



Information regarding Honours and Awards

"Awards that are given to honour valour and bravery are very useful to encourage [people] to accomplish praiseworthy deeds because, as they do credit to persons worthy of the grateful recognition of the Church and society, they also stimulate others to follow their path leading to praise and honour. So it was that Our Predecessors, the Roman Pontiffs, turned their special attention to Orders of Knighthood, as a spur towards glory."

Vatican, 7 February 1905, Pope Pius X

Papal, Archdiocesan and Australian Civic Honours and Awards

The Papal Honours System

The Papal honours system dates back many centuries, with each honour or award having its own history and relevance in the life of the Catholic Church. All honours and awards are granted by the Holy Father, and the local church only has a role in promoting nominations for the granting of such honours or awards.

The Papal Honours system seeks to encourage aspirations and ideals of the highest standards and values within the Catholic Church by recognising people who have:

- shown outstanding valour and bravery on behalf of Church and Society; or
- carried out conspicuous deeds of merit in Church and Society; or
- provided significant services to the Church by persons maintained unswerving fidelity to God and the Sovereign Pontiff; or
- been instrumental in conspicuous activity in support of the Church by persons (including non-Catholics), particularly in the exercise of their professional duties; or
- undertaken meritorious work on behalf of the Church.

The degree and value of the contribution made by the person nominated is to be the primary focus in considering nominations rather than the length of service.

The system of Papal Honours for the laity comprises four separate orders, the most usual of which are the Orders of St Gregory the Great and the Order of St Sylvester. A cross, a medal or other award also may be granted by the Holy Father.

Who can be nominated?

Any Australian person worthy of grateful recognition by the Church and Society can be nominated for the award of an Ecclesiastical and or a civic honour. Nominations can be made by any Australian citizen including any priest, religious brother, religious sister, other Catholic individual or church agency, commission or similar group.

How do you prepare a nomination?

When completing the nomination form, it is important to provide specific examples of how the nominee's contribution to the Archdiocese or the Catholic Church has been outstanding.

In addition to providing a list of appointments or positions held by the nominee, it is helpful to include examples that best show how the nominee has gone above and beyond what could be reasonably expected of someone in a similar position.

In preparing the nomination, time should be devoted to considering why you think the nominee's service and achievements are outstanding and worthy of recognition through the honours system.

How are nominations assessed?

Nominations made within the Archdiocese of Sydney will be referred to the Archdiocesan Ecclesiastical and Civic Honours Committee to provide advice to the Archbishop of Sydney. In the case of Papal Honours the Archbishop of Sydney will forward those nominations which have his support to the Vatican Secretariat of State for consideration. The final decision on the awarding of an honour rests with the Holy See.

Is it necessary to provide referees?

Yes, the names and addresses of individuals who would be in a position to comment directly on the nominee's service should be provided together with written references. As a general guide, about four referees are required for each nomination.

Are nominations confidential?

All nominations are strictly confidential and the information provided will be used only to assist the Archbishop and the Committee in considering the merits of the nomination.

The person being nominated should not be approached for information or advised of his or her nomination at any stage.

The Archdiocese will not respond to any requests made by nominators or other interested parties in respect of the progress of any particular nomination.

How long does it take for nominations to be considered?

All nominations referred to the Committee will be considered by the Committee which meets not less than three times a year.

Following receipt, each nomination is thoroughly researched and referees may be contacted.

When all relevant information has been obtained, the nomination is submitted to the Archbishop for consideration and, if supported by the Archbishop, to the Vatican Secretariat of the State.

This process can take 18 months to 2 years.

How are recipients told of their award?

Recipients will be advised in writing of the award of a papal honour by the Archbishop of Sydney after advice has been received from the Secretariat of State.

Are nominators advised?

Nominators will not be advised of the progress of applications. However, upon receipt of advice from the Secretariat of State of the granting of an honour, the Archbishop will advise the nominator to allow for the making of appropriate arrangements for investiture.

The Dempsey Medal

The Dempsey Medal is awarded annually by the Archbishop of Sydney to members of the clergy and Catholic laity.

It seeks to encourage and recognise outstanding contribution and service by members of the Sydney Archdiocesan community to the life of the local Catholic Church or for the benefit of society.

Although the Dempsey Medal is awarded for outstanding service or witness to parish, diocese or community, it is primarily intended to recognise those who have made an outstanding contribution in the context of their local parish.

At the discretion of the Archbishop the Dempsey Medal may be awarded to a non-Catholic.

This could recognise outstanding collaboration in, support for, or contribution to the work of the Archdiocese or its parishes.

Nominations for the Dempsey Medal are assessed in the same way as nominations for Papal Honours but the decision to make the

award rests solely with the Archbishop of Sydney rather than the Holy See.

Further information is available at:

- [The Dempsey Medal](#)
- [Nomination Form for the Dempsey Medal](#)

The Australian Civic Honours System

Australian and other civic honours, of which the Order of Australia is the principal example, are awarded to help define, encourage and reinforce community and national aspirations, ideals and standards by identifying role models.

Information about the Order of Australia may be found at www.itsanhonour.gov.au or by telephone toll free to (02) 1800 552 275. Awards recognise, celebrate and express gratitude to people who make a difference by achieving their best and by serving others.

The Archdiocesan Ecclesiastical and Civic Honours Committee is able to assist in relation to nominations of Catholics for civic honours in two ways.

First, a person who is nominating a Catholic for a civic honour may write to the Committee requesting that the Archbishop of Sydney or another suitable Archdiocesan representative support that nomination.

Second, the Committee is pleased to receive details of persons who it is suggested may be suitable to be nominated for Australian or other civic honours by the Archbishop of Sydney or another suitable Archdiocesan representative.