

Good Morning Sir, Ma'am et al,

Please find below a submission to the Inquiry into adaptive programs for Australian Defence Force veterans.

Who are we?

In late 2020, a group of Australian Military Veterans, Families and Supporters came together to form "Operation Fair Recognition", specifically to raise awareness (and provide support) surrounding the awarding of the Australian Sports Medal to only the 2018 Australian Invictus Games Team. This submission will discuss what we have discovered and what we believe should occur moving forward. We will also discuss our thoughts around Adaptive Sports for ADF Veterans.

Adaptive Sports for Veterans in Australia

Firstly, we are all extremely supportive of Adaptive sport for veterans. Many of the Operation Fair Recognition team are previous Invictus Athletes and can wholeheartedly state that adaptive sports have given us another chance of life, but also the ability to socialise with like-minded people. Unless you have served in the ADF or have supported/loved someone who has, the effects of service cannot be understood. Especially for those who have become ill, wounded or sick directly due to their service to our great country of Australia. The ability to feel safe and secure with others in a supportive and understanding environment cannot be understated. Adaptive Sports has a role to play, and it's something we would like to see cemented across the country to enable the most benefit to all Veterans (young and old).

Many of us have personally witnessed or experienced how Adaptive sports have assisted in transition from the ADF but also by providing a supportive environment after transition, which is proven to reduce the risk of suicide and self-harm. When you leave the ADF, people often feel lost. They have been used to following orders, having days planned up to minute by minute and have been surrounded by others who are doing the same job in the same environment (including pressures) as them. The loss of this support (safe space) network is what veterans often struggle to replace. Adaptive sport assists in regaining this.

Adaptive Sport benefits for ADF

The ADF does not necessarily use Adaptive Sport as well as they can. Army have developed Soldier Sports Hubs which is definitely a step in the right direction, but Navy and Airforce are yet to establish something on a similar scale. We are very supportive of this occurring in the future. Initially, when Invictus Games teams were established in Australia, the format was that active ADF personnel would make up 50% of the team, with ex-serving Veterans making up the other 50%. Disappointingly, based on the make-up of the 2018 and 2020 teams, this has not been the case, with ex-serving making up the majority of the team. The importance of Invictus Games and Adaptive sports in ADF personnel recovery cannot be underestimated. The programs provide the support and possibilities of recovery and

rehabilitation to enable serving members to regain their medical clearance to return to the jobs they are highly trained to do and the job they want to do.

Invictus Australia

Since Invictus Australia has been developed, it has become clear to us (through Invictus Australia's social media platforms) that parts of Australia are being under-represented or not supported. Areas where significant bases are located, and thus veterans who could benefit in the services are seemingly not having programs developed ie. Western Australia, Northern Territory & Victoria. The social media accounts regularly advertise events in South Australia, NSW and the ACT. This is extremely disappointing and in a country the size of Australia, we feel things can be done better. Whether this is a case of funding or administration support remains unseen. Enclosure 1 is a statement has been provided from a previous serving ADF Psychology screener on the effect that mismanagement of Veterans in a selective process has had on her personally, and how detrimental the lack of support and aftercare is to ill, sick and wounded Veterans.

Australian Sports Medal

The Invictus Games was created by the Duke of Sussex, Prince Harry, and the first games were held in London in 2014. The Invictus Games are the only international adaptive sporting event for injured active service members and veterans. The Games use the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding of and respect for those who serve their country and their loved ones. Since the 2014 Invictus Games in London, Games have also been held in 2016 in Orlando USA and 2017 in Toronto Canada. An Australian team participated in all three games prior to Sydney being awarded the 2018 Games.

Operation Fair Recognition includes previous Invictus Games athletes, their families and supporters. It formed through a group of people coming together to support each other due to the 2018 Australian Invictus Games team being awarded the Australian Sports Medal. To be clear, we have never stated the 2018 team was undeserving, we completely agree with the team being awarded the medal. However, we do take issue with the way it was awarded, social media discussions about it, and the simple fact that the 2018 team would not have been as successful as it was without the efforts and changes that the 2014, 2016 and 2017 Australian Invictus Games teams brought. Statements made to individuals that the 2018 team achieved at a higher standard than other teams and that the medal cannot be awarded retrospectively, has been extremely detrimental to many veterans' health and wellbeing, as well as those who have been supporting them. Medals might not matter to everyone, but to Veterans who have given their all in the defence of Australia, they do. They bring a sense of pride, but more importantly, as a sense of thanks for your efforts.

