

How Significant is an Order of Australia

By
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Introduction

The Order of Australia is an order of chivalry established on 14 February 1975 by Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia, to recognise Australian citizens and other persons for achievement or meritorious service. Before the establishment of the order, Australian citizens received British honours.

The order currently consists of four levels (one discontinued) and the medal, in both *general* and *military* divisions. Since 2015, the knight/dame level has been discontinued on the advice of then prime minister Malcolm Turnbull. Awards of knight and dame of the order have been made in the general division only.

The five levels of appointment to the order in descending order of seniority have been:

Knight and Dame of the Order of Australia (AK and AD – inactive)
Companion of the Order of Australia (AC – quota of 35 per annum)
Officer of the Order of Australia (AO – quota of 140 per annum)
Member of the Order of Australia (AM – quota of 365 per annum);
Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM – no quota)

Honorary awards at all levels may be made to deserving non-citizens – these awards are made additional to the quotas.

Since 1976 any person may nominate any Australian citizen for an award. The nominations are reviewed by the Council for the Order of Australia, and then approved by the governor-general. The order is awarded on Australia Day and on the Queen's Birthday public holiday in June, when public announcements are made about new awards, on the occasion of a special announcement by the governor-general (usually honorary awards), and on the appointment of a new Governor-General.

Analysis

Table 1 represents the number of inductees at each level from 1975-2019. Note the significant difference in total inductees (and hence average inductees per year) between an AC and AO compared to an AM and OAM. Table 2 represents the number of inductees at each level for 2019.

Again, notice the significant difference between an AC and AO compared to an AM and OAM (which is reflected by the maximum quotas). Also note there is no quota for an OAM. As mentioned in the introduction, since 1976 any person may nominate any Australian citizen for an award. This implies that a family member could nominate you and write-up the proposal (which is highly biased), as was the case where the author's father nominated

Herbert Freilich (cousin by marriage) for an Order of Australia (and received an AM in 2006 for philanthropic service to the community and to medicine). Note that Herbert received an AM rather than a higher award such as an AO or AC.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/humanist-fought-to-promote-tolerance-20090926-g6ho.html>

The Herbert and Valmae Freilich Project for the Study of Bigotry supports research into the causes, the histories and the effects of ethnic, cultural, religious and sexual bigotry and animosity. It also promotes public discussion of how such intolerance can be combatted - and co-existence promoted - through educational and social programs. Known as the Freilich Foundation from its establishment in July 1999 until December 2018, the Project celebrates its twentieth year of continuous operations in 2019. The commemorative publication 20 Years of Freilich has been produced to mark this occasion.

<https://freilich.anu.edu.au/>

18 million dollars of funding by Herbert and Valmae Freilich has been invested into this project as run through the Australian National University. Herbert Freilich received an Order of Australia medal for setting up this project. Herbert was a medical doctor (specializing in radiology) and no expertise in the knowledge of bigotry. Valmae Freilich has no tertiary level education and is currently a board member of the foundation. The underlying question is, 20 years later has it made any difference to resolving bigotry?

The author wrote a paper 'The Solution to Bigotry', where evidence was given that we are not defined by whether we are Asian, Aboriginal, Jewish or this or that, but rather by our level of consciousness, and any human can increase their level of consciousness by advancing spiritually (in particular reading and understanding the Bhagavad Gita As It Is). Therefore, the best and optimally the best solution to resolving bigotry is to introduce knowledge from the Bhagavad Gita As It Is (also known as yogic philosophy) into primary and secondary school education globally, by allowing school teachers to teach this knowledge to students. Hence, the research undertaken by the Herbert and Valmae Freilich Project is not the best model to resolving bigotry, and there is no indication that 20 years later it has made any difference to resolving bigotry.

<http://strategicgames.com.au/article92.pdf>

Level	Total Inductees	Average per year
AK	15	-
AD	4	-
AC	588	13.1
AO	3,160	70.2
AM	11,026	245.0
OAM	25,426	565.0

Table 1: Number of inductees at each level from 1975-2019

Level	Total Inductees	Quotas
AC	19	35
AO	72	140
AM	294	365
OAM	769	none

Table 2: Number of inductees at each level for 2019

Summary

The underlying problem with the Order of Australia is that any person may nominate any Australian citizen for an award, which implies that a family member could nominate you and write-up the proposal (which is highly biased), as was the case when the author's father nominated Herbert Freilich (cousin by marriage) and received an AM in 2006. Also note the significant difference between the number of inductees that receive an AC and AO compared to an AM and OAM, and also there is no quota for an OAM. This suggests that an AC and AO could have some level of significance, but there is no indication that an AM or OAM has a level of significance.

Some of well recognized Australian Icons that received an AC and AO in 2019 are listed below. A full listed of Order of Australia inductees can be found here.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Australia_Day_Honours

Roy Emerson received an AC in 2019 - For eminent service to tennis as a player at the national and international level, to the promotion of the sport, and as an inspiration to young sportspersons. His haul of 28 Grand Slam titles (12 singles, 16 doubles) is a record for men's tennis. Emerson is also the only man to win singles and doubles titles at all four majors.

Olivia Newton-John received an AC in 2019 – For eminent service to community health, particularly for people living with cancer, through support for medical research, and as a songwriter and performer.

Kylie Ann Minogue received an AO in 2019 - For distinguished service to the performing arts as a national and international recording artist and entertainer.

Magdalene Mary Szubanski received an AO in 2019 - For distinguished service to the performing arts as an actor, comedian and writer, and as a campaigner for marriage equality.

Also, David Walsh received an AO in 2016 - For distinguished service to the visual arts through the establishment of MONA, and as a supporter of cultural, charitable, sporting and education groups.