



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONDOLENCES

Atkinson, Corporal Richard Edward

SPEECH

Thursday, 10 February 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Marino, Nola, MP

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Ms MARINO (Forrest) (11.58 am)—I rise to honour and respect the life and sacrifice of Corporal Richard Atkinson on this day, which marks the final journey of his life. I offer my heartfelt condolences to the Atkinson family: his mother, Kate; his father, Ross; brother, James; sister-in-law, Sumah; his fiancée, Dannielle; and his extended family, their friends and his Australian Defence Force mates in the 1st Combat Engineer Regiment. I also honour and respect the sacrifice made by his family. Every day this fine young man will be in their thoughts and hearts. For his mum and dad, they will remember Richard as a baby—the little boy—his many antics, his achievements and his aspirations as a young man. His brother will remember all their fun and games and many adventures. His fiancée, Dannielle, will remember how much they loved each other and the dreams they had of the future that they would share. In spite of the terrible grief of the Atkinson family they will all know why Richard chose the path he did, why his personal qualities made him a leader, why he loved his job, why he was regarded as a great young soldier with steely resolve and why he always wanted to do his job properly and lead from the front. They will know why the words of Major French, which we have heard today, are so relevant:

... as the search commander, Corporal Atkinson's job was to direct from the rear.

"But he wasn't that type of guy. He called his junior blokes back behind him, and with his best mate Rosey went forward to confirm the location of the device. I've got no doubt that as he did so, he had half a grin and a quick remark at the ready. Akka was never happier than when he was on the job ..."

Major French went on to say:

... he was someone ... who after his death would never have wanted anyone to do anything in his name, "but simply get the job done for the same reasons we always have—for each other, for our mates, for our mission.

He said:

And he was bloody good at it.

Richard epitomised the motto of his Combat Team Charlie—that is, 'Never alone, fight together.' That is something that Sapper Rose would know very directly at this moment.

I honour Richard Atkinson. As my colleague Stuart Robert said so eloquently, he fell fighting for freedom for the Afghani people and freedom for all Australians.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms K Livermore)—I understand that it is the wish of honourable members to signify at this stage their respect and sympathy by rising in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I thank the Committee.