The awarding of the medal to only the 2018 team has been detrimental from the beginning. This submission also includes a statement (Enclosure 2) from a 2018 athlete (who was a member of the 2017 team also) stating that they do not believe it is fair to give it to one veteran, but not another. That individual doesn't feel comfortable wearing the medal as

those who came before her achieving the same thing have been essentially forgotten and ignored. Enclosure 3 is a statement from a family on what it has meant to them.

Enclosure 4 is one of the many letters members of Operation Fair Recognition have received by serving members of Parliament stating that backdating it and awarding the medal to previous teams would mean “all declared international multi-sport events” would need to be retrospective also, making the eligibility “arbitrary”. The veterans who participated in the 2014, 2016 and 2017 games teams essentially served in the same “conflict” as the 2018 team – which is taken into account when ADF medals are established. If an operation is awarded a medal during its time period, it’s not just those who served at the time of the medal being approved that are awarded it, those who served in the same operation prior to the medal establishment are also awarded the medal. A recent example of this is the establishment of the Operational Service Medal - Border Protection. It was only established in 2012 but Border Protection operations dating back to 1997 are also eligible and have been awarded it. How is the awarding of the Australian Sports Medal to all the 2014, 2016 and 2017 Invictus Games teams any different?

Attached at Enclosure 5 is our research on the athletes and support staff from the Australian Invictus Games teams prior to 2018 that have missed out on the medal. A total of only 82 people. With the current Royal Commission into Veterans Suicide occurring, shouldn’t we be looking at options to thank veterans for their service, not cause mistrust and unrest in a community that is already struggling and asking for help? Operation Fair Recognition sent numerous letters to Ministers and also submitted a Parliamentary petition (submitted on 13 Jan 22). The responses received to letters sent to MPs has shown a lack of empathy and understanding of veterans from those we voted to represent us, as well as the response to the petition (which basically says thank you for your thoughts but provides no possible action). The level of disappointment in the responses received, including those from the current and previous Prime Minister’s office cannot be put into words. We have received carbon copies of letters from numerous Minister’s offices’ which exhibits a complete lack of understanding and respect of veterans and their issues.

It is also essential to note that Australia had to bid for the 2018 Invictus Games. Without the outstanding achievements and representation of Australia by previous Australian teams, the understanding of what Invictus Games were and the level of awareness it brings to adaptive sports would not have occurred at the level it did. The 2017 Invictus Games team did significant promotional events to secure sponsors for the 2018 team, but yet have not been awarded the medal to thank them for their efforts of assisting Australia on a world stage. 2017 team members images were used in media reports surrounding the awarding of the medal. This led to friends reaching out to congratulate them on the deserved award, only for the veteran to have to tell them they aren’t being awarded it. Not an easy thing to do, especially when those veterans were already feeling extremely hurt with the whole situation.

For many of the Australian Invictus athletes and support staff in the 2014, 2016 and 2017 teams, the challenge of competing overseas was almost too great to manage. However, it was their pride of representing Australia at an International level that drove many of these athletes to compete. It gave them a sense of belonging and their sporting excellence was

highly regarded. It is widely considered that the success of the 2018 Invictus Games held in Sydney was due to the work undertaken by previous teams. To not only raise awareness of the Invictus Games, but also Veteran and Adaptive Sports. Previous teams also helped develop training opportunities and opened doors of opportunity that definitely assisted in the 2018 team's success.

So, the resounding question is, why should the 2014, 2016 and 2017 teams miss out?

Another issue we wish to raise is the way in which the medal re-establishment occurred for the 2018 Australian Invictus Games team.

- On 18 Oct 2018, the Hon Bill Shorten raised the awarding of the Australian Sports Medal to the 2018 Invictus Games Team on the floor of Parliament. This was supported by statements of "for their excellent achievements and representation of Australia". The then Prime Minister, Hon Scott Morrison endorsed the proposal.
- However, the 2018 Invictus Games didn't occur until 20 Oct -27 Oct 2018. It has been difficult to understand how a medal can be signed off in parliament without a team even competing yet?
- On 18 Aug 2019, the Honours and Awards Committee met to discuss the awarding of the Australian Sports Medal to the 2018 Australian Invictus Games Team. During this meeting it was discussed whether the previous teams received any recognition similar. The answer was no, and it was mentioned that the since the 2014, 2016 and 2017 games, the Australian team doubled in participants and support/admin staff tripled. Therefore the previous teams achieved what they did with less support than the 2018 team. No further research was done as to how previous teams could be recognised.
- During the 2018 Invictus Games, members of that team raised with management if previous teams would be included. They were all told it was not up for discussion. This resulted in unrest within the team, and has meant some 2018 athletes have refused to attend medal ceremonies for the Australian Sports Medal as they feel guilty they have been awarded it and not others.

