



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONDOLENCES

**McDonald, Lance Corporal Mervyn John,
Galagher, Private Nathanael John Aubrey**

SPEECH

Wednesday, 12 September 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Speaker	Jones, Ewen, MP	Question No.	

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (12:30): I join with all others in honouring Lance Corporal Meryvn McDonald and Private Nathanael Gallagher, who were killed in action when their ISAF helicopter crashed in Helmand Province in the early hours of 30 August 2012. I pass on my condolences to Lance Corporal McDonald's family: his fiancée, Rachael; his mother, Myrna; his stepfather, Bernie; his brothers, Percy, Roger and Gary. To Private Gallagher's partner, Jessie; his parents, Wayne and Sally; and his sister, Elanor: I pass on my condolences. 'Nate'—as he preferred to be called—Gallagher was serving with the Special Operations Task Group in Afghanistan when he was tragically killed. Twenty-three-year-old Private Gallagher was born in 1989 in Wee Waa, which is just down from the road from where I grew up in Texas, in the black soil plains of New South Wales. He joined the Army on 22 October 2007 and was posted to the 1st Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment—1RAR—which is based in Townsville. On completion of his selection and training course and reinforcement cycle, Private Gallagher was posted to the 2nd commando Regiment in 2011. Nate was on his second tour of Afghanistan.

Private Gallagher always put 100 per cent into everything he did. He had a 'can do' attitude—always wanting to get the job done and taking everything in his stride. He was an enthusiastic young soldier who was very well respected by his mates from the regiment.

Lance Corporal McDonald was serving with the Special Operations Task Group in Afghanistan as well. He was 30 years old and was born in Carnarvon in north-western Western Australia in 1982. He joined the Army in 1999 and was posted to the 1st Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, which is a long, long way away from Carnarvon, in Townsville. On completion of his selection and training course and reinforcement cycle, he was posted to the 4th Battalion (Commando), The Royal Australian Regiment, now the 2nd Commando Regiment, in August 2008. Lance Corporal McDonald was on his sixth tour to Afghanistan.

Lance Corporal McDonald was quick witted and 'brought a positive energy to his unit comrades and to all those who served with him'. He was a dedicated and enthusiastic professional soldier and was always willing to come forward with ideas and solutions. He was a highly professional soldier, but his quiet nature and humility meant he always deflected credit back on to fellow members of his company. I agree with what the minister and the Chief Government Whip said earlier: these guys in the commandos are a special breed. They live on the edge. They know the risks. No-one wants anyone to die, but they know the risks and it is a very, very dangerous job that they do.

Having been part of 1RAR when they first joined the Army, Townsville does share their loss. We feel every injury, every death, very sharply. We pass on our regards as a city, and as a garrison city, to their families. I have never been to Afghanistan but I have been to Wee Waa. I have never even been to Western Australia. To the families: I wish you godspeed. It is not going to be easy; it never will be.

I did not know either of these men, but I will always remember them and the job that they did. I thank them for their service and their sacrifice. Lest we forget.