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CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCE**

**Opening Statement
Budget Estimates Hearing
26 February 2014**

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Good morning Chair, Senators, thank you for the opportunity to make an opening statement.

Last week Australia honoured one of our nation's finest soldiers when the Governor General awarded Corporal Cameron Baird the Victoria Cross for Australia posthumously. Corporal Baird, from the 2nd Commando Regiment based at Sydney's Holsworthy Barracks, was killed by small arms fire during an engagement with insurgents in the Khod Valley in southern Afghanistan on Saturday, 22 June 2013.

We mourned with Corporal Baird's family last year and it was an honour to salute Corporal Cameron Baird, VC, MG and his family on behalf of all those who serve and have served in the Australian Defence Force. His courage and extreme devotion to duty that day was of the highest order and in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

Corporal Baird died with honour and valour, taking the fight to the enemy with an extraordinary brand of tenacious courage that inspired his men and continues to inspire members of the 2nd Commando Regiment today. As a final tribute to Corporal Baird, the Australian facilities at Al Minhad Air Base in the United Arab Emirates will now be known as Camp Baird.

Approximately 800 Australian personnel are based at Al Minhad, supporting our commitments in Middle East Area of Operations. Their role is to support the ADF's commitment in Afghanistan following the conclusion of Australia's mission in Uruzgan province at the end of 2013.

Senators, in Uruzgan, the Australian Defence Force achieved its objective; to train the Afghan National Army (ANA). Working in partnership with the Afghans we helped degrade the insurgency while our training and mentoring allowed the ANA 4th Brigade and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to develop into a competent force that is capable of securing the province into the future. Together with our civilian partners we have made a lasting contribution to the province and tangible improvements that have significantly enhanced the quality of life for those who live in Uruzgan.

Australia welcomed home around 1000 personnel in time for Christmas in what was the first major drawdown of ADF personnel. In parallel, we also completed an

enormous, year-long redeployment effort, to return to Australia the infrastructure and equipment accumulated over eight years in Uruzgan and to remediate the bases previously occupied by Australian Forces, including Multi-National Base - Tarin Kot. To give you some idea of the scale of the task, that meant transporting 630 tonnes of general cargo including than 1,300 shipping containers filled with around 7,000 items of information technology and communication equipment. In addition, more than six thousand pieces of infrastructure, fixed plant and equipment were removed from Uruzgan and either returned to Australia, gifted to the Afghan National Security Forces or disposed of in accordance with agreed guidelines.

The team responsible for Australia's redeployment did an outstanding job. The task was completed by the time the last Australian personnel left Uruzgan on the 15th of December and other nations are now looking to us to provide advice on how to get the job done efficiently and effectively.

The conclusion of our mission in Uruzgan does not mark the end of the ADF's contribution in Afghanistan. In support of our secondary objective to develop a long term relationship with the Afghan Government, our focus has shifted from operations in Uruzgan toward a more nationally oriented mission in 2014. Up to 400 personnel will continue to provide training and support to the Afghan National Security Forces in Kabul and Kandahar. We will also continue to train, advise and assist our Afghan partners throughout the year as part of the broader NATO mission.

The largest contingent of ADF personnel is assigned to the combined United States - Australian 205th Coalition Advisor Team where 74 Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned Army Officers are providing specialist training and advice in key areas. The focus on command, logistics, training, artillery engineering operational planning and information operations is designed to establish enduring capabilities the Afghan Security Forces can maintain into the future.

Under the Coalition Advisory Team's guidance, the 205 Corps is showing continued improvement. The 205 Corps recently led a successful security operation across its entire area of responsibility in a deliberate effort to place pressure on insurgent networks in the lead up to the Presidential elections. Concurrently, the Afghan National Army is increasing its indigenous training courses, reducing the reliance on Coalition trainers. The 205 Corps is now delivering its own explosive hazard reduction course with around 30 trainees undertaking the course each month.

