



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONDOLENCES

Chidgey, Lance Corporal Todd

SPEECH

Wednesday, 16 July 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Snowdon, Warren, MP

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Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (10:00): It is with great sadness that I stand in this parliament today to express my, and I know the parliament's, condolences to the family, friends and comrades of Lance Corporal Todd Chidgey. Lance Corporal Todd Chidgey's service to the Australian Army included six tours to Afghanistan from 2008 through to this year. These were Operation Slipper, Afghanistan, May to July 2014; Operation Slipper, Afghanistan, March 2014; Operation Slipper, Afghanistan, October to November 2013; Operation Slipper, July to December 2012; Operation Slipper, February to July 2010; and Operation Slipper, June to November 2008.

I have spoken in this place many times now, sadly, about the death of Australian soldiers while on service overseas, and I do not think we should underestimate the work which this man has done. He was from the 2nd Commando Regiment, a special forces unit which does great and special work for us. Unfortunately, the broader Australian community have no real idea—and dare I say most members of this parliament have no real idea either. I am fortunate to have had an insight into the work of the commandos and other special forces units, as well as all of our men and women in uniform overseas, during the period in which I was a minister in the defence portfolio in the previous government. I have the utmost respect for these men and women who wear this uniform on our behalf, and particularly these men and women of the special forces who do such difficult, dangerous and often tragic work.

Can I express my condolences—and I know my family's and I am sure the parliament's—to Todd's family: his mum, Kerrie Baker; his dad, Wayne Chidgey; his partner, Karla Hosie; his brothers, Paul and Adam; and his niece, Kayla. Of course, I also express my deep condolences to his comrades in the 2nd Commando Regiment. That regiment, sadly, has had many losses during this war in the Middle East Area of Operations—in this case in Afghanistan—over what is now some years.

We know that Lance Corporal Todd Chidgey is now peaceful and at rest. He was farewelled by his mates during a private memorial service held at Kabul International Airport, and he is now being laid to rest at home on the Central Coast. The Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, attended the funeral representing us and the people of Australia.

Everyone who knew Todd talks about his loyalty. His family have written a wonderful statement about their love for this brave young man. He was a loyal son; he was a loyal brother; he was an absolutely loyal teammate, a professional soldier from 2 Commando Regiment.

I know, having observed the reaction of 2nd Commando and other units across the Defence Force when one of their members is lost, they will continue to swing behind and give support to Lance Corporal Chidgey's family. He was a man who was very highly respected by his colleagues. They described him as:

... a brilliant bloke to know and work with, who was loyal to the core and would do anything for his mates. He was a consummate professional and a dedicated soldier. Lance Corporal Chidgey was one of the hardest working members of the Regiment, who never sought recognition or reward.

It may be true he never sought recognition or reward but it is worth stating what he was awarded because it says a lot about what he dedicated himself to and the service he gave.

Lance Corporal Chidgey was awarded: Australian Active Service Medal with Clasp International Coalition Against Terrorism; Afghanistan Campaign Medal; Australian Service Medal with Clasp Counter Terrorism/Special Recovery; Australian Defence Medal; NATO non-article 5 Medal with Clasp ISAF; Multiple Tour Indicator 3 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, International Security Assistance Force; Soldiers Medallion; Infantry Combat Badge; and the Returned from Active Service Badge.

I think it is worth reflecting that as we approach the centenary of Anzac, we are now paying homage, giving our respect to and saying goodbye to another man who will join the great pantheon of those who have been lost to

us while serving overseas proudly wearing an Australian uniform in the cause of peace and justice and in the knowledge that they are fighting to safeguard our national security. Todd, you have now returned to us from active service. We thank you for your service. Rest in peace.