

# Queen Approves Medals For Customs Officers

## HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN APPROVES MEDAL FOR NEW ZEALAND CUSTOMS SERVICE OFFICERS

In September 2004 when I was appointed as the Comptroller of Customs I identified several core objectives that needed to be achieved for the future of the Service. Progressively each of these objectives has either been achieved or under action. In addition, there were several non core initiatives, the new Customhouse in Wellington and our remodeled uniforms, are two examples.

A number of these objectives were important to our future and for recognizing the Customs Service for its role at the Border and for improving the conditions in which we work.

This left one measure of recognition still to be achieved. That is the institution of a medal to recognize the special nature and scope of Customs border protection work and the significant contributions that our frontline Customs officers make to the security and protection of New Zealand's border.

Today, with the support of the Prime Minister, Helen Clark, and the Minister of Customs Nanaia Mahuta, that recognition has been achieved.

This morning, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Customs announced that Her Majesty the Queen has approved the institution of the New Zealand Customs Service Medal.

To have a specific New Zealand Customs medal approved by the Queen is not only a great honour for the Service it is also a significant event in the long and distinguished history of the New Zealand Customs Service. The Service was established on the 5th January 1840 and is one of New Zealand's oldest government departments with over 167 years of service to the Crown, Governments and to the people of New Zealand.

Over the years, whilst the fundamental role of the Customs Service in protecting New Zealand's border has remained steadfast, the operating environment for the Service overall, and for frontline officers in particular, has become increasingly complex. The changing nature and complexity of our role has significantly increased the danger and personal risk factors faced by our frontline officers in the execution of their duties. Increasingly, over the years, this has meant that for our officers there has been an increasing level of involvement in activities such as the interception of contraband, especially illicit drugs, transnational organized crime, people smuggling and threats to national security.

The institution of a Customs specific Medal recognizes and aligns our officers, and the importance of our work, with other uniformed services such as Police, Fire and Defence, all of whom have similar Sovereign sanctioned medals.

Our Medal is circular in shape and made of Sterling Silver. The reverse design is a representation of the Badge of the New Zealand Customs Service. The obverse bears an effigy of the Queen and the inscription Elizabeth II Queen of New Zealand. The medal ribbon is two colours of blue and one of yellow.

These colours have been specifically chosen for and allocated to the New Zealand Customs Service to represent that access to New Zealand is either by sea or air and this is represented by the dark blue and light blue colours in the medal ribbon. The dark blue alludes to the sea and the colour historically used for the uniforms of the New Zealand Customs Service. Light blue alludes to the sky. The yellow (representing gold) alludes to the gold box chain in the Badge of the New Zealand Customs Service, to safety and security and the Customs role of protecting our border.

I am sure that many people will be interested in what our new Medal looks like. A visual representation of the Medal is included at the end of this announcement. Our medal was specifically designed for us by the New Zealand Herald of Arms Extraordinary, Phillip O'Shea, CNZM, LVO.

I realize that because of the nature and area of their work some of our staff groups will not be eligible to apply for the Medal. All of our roles in Customs are important and it is acknowledged that without the dedicated and excellent work of our people in support roles our frontline officers would not be able to effectively carry out their border protection duties.

As one of the fundamentals of our Medal is to recognize the danger and personal risk factors for frontline officers strict eligibility criteria had to be set for the award of the Medal and the Clasps to the Medal. Our Medal recognizes 14 years of service, conduct and contribution as a frontline officer, with clasps to the Medal awarded for each subsequent 7 years of service.

No doubt people may have lots of questions regarding eligibility and how to apply for award of the Medal and Clasps to the Medal. To assist you with this we will shortly provide several documents on the Longroom under ODHR Recognition and Reward.

The first presentations of the New Zealand Customs Service medal will be to our longer serving officers. Our plan at this time is that will be in April 2008.

Together with our Minister, the Hon Nanaia Mahuta, I look forward to making the first presentations of the New Zealand Customs Service Medal.

**Martyn Dunne**  
**Comptroller of Customs**