Conclusion

Adaptive sports have an essential part to play in both the ADF, transition from the ADF and within the Veterans community. However it needs to be managed fairly and is available around the country. Regarding the Australian Sports Medal, we believe it should be awarded retrospectively to the 2014, 2016 and 2017 Invictus Games Teams to exhibit that their efforts are valued as much as those in 2018 and beyond.

Mr Scott Seccombe
(on behalf of Operation Fair Recognition)

Enclosure 1 – Statement from Ms Penelope Looker

Enclosure 2 – Statement from Ms Sonya Newman

Enclosure 3 – Statements from Mr Gary and Mrs Renee Wilson

Enclosure 4 – Letters sent to Operation Fair Recognition members from Members of Parliament

Enclosure 5 - Previous Team Lists and cross referenced proposed Australian Sports Medal nomination

My name is Penelope Looker. I am a retired Sergeant Army Psychological Examiner. I joined the Army in 1996 and was medically discharged in 2015 after suffering a stroke along with multiple musculoskeletal injuries. At the time of my discharge from the ADF, I had been through approximately 30 surgeries for my injuries.

During my service I was an extremely competitive sportsperson in events such as long-distance running, body building and netball. Post discharge, and not being able to use my body like I had before, I was continually looking for a new way to exercise. Exercise had been a major coping mechanism for me as it is for many people, particularly Military. I went on my first Invictus camp in the lead up to the 2016 Invictus Games to be held in Orlando. I wasn't competitive and I was still finding my feet to work out where I fit and what was going to work for me and my mind and body.

I was pushed towards cycling even though it had never been high on my list of events to try. I was pushed into purchasing a bicycle that was a lot more financially than I could afford. I did this as I needed to have something that would make me competitive. I was assured that it would help towards selection for the next games as I was not competitive for the first round I applied for. I continued to passionately support everyone that made the team. Sharing their stories, watching them compete, cheering as loud and proud as I could.

I applied again and went through to the athletics camp and then the cycling camp. Then I was pushed into spending a huge amount of money on a "bike fit" which would optimize the set up of the bicycle for me to ride it. What none of this took into consideration was the fact that I had sustained lower back injuries, injuries to both hips and knees and the setup, which costs around \$1500, set the bike up for a person of my height without any injuries. It made it unrideable for me. In actual fact, the changes that I was forced to make to my bicycle caused me to have serious pain in my hips which has resulted in a further surgery to both hips.

I was assured by the physio that this would not impact my position on the team and I was told he would be visiting me in Newcastle to do an assessment and ensure I made the team. I had done all of the rehab and was training as hard as I could. I then received a phone call the day before the team was announced to advise I was not on the team, and I should join a local adaptive sports team to make myself more competitive. Adaptive sports teams were not a thing in my area. There was no support. It was all taken away from me again. That was it. That was the end, again.

I have never been the type to give up easily, but after everything I had been through, all the money I had wasted, the lies I had been told about them wanting me on the team, how they all thought it would be great for me and to be just dropped with a quick phone call. There was zero after care. No follow up. No care whatsoever. Pure rejection after giving everything I had. Literally to the point of my body giving out on me and having to go through more surgery.

I was already in a bad headspace after my career abruptly ended. I then moved to a new place and had to try start my life again and Invictus was my lifeline. It turned out to be the straw that broke the camels back. The second rejection hurt so much as I had literally given everything. This resulted in me selling my bicycle and giving up on everything.

I had lost my job. I lost my ability to run and compete like before. I tried and was rejected not once but twice and after I had put my body on the line and spent my savings on things I was pushed into purchasing even though I couldn't afford it. The team management were atrocious. They did not care for the wellbeing of anyone. It was very clear that the only goal was to win medals no matter the cost. We were assured people would only be able to compete in two games then they could support others to ensure as many people had a go. I was contacted and asked to apply again. This was for the 2018

Sydney Games. Being as this would not take me away from my family so much, I thought I'd give it one more go. I was able to get a rowing machine through the RSL so I began using a training plan and adapted my rower so that I could grip, as I don't have full use of my left hand.