Despite the Afghan National Security Forces' marked improvement and our change in posture, we should not under estimate the threat. Our advisors continue to operate in a high threat environment and we must not become complacent about the risks they face.

The ADF's other major operational commitment is to Australia's border protection mission, Operation RESOLUTE; and through it, Operation Sovereign Borders. Last week Mr Mike Pezullo, the Chief Executive Officer of Australian Customs and Border Protection and I released the findings from the Joint Review into Australian vessels which entered Indonesian waters. The Review found that Australian vessels inadvertently entered Indonesian waters on six occasions between December 2013 and January 2014. The breaches were inadvertent in that each arose from incorrect

calculation of the boundaries of Indonesian waters rather than as a deliberate action or navigational error. Furthermore, there was nothing in the strategic guidance provided for the operation which required, implied or suggested that a breach of Indonesian sovereignty would be acceptable.

Mr Pezullo and I have accepted the findings and have directed implementation of the recommendations. I have also directed the Chief of Joint Operations and the Chief of Navy to consider any individual lapses in professional conduct. Notwithstanding the error that occurred, the safety of life at sea is the Australian Navy's highest priority. Our Navy personnel have consistently demonstrated great compassion and courage, often at great risk to their own safety, and they are achieving their mission objectives.

In addition to our operational commitments, next month marks two years since the start of our cultural reform program known as *Pathway to Change*. In this time we have introduced a number of significant programs and reforms. In my view, standing up the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office or SeMPRO, and introducing restricted reporting for incidences of sexual misconduct, are two of the most important steps we have taken in our move toward a more victim oriented approach to managing sexual misconduct incidents.

The Chiefs of Service Committee has taken responsibility for driving and monitoring progress on reform. We have set targets to improve the gender balance represented in courses at the Australian Defence College and we are also seeing increased diversity on our promotions boards. Combined, these factors give the services a greater pool of candidates to consider for promotion and provide more opportunities for the women in our organisation. These efforts will be further strengthened by the measurable progress we have made in recruiting more women and our decision to formalise flexible work arrangements.

As we move into the third year of cultural reform, the challenge will be to maintain the positive momentum. The senior Defence leaders and I have taken a strong and visible stance to set the boundaries and expectations necessary to effect change. While we acknowledge that deep, enduring reform takes time, we will not accept or excuse illegal, offensive or discriminatory behaviour in the ADF. As an organisation, we must continue to work on reform initiatives that reinforce the values and behaviours we want for our Defence Force.

Senators, this committee has historically shown great empathy and interest for the health and wellbeing of our Defence personnel, particularly in regard to mental health care. Like you, I am committed to ensuring the welfare of our people and, where mental health is concerned, that means engaging in a frank and open discussion about the issue. The ADF Theatre Project is one way we are having that conversation - not only with our own people, but with the Australian public.

The Long Way Home tells the story of the impact of operational service on Australian servicemen and women, the challenges they face, and the sacrifices they and their families make. It is a very human story and it is an important story to tell. I have the greatest admiration for the impressive men and women who volunteered to take part in the production and I urge you to encourage your constituents to support them and

see the show. I guarantee they will leave with a greater understanding of some of the challenges their Defence Force personnel face.

Senators, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Commander in Chief, Her Excellency the Honourable Quentin Bryce for her unwavering support for the men and women who serve in the Australian Defence Force. The Governor General has always shown genuine compassion for our military personnel and their families. I have witnessed this in her interaction with wounded personnel and the families of our fallen. On behalf of the ADF, I wish Her Excellency well as she prepares to step down from office and I look forward to working with General Cosgrove in the future.

Finally, I would like to remark on yesterday's proceedings. I was surprised at the accusations made against Lieutenant General Angus Campbell. I am pleased these accusations were withdrawn, but unfortunately, once said, the shadow will linger.

Lieutenant General Campbell has a reputation in Canberra, more widely in Australia and overseas of integrity, intellect and studied impartiality. He is widely respected across Australia's political divide.

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