Submission to Senate Inquiry into Defence Honours and Awards

Terms of Reference items this submission relates to:

> a) experiences of Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel progressing through the honours and awards system;

> b) the effect of awards and honours on maintaining morale within the ADF;

I am a former member of the Australian Army, where I served as a full-time soldier for a period of 12 years.

During my period of full-time service I served on the following operations, Operation Slipper & Operation Accordion in the United Arab Emirates in 2014, Operation Okra in Iraq in 2015 through to 2016 and Operation Augury in Iraq in 2021. As a result of my operational service I was awarded the following Honours & Awards, Australian Defence Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Australian Active Service Medal with clasp ICAT, Operational Service Medal – Greater Middle East Operation, Numeral 2 to the Operational Service Medal – Greater Middle East Operation, Australian Service Medal with clasp CT/SR, Australian Operational Service Medal – CT/SR and Numeral 3 to the Operational Service Medal – Greater Middle East Operation.

For my deployment in 2021, Operation Augury, I was force assigned to Task Force 12 Rotation Two, to the Forward Exploitation Team – Levant (FXT-L) in Erbil Iraq, during which we provided information collection and exploitation relating to ISIS, its members and associated subsidiaries as well as support for the withdrawal from Afghanistan. The SASR and 2CDO members assigned to Task Force 12 Rotation Two, were awarded the Infantry Combat Badge. Support members that were assigned and in direct support of TF12 were not awarded the Army Combat Badge (ACB). The criteria for the ACB is as follows;

- be a member of the Australian Army for the duration of qualifying service; and
- be Force Assigned to an Arms Corps Unit, Battlegroup or Combat Team in an area defined by an operational order (e.g. an OPORD) as incurring warlike conditions of service for 90 days, either continuous or aggregate total; or
- as a member of a unit assigned by formal OPORD to be in Direct Support of a Battlegroup or Combat Team in an area defined by an operational order (e.g. an OPORD) as incurring warlike conditions of service for 90 days, continuous or aggregate total; and
- provide satisfactory service (as defined in Annex 3A) on close combat like operations for a single operation or deployment; and
- not previously have been issued the Infantry Combat Badge (ICB), ACB (or Air Force Ground Combat Badge (AFGCB))

It is my strong belief that we met all of the criteria listed above.

When it was mentioned about the Infantry Combat Badge & the Army Combat Badge awards towards the end of the trip the support staff members were brushed aside and were told by the Chain of Command that it wasn't something the Admin Team would handle whilst deployed, it would be up to our home unit to submit the paperwork for the award.

After coming home, I followed up multiple times with my Chain of Command at my home unit and it was a constant circular conversation, it never went anywhere and nothing happened, I eventually gave up.

There are only a few things in the Army that I, as a young female in a male dominated work force, thought to aspire to, climbing the ranks and promoting to the rank of Sergeant, posting to one of the most revered units in Australia – the Special Air Service Regiment SASR, deploying on operations in service to my country and being appropriately recognised for doing so. The Army Combat Badge is seen as a point of pride among soldiers outside of Infantry, it is a symbol of having served at the highest level within your job role on operations in service to the nation.

This inaction on this topic eventually led to a disenfranchisement with Army and Defence as a whole and it ultimately resulted in the discharge of an experienced Senior Non-Commissioned Officer from the Australian Army.

Should this matter require further discussion I am contactable using the following details;