I applied and went on the camp at Narrabeen. The first thing that happened was one of the coaches asked where my bicycle was. When I explained, I was told I had the wrong attitude and won't get anywhere like that. That comment floored me. I had literally given my everything repeatedly. I got involved in all of the team sports and the rowing at that camp. It was great to see so many familiar faces, although I was surprised seeing some as we were told we would only be able to compete twice then could only support. I was not surprised however, when an email came the following week saying thanks but no thanks. Again, no support given, not even a phone call. Just a generic email that didn't even have my name on it. It was literally just sent to everyone that was not selected.

I continued to support those who made the team, even though many of them were on their third and some on their fourth Invictus Games despite what the policy was on only competing twice. That was a real indicator of the selections and management of the Australian Invictus Committee. It was all about medals, not about people at all. In fact, the way in which the Australian Invictus team has been handled is in direct contradiction to The Duke of Sussex idea and the Governance behind the Invictus Games:

The Duke of Sussex was inspired to bring the Invictus Games to London after visiting the Warrior Games in America 2013. The Duke sees the Games as an important part of a broader legacy of support, through a combination of on-going care, training and employment opportunities, to the well-being of those men and women who have served their country

I wish that I was alone on my thoughts and feelings on this. It is a travesty to know that many others who were cut and even many who made the team over several of the years have felt they were treated badly, not cared for, felt no compassion or had any empathy shown towards them. Many of those who applied were forced into spending money they could not afford, made to train in ways that hurt their bodies more or were just spoken too and treated so badly that there was a negative effect on their mental health. In many circumstances, these veterans were already dealing with mental health issues, so this became another hurdle in their attempt at recovery.

Not unlike a business or workplace, when management of a group of people is bad, it can have extremely detrimental effects on both the health and mental health of those who are being mis-managed. The fact that the selectors and committee showed no empathy, no after care, no consultation or support to either those who were cut or even those team members who competed speaks volumes.

Studies show that people who are exposed to bad management are more susceptible to **chronic depression, stress, and anxiety**, all of which increase the risk of a lowered immune system. Some research even indicates that it takes people 22 months to restore their stress levels to a healthy range after the fact, and that is for a person who is not already dealing with mental or physical health issues already. Just imagine what this bad management has done to those of us who have been subjected to it through the Australian Invictus team selections and games.

The Invictus Games was created as an inspiring event to highlight how sport has the ability to help those who are physically, psychologically and socially suffering from injuries and illness caused by their

service. The Australian team selections were not inline with this at all. The team selections were about medal tallies. People were selected when their injuries and illness were not related to their service, people were selected to compete in 3-4 games despite the policy of only being able to compete in two games, people were not given the same opportunities. Some were able to go and compete in Warrior Games and again we were told if you get Warrior Games, you will not get Invictus Games, and yet, people were selected for both. It has always been a hypocritical event in building a team that will get the most medals. It has never been about building a team that will help the most veterans find a path to healing. It has never been about following up to ensure those who apply or even compete have the right support mechanisms in place.

If the management of the Australian Invictus Games team had been managed correctly, the policies would be followed. All applicants would have access to support services and would be followed up after each camp, after being cut from selections, after making the team and after the Games. This follow up is highly important. Each person copes differently with being in new places, being around so many people, having negative feedback, being rejected, and importantly; on the completion of a major life event such as competing in the Invictus Games.

Whilst serving, if you go on a deployment or are involved in a critical incident, you are required to go through a screening process. The Invictus Games should be no different. All of the people applying have been injured or are ill. All have been exposed to some form of trauma and they will be taken away from their support systems, put in a competitive environment, placed in crowded areas, exposed to loud noises/choppers/media, meeting and seeing others who have been through trauma, in some cases seeing people they have deployed with, seeing others who have lost limbs or have visible injuries from events that they themselves may have been involved in. It is imperative that the right support is available when veterans are being exposed to these things particularly when it is related to military service.

Resilience is something we are pushed to find whilst we are serving. It is something that I have personally been told so many times that I have a lot of. Resilience is something I don't want to have to have any more and Invictus pushes people to find more when they should be finding some form of peace and happiness. Invictus should be about building people up and supporting them, not bringing them down.

Penelope Looker

To whom it may concern,

My name is Sonya Newman and I was a member of the 2017 and 2018 Australian Invictus Games Teams.

