



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

**Australian Defence Force
Parliamentary Program**

SPEECH

Thursday, 20 August 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Marino, Nola, MP

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Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (09:33): These are the words of Major Tracey Allison of the Australian Army.

'The Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program aims to promote mutual understanding amongst Defence personnel, members and senators. It allows parliamentarians to 'ground truth' the realities of service life with the men and women at the coalface by participating in a full spectrum of activities with the Australian Defence Force.

The annual parliamentary exchange component of the program is a wonderful opportunity for Australian Defence Force members to learn more about the inner workings of the Australian parliament and gain insight into the routine and duties of their host parliamentarian. The program allows parliamentarians to hear the unpolished truth about the equipment government funding provides to us, to experience the conditions in which we work and live, and to experience the missions that you send us on and the impact that service has on us and our families. Hopefully this enhances the understanding of the challenges and rewards of military service and assists the parliamentarians in their role as law-makers, in developing policy and inquiring into matters that affect our nation.

While the program allows unencumbered access to the people behind the uniform for parliamentarians, an element of the exchange that I had not considered was the opportunity to get to know and understand the motivations of our parliamentarians. There are many common elements between the motivations of those who volunteer to serve our nation in the Australian Defence Force and those who volunteer to serve our nation as members of parliament and senators.

In our hearts, our most basic motivations are altruistic. We want to be part of something bigger than ourselves, help people and contribute to improving our great nation in some way. We fight for what is behind us, our families, communities, beliefs and values, rather than fighting who is facing us, be it in the political area of the chamber or on the battlefield. As members of the Australian Defence Force, we pride ourselves on our commitment to put service before self. While there are those who would have us believe otherwise, I have seen innumerable examples of this commitment in my interactions, the meetings and conferences I have attended with my host this week in the Australian parliament. I have also been overwhelmed by the gratitude of the members and senators for the work of the Australian Defence Force and their genuine concern for and interest in soldiers, sailors and airmen and women.

The parliamentary exchange element of the program is very popular amongst Defence members of every service as we want to better understand our parliamentary process and gain an insight into the roles of our members and senators. I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to be here and am privileged to have been allocated to Nola Marino MP whose commitment to her constituents, Australian Defence Force personnel and the betterment of the nation is inspirational.

This year the program offered parliamentarians 19 options covering all aspects of defence capability in training, on exercise and operations. In the raise, train, sustain environment, options include Army and Navy recruit training, the Collins class submarine, a range of programs right throughout Defence.'

These are the words of Major Tracey Allison, the Australian Army.