

**Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
References Committee**

**SUBMISSION COVER SHEET**

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**Inquiry Title:** Effectiveness of Australia's Military Justice System

**Submission No:** P18

**Date Received:** 18.02.04

**Submitter:** Ms Knight

**Organisation:**

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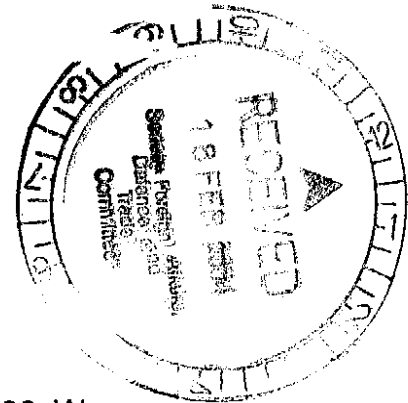
**Date Authorised:**

14<sup>th</sup> February 2004

Debra Knight

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Jason Lee Gutteridge



My son Jason Lee Gutteridge enlisted in the Army in August 1996. We were living in [REDACTED]

Jason went to Kapooka to do his basic training. He was in 1 R.T.B. Battalion. I wrote to him constantly and sent him magazines. He wrote back a few times and sent some photos.

One of the photographs made him look quite miserable. I felt concerned but Jason told me not to worry as he had the flu.

I understand that basic training is very hard and that the instructors are very gung-ho and come across as bullies (this seems to have been the norm for years). I know this from the other military people in my family. A sorting of the men from the boys mentality.

Jason spent his first leave in [REDACTED] where we were originally from. All his mates said that he was happy being in the army and even tried to convince his brother to join up. He could see a future for himself in the army.

Jason graduated on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1996. He had excelled in training and won the Most Improved Recruit trophy. I was told on the day that this trophy is not given light-heartedly and not given out often.

Jason went to Townsville or Bandiana, I'm not sure now, before being assigned to Richmond Airforce Base. He completed his Transport Licences. He came home for Christmas 1996