I finished serving as a Corporal in the Australian Army when I had my right leg amputated above the knee. To me, I thought that was the end of any form of physical activity, until one of the team at the Darwin Soldiers Recovery centre mentioned the upcoming Invictus Games trials for the 2017 team. I had only been out of hospital for a month, but figured I didn't have anything to lose.

What I was met with was an amazing group of people, both currently serving and ex-serving, and a small team of staff (around 15) that were trying to do the job of at least 30 people. They were calm, welcoming and I felt at ease.

I tried out for everything I could, but it was swimming that caught my eye as well as wheelchair basketball. The training and briefs were all about doing your best and that it wasn't being the fastest that mattered, it was about effort and using sport as part of our recovery and rehabilitation. As the training camps progressed, I continued to push to beat my last PB in the pool, or set up a mini volleyball or basketball court at home, as well as using the Soldier's Recovery centre for training. Coaches opened up opportunities I never thought I would be given and this not only helped my training, but it helped me in a more important way – as a person. I think it's important to mention that the 2017 team were not just coaches and fellow athletes, they were friends and a massive support network. There were numerous times I called a coach or a fellow athlete in the depths of despair as I doubted my abilities. Especially when I had injury setbacks.

The 2017 Games Team was announced and I had witnessed some athletes who were shells of people at the start, grow into amazing people who would give anything a go, and would support you to the absolute end. I felt like I had finally found a way to fill the void of losing my career and felt like I could do anything. During the lead up to the 2017 Games, it was announced that Sydney had been awarded the 2018 Games. This was huge for Veterans sport in Australia and the 2017 were involved in heavy Public Relations events in the months leading up to departure for the 2017 games.

The 2017 Games in Toronto was like nothing I'd ever imagined. I was thanked for my service by complete strangers on the street, met 100's of fellow veterans and compared injuries and recovery success and techniques. That being said, Toronto wasn't easy. Although I had my wife and kids with me, I was away from my normal home environment with the medical supports I had in place. The staff did everything they could to reduce the strain on every athlete, but competing at that level with all the injuries, both physical and mental, took its toll on everyone. I competed in all my events and surpassed my wildest expectations with my results. The Invictus Games 2017 gave me my life back, but also gave my family me back.

Due to my positive experience, I submitted my EOI for the 2018 Games – it being held in Sydney was a great opportunity to show my family and friends what I could achieve, plus have the additional medical/support networks I'd craved in Toronto.

As the team trials and selections progressed in the lead up, it became clear to me that the aims of the management team were different (both the head coach, team manager and a number of other coaches hadn't returned to the team – some voluntarily and others were replaced). It was no longer about recovery and who needed the opportunity to aid in their rehabilitation, it was about sending the strongest team possible to the games, and results mattered more than they ever had. It seemed it was only my times that mattered, not taking into account how I was doing as a person (how it was in 2017). I felt hugely pressured and severely struggled with the expectations. The team had changed significantly and it was super competitive and didn't appear as supportive as it once was. This became apparent when team mates were told they had been cut – these people were giving their all. Now I understand the Games team management wanted results – the previous teams had given outstanding results with half the amount of support the 2018 team was receiving (training facilities, uniforms etc). But to me, cutting some people who needed this experience to positively improve their outlook and ability to function went against what Prince Harry

envisioned when he created the games. The previous teams weren't about medals, but it was clear the 2018 Team was. I called my 2017 coaches numerous times during the 2018 lead up, pleading with them to come back, as I missed their personal touches where you weren't just seen as a number or a time, but as a person.

Prior to the 2018 Games starting, a few of the athletes got wind of the Australian Sports Medal submission to parliament. This was not something that was discussed as a team, and the fact that it was being spoken about prior to us even competing upset a number of us. How could something be approved when the team hadn't even competed?

The 2018 team had a number of 2017 and 2016 athletes in it. A number of them and the first timers (2018 athletes) asked management if this was going to include the previous teams, as without their navigation of the Games plus their successes/failures and perseverance to improve options for training facilities etc, the 2018 Australian team would not have been as successful as they were. When the question was asked, they were told no it was only for the 2018 team. When the medal was awarded, I openly said I didn't want it, as without the previous teams, I never would have known about Invictus or had the mentoring from previous athletes that helped me on my journey. What made it even worse is that support staff who opened car doors, and were Senior officer liaisons received the medal – but those who competed and coached in the years prior were ignored? This has sent the message of “you don't matter” and “your efforts aren't good enough”. With the current Royal Commission happening with Veterans Suicide this isn't ok, and I personally know the awarding of the medal to the 2018 games team has significantly affected previous team member's mental health and sense of worth.

Medals mean a hell of a lot to veterans. They shouldn't, but they do. When you enlist, you sign saying you will defend Australia and its people. A medal is in my view a show of thanks for your efforts and your sacrifices. Being in the Defence Force is not easy, and when you are injured or become sick while doing your job, it makes it even harder. You lose a sense of yourself and what your purpose is. If a medal is awarded for a specific operation, its backdated to the time that operation started. Why can't this be the case for the Australian Sports Medal for the Invictus Games teams?

I do not agree with the argument that if this is done for the Invictus Games teams it needs to be done for all teams – veterans are different. We serve (or served) as we felt a calling to do so – pride in our country and we will lay down our lives to protect it. Invictus Games athletes represent Australia with excellence again, despite our injuries – many of which have significantly changed our lives and often ended our service to Australia prematurely.

The 2014, 2016 and 2017 Australian Invictus Games teams represented Australia with excellence and pride, and did it with less support than the 2018 team and future teams have done. They aren't professional sportspeople, they train alone a lot of the time and fight their demons alone. But yet they show up and wear the Australian flag on their shirts and in just that moment, they feel more at home than they have in a long time.

I really hope you reconsider the decision re the Australian Sports Medal and also look at how Invictus Australia selects future teams. Invictus Australia has the ability to give veterans another chance at life and to make their lives (and families lives) better and this should not be underestimated.

Kind regards

Sonya Newman

30 January 2023

Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee
fadt.sen@aph.gov.au
C/: Mr Scott Seccombe

Dear Committee Chair

RE: Inquiry into adaptive sport programs for Australian Defence Force veterans

We write regarding your inquiry into the issue of the Australian Sports Medal in 2020. Our names are Gary & Renee Wilson. Gary is a veteran wounded during the Afghanistan War, Renee, his spouse.

Together we have seen the growth of the Australian Defence Forces Adaptive Sports Program since 2011. Gary has participated in multiple international and domestic sporting opportunities as a result of that program. The program inspired him to achieve physical and mental milestones that we didn't initially think possible. The program helped to develop Gary's passion for health and wellbeing and we have no doubt has helped him find his new purpose.

In 2014 Gary was approached to join the inaugural Australian contingent to attend the Invictus Games in London. Unfortunately, Gary was unable to attend as we were expecting our first child. Gary subsequently attended the 2016 and 2017 games, where Renee was able to join him for the first time.

The games left a significant mark on Renee and when an opportunity came about to apply for the Board of the Australian International Military Games (AIMG), she applied. AIMG was the company that delivered the highly successful 2018 Sydney Invictus Games. Renee was successful and joined the Board in early 2018. Gary, no longer a competitor was asked to join a group of Australian Veterans who had previously competed at the Invictus Games to voluntarily undertake representational duties and engagements during the Games so that the 2018 participants could focus on their sports and competitions. Gary gladly accepted.

The 2018 Games were an incredible success, not only for the athletes but for all involved past and present. It was the culmination of 4 years of experience, competition and brand building – domestically and internationally.

What has always set the Invictus Games and the ADF Adaptive Sports Program up for success has been the lack of politics and the focus on equity and integrity. It appeals to "younger" veterans and their families for these reasons. The camaraderie built between competitors and the families groups is unrivalled and the experience life changing for both groups.

We were therefore shocked and saddened to see the media announcing the Australian Sports Medal being bought back but only for the 2018 competitors. For us this made us feel "less than". Renee was particularly saddened to read and see the shock reverberate through the veteran community as previous competitors were left feeling incredibly vulnerable and had no support. Fundamentally this announcement put a small group of wounded and injured veterans above others and that is not okay. Particularly when we are losing veterans far too often to suicide. The contributions that this made to feelings of worthlessness among the veteran community were devastating to see.

But it didn't just end with the veterans. At least one family member was also provided with the sports medal, this had the same negative ripple effects among the families community who couldn't understand how or why they too were not as important as this one individual. That their roles are not as significant, that their sacrifices not as important. On the evening of the announcement Renee received a call from a representative of the 2018 families group looking for answers, answers which she didn't have as she was in just as much shock.

Subsequent conversations between us and the persons involved with the announcement and decision making looking for answers were interpreted as 'sour grapes' and resulted in those persons seeking to absolve themselves from accountability.

We want to be very clear with this Committee, with the Veteran community and any one who reads this. We are not upset that we or at the very least Gary was not recognised. What has upset us is that this process lacked the fundamentals that both the Adaptive Sports Program and the Invictus Games were built on. Equity and Integrity.

We are upset that the politics of the ex-service space has permeated such an important and healing experience for many Australians.

We are upset that those veterans that came before are not eligible for the medal because they chose the wrong time to compete or were not selected for that team. We are upset that of all of those families who stand beside and behind every one of those 2018 competitors were made to feel 'less than' by placing one other spouse above them all.

We are upset that this whole thing has detracted from the award of the medal and the 2018 competitors and their families are feeling the effects of this series of poor, political and unethical decision making.

We would like to see this Committee's investigation result in the opening of the medal to all veterans who have participated in the Adaptive Sports Program, where those veterans can apply to receive the award (similar in form to the Bush Fire Medal). That way they have a choice. We would like to see clear and transparent criteria for the award of the medal to the families and carers, we would like to see that communicated among the veteran community.

The contents of this letter represents our personal views and opinions on this matter. They represent our views having witnessed the discord among our community following the announcement.

We wish the Committee all the best in their investigation and remain hopeful for a positive outcome for the veteran and families community.

Yours Sincerely

Gary and Renee Wilson



THE HON BEN MORTON MP
ASSISTANT MINISTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET
ASSISTANT MINISTER TO THE MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR ELECTORAL MATTERS

Reference: MC21-005381

Mr Scott Seccombe
1023C Coramba Road
KARANGI NSW 2450

Dear Mr Seccombe

Thank you for your email dated 20 January 2021 to the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, regarding the Australian Sports Medal for Invictus athletes. The Prime Minister has asked me to respond on his behalf. I sincerely apologise for the delay in responding to you.

As you may be aware, the Australian Sports Medal was issued in 2000 to commemorate Australia hosting the Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games. Similarly, the intention of the new Australian Sports Medal is to mark Australia hosting the Invictus Games in October 2018.

In recognition of the 2018 Invictus Games, it is this date from which individuals participating in certain international multi-sport events will be eligible. If the award were to be retrospective, it may need to be retrospective for all international multi-sport events involving Australian participants, and the date of eligibility would then become arbitrary.

This in no way diminishes the efforts of the Australian teams at the London, Orlando or Toronto Invictus Games. You should feel truly proud of your participation and involvement in Australia's Invictus teams.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to the Prime Minister with your views. I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

BEN MORTON

19/1 / 2021



THE HON PATRICK GORMAN MP
ASSISTANT MINISTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Reference: MC22-053325

Mr Scott Seccombe

Dear Mr Seccombe

Thank you for your email dated 21 July 2022 to the Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, regarding eligibility for the Australian Sports Medal for the Invictus Games prior to 2018. The Prime Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf.

As you are aware the Australian Sports Medal was first issued in 2000 to commemorate Australia hosting the Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Similarly, the intention of the new Australian Sports Medal was to mark Australia hosting the Invictus Games in October 2018. As such, it is this date from which individuals participating in declared international multi-sport events will be eligible.

The Government has no plans to expand the eligibility criteria for the Australian Sports Medal at this time. If the award were to be retrospective, it would need to be retrospective for all declared international multi-sport events involving Australian participants, and the date of eligibility would then become arbitrary.

This in no way diminishes the efforts of the Veterans who participated at the London, Orlando or Toronto Invictus Games. They should feel truly proud of their participation and involvement in the Invictus Games.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to the Australian Government's attention and I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

PATRICK GORMAN

05/08 / 2022

Cross Referenced Athlete and Staff Names to Australian Sports Medal - Non

* Names have been gathered from previous team lists. Require confirmation not already a recepier

	Surname	Given Names	Title/Rank	M/F/X	DEC	Athlete/Staff	GAMES TEAM
1	Amigh	Hannah	Ms	F	N	Athlete	2014
2	Archibald	Sarah	SPR	F	N	Athlete	2014
3	Ashcroft	Cris	Ms	F	N	Athlete	2016
4	Baker	Latisha	PO	F	N	Athlete	2017
5	Barrett	Peter	Mr	M	N	Staff	2017
6	Beal	Amy	LCDR	F	N	Staff	2017
7	Benfer	Tony	WOFF	M	N	Athlete/Staff	2014, 2016, 2017
8	Boland	Tim	CPL	M	N	Staff	2017
9	Brooker	Anita	Ms	F	N	Athlete	2016
10	Brown	Darlene	Ms	F	N	Athlete	2016
11	Brown	Kirsty-Lee	LS	F	N	Athlete	2014
12	Burey	Andrew	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
13	Burnett-Brooks	Kyle	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2014
14	Cherry	Nicholas	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
15	Clark	Chris	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2017
16	Clibborn	Luke	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
17	Close	Danielle	PTE	F	N	Athlete	2017
18	Collins	Christophe	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
19	Collins	Mick	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2017
20	Connolly	Sean	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
21	Cook	Terry	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
22	Copelin	Brad	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
23	Darcy	Astin	CPL	M	N	Staff	2017
24	Dover	Brendan	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
25	Evans	Geoff	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2014
26	Green	Elly	CAPT	F	N	Staff	2016
27	Geurtz	Michael	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
28	Hackett	Julie	WGCDR	F	N	Staff	2014, 2016
29	Halsall	Lisa	SGT	F	N	Athlete	2014
30	Hancock	Craig	LCPL	M	N	Athlete	2014, 2016
31	Humphries	Adrian	PTE	M	N	Athlete	2014
32	Jinks	Jason	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2017
33	Kerrigan	Rachel	Ms	F	N	Athlete	2016
34	King	Sonia	WGCDR	F	N	Staff	2016, 2017
35	Kirkhope	Daryl	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2014
36	Lane	Kristin	SIG	M	N	Athlete	2017
37	Langworthy	Phillip	COL	M	N	Staff	2016
38	Lawler	Sean	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016, 2017
39	Maclean	Scott	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2017

40	Marshall	Graeme	SGT	M	N	Athlete	2016
41	McCracken	Ian	PO	M	N	Staff/Athlete	2016/2017
42	McGinty	Paul	SQNLDR	M	N	Athlete	2016
43	McGrath	Curtis	SPR	M	N	Athlete	2014, 2016, 2017
44	McLeod	Chris	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
45	McKechnie	Frank	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2014
46	McManus-Smith	Darren	Mr	M	N	Staff	2016, 2017
47	Mengel	Scott	WO1	M	N	Staff	2016
48	Moran	Taryn	Ms	F	N	Athlete	2016
49	Neagle	David	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2017
50	Olson	William	PO	M	N	Athlete	2016
51	Pahl	Anne	Mrs	F	N	Staff	2016, 2017
52	Parry	Danielle	Ms	F	N	Athlete	2014
53	Perrin	Chris	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2014
54	Phillips	Melissa	Ms	F	N	Athlete	2014
55	Prowse	Danielle	LEUT	M	N	Athlete	2014
56	Quee	Peter	SGT	M	N	Staff	2016
57	Ramsay	Dennis	Mr	M	N	Athlete/Staff	2014, 2016/ 2017
58	Rapson	Christophe	PTE	M	N	Athlete	2017
59	Roberts	Wade	LAC	M	N	Athlete	2016, 2017
60	Roberts	Clancy	PTE	M	N	Athlete	2014
61	Roberts	Peter	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
62	Roberts	Melissa	LACW	F	N	Athlete	2017
63	Robinson	Darren	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016, 2017
64	Rolfe	Adrian	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
65	Scott	Craig	Mr	M	N	Athlete	
66	Seccombe	Scott	Mr	M	N	Athlete / Staff	2014 / 2016
67	Serafini	Trent	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
68	Slade	Glenn	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2016
69	Talbot	Adrian	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2014
70	Taxis	Matt	SPR	M	N	Athlete	2014
71	Thomlinson	Damien	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2014, 2016
72	Thompson	Philip	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2014, 2016
73	Urquhart	Mark	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2014, 2016
74	Vardanega	Nathan	SGT	M	N	Athlete	2014
75	Warren	Paul	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2014, 2016
6	Wassell	Richard	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2017
77	Watson	Sarah	Ms	F	N	Athlete	2017
78	Webb	Benjamin	Mr	M	N	Athlete	2014
79	Webster	Sarah	SGT	M	N	Athlete	2014
80	Wilson	Gary	LCPL	M	N	Athlete	2014, 2016, 2017
81	Young	Agnes	Ms	F	N	Athlete	2014
82	Young	Donna	Ms	F	N	Athlete	2017

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