating excellence in public service delivery, and if these awards are being handed out for improved productivity and achievement of more efficient processes, **why are we hiring more and more public servants each year**. The award criteria are obvious window dressing while the reality is that the longer someone manages to hang on to a top-level public service job, with massive pay, lifetime tenure and 15% superannuation, all provided courtesy of that most put upon of all groups, the taxpayers, the more they are likely to get the Public Service Medal. Why should they be awarded for simply doing their well-paid jobs. Another curious fact is that the most prestigious awards, the Orders of Australia, tend to go to the politicians, judges, highflying businessmen and the like. Several on this year's lists had already received honours but are now being promoted to higher categories. **How much recognition does one individual need** and one can only imagine the jostling that takes place in hallowed halls to get benefactors and mates pushed up that list. Those that do the hard slog in the community, helping others, fostering kids, running homeless shelters, the quiet achievers who do not seek the kudos of awards, predominantly receive the less prestigious awards and medals. **Why so many awards every year** and they are now handed out like lollies. This debases their prestige and undervalues the truly deserving recipients. It's time to have a look at the system. Too many are receiving too much recognition for too little effort or distinction, just for being connected or famous. It's not the Logies.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley with thanks to Deborah Kelly