



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

**Tongs, Captain Bede George Donald, OAM, MM**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 23 February 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 23 February 2015  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Brodtmann, Gai, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

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**Ms BRODTMANN** (Canberra) (13:54): It is with profound sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to a great Canberran, Captain Bede George Donald Tongs, who passed away on 14 January, aged 94. Sent off at the tender age of 22, Bede bravely fought for his country on the Kokoda Track. On the front line and with little-to-no training Bede was not only a soldier but a kind and resourceful man who understood the power of friendship. Through communicating with the native Papuans, Bede helped secure vital information, such as how to harvest safe water from the jungle. Bede's bravery was exemplified when he selflessly crawled through an enemy fire line and destroyed a machine gun rather than exposing his men to face machine gun fire. It was these great examples of leadership that saw Bede awarded a Military Medal by the end of the campaign.

But Bede was not only a hero he was also a tireless servant of the community. After moving to Canberra in 1939, Bede left a lasting legacy on this city. As a builder he contributed to the early formation of Canberra. As a community man he donated land to build a much needed children's playground and community hall.

On the 9 June 2014, Bede was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his contribution to the Kokoda story. He was president of the Oaks Estate Progress Association and an ambassador for the Kokoda Track Foundation. Canberra and Australia thank him for his service. Vale Bede Tongs. (*Time expired*)