



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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Questioner
Speaker Prentice, Jane, MP

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Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (12:16): I rise to pay my respects to Sergeant Blaine Flower Diddams who has paid the ultimate price fighting for Australia, fighting for all Australians. This is also an opportunity to honour all those Australians who have served in our military forces and to honour all those who have died while serving. Sergeant Blaine Diddams is the 33rd Digger who has been killed while on deployment to Afghanistan. His death is a timely reminder of the risks that our servicemen and women face, and the honour and bravery of all Australian soldiers, and the sacrifices they make knowingly and willingly in defence of our country.

Sergeant Blaine Diddams served in the Special Air Service Regiment as a patrol commander. He served for our country on 12 deployments, including seven tours of Afghanistan. I did not know Sergeant Diddams personally but I was recently in Afghanistan with the Australian Defence Force and the serving members with whom I spoke told me that the death of Sergeant Diddams in the Chorah Valley was as a result of a fluke shot—a fluke shot that had tragic consequences. They spoke of Sergeant Diddams's unwavering dedication to Australia's cause in Afghanistan, his professionalism and also his kind-hearted spirit.

As his parents Peter and Cate Diddams said in their statement, 'Blaine's brothers and sisters all looked up to him as their hero long before he became a national hero. As parents, we are so proud of Blaine, proud of what he stood for, proud of what he had achieved, proud of who he was.'

Sergeant Diddams's colleagues and senior officers with whom I spoke in Afghanistan were understandably upset that a journalist who was there at the time broke a long-held agreement and ran the story of his death before all his family could be contacted and, subsequently, some heard the tragic news through the media. The way in which Sergeant Blaine Diddams conducted himself is a reflection of all Australian soldiers who are known to be among the most professional in the world and, indeed, the most courageous. As the Chief of the Defence Force, General David Hurley, so eloquently expressed to Sergeant Diddams's family and friends:

Words cannot ease the overwhelming grief they feel today but I hope they can find comfort in the knowledge that this soldier served his country with pride and distinction.

This distinction was reflected in the many honours and awards Sergeant Diddams received from the ADF, including the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, International Force East Timor Medal and the Australian Defence Medal, among many others.

Sergeant Diddams was dedicated to his cause—our cause—and the country is justifiably proud of him. On behalf of the residents of Ryan, as we continue to keep our other Australian soldiers serving in Afghanistan and around the world in our thoughts and prayers, I extend my condolences to the family of Sergeant Blaine Diddams. We will remember him. Lest we forget.