



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONDOLENCES

Diddams, Sergeant Blaine Flower

SPEECH

Wednesday, 15 August 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Wednesday, 15 August 2012	Source House
Page 8839	Proof No
Questioner	Responder
Speaker McCormack, Michael, MP	Question No.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (12:12): Sergeant Blaine Diddams was gunned down during a mission against an insurgent commander's compound near Tarin Kowt in Afghanistan on 2 July. The 40-year-old father of two was a Special Forces soldier and a member of the Perth based Special Air Service Regiment. Canberra born, Sergeant Diddams was a career soldier, described by the shadow minister for science, technology and personnel as a 'soldier's soldier'—a leader who led tough men, who fought tough fights and who paid a tough price. Indeed, he paid the ultimate price. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

'Dids', as he was affectionately known, joined the Army in 1990 when he was just 19—he was only 19. In 1995, at the age of 24, Sergeant Diddams joined the Special Air Service Regiment. He was deployed on many operations during a decorated and gallant career, and these operations were the toughest test of all. His career spanned more than 20 years. His final tour was his seventh to Afghanistan over an 11-year period. He was the 33rd Australian soldier killed in Afghanistan, the fifth from his regiment.

At Sergeant Diddams' funeral on 14 July, Special Operations Commander 'Gus' Gilmore told the gathering that the Army had lost a distinguished soldier. He said:

The scale of our loss of Sergeant Diddams is perhaps only surpassed by our recognition of his contribution to Australia over so many years in so many places and at such a consistently high standard.

Australia is truly lucky to have men such as Sergeant Diddams fighting for our freedom, fighting for peace and fighting for the freedom of the Afghan people so they can hopefully one day live in peace as we so fortunately do here in Australia.

Wagga Wagga, in my electorate of Riverina, is a city which proudly has Blamey Barracks at Kapooka, home of the Australian soldier, on its outskirts. The officers at Kapooka train the recruits to carry on the outstanding work of those serving in Afghanistan and they know how important it is for our troops to be physically and mentally equipped for the challenges which lie ahead. It is during these sad times that we are reminded of the sacrifices that men and women make, and make selflessly and willingly, in order to bring peace and stability to a country so that in it one might live a life as good and democratic as ours. Sergeant Diddams died doing what he loved and in the only way he knew how—leading his men from the front. A man described as living life to the fullest, Sergeant Diddams was widely respected for his command, his leadership and his acumen.

He leaves behind a loving wife, Toni-Ann, two children, Elle-Lou and Henry, his parents, Peter and Cate, and four siblings. May their pain be comforted by the knowledge that Blaine Flower Diddams made a difference in his life and by his legacy. We salute him. We remember this warrior's sacrifice. We thank him for his service and may he rest in peace. Lest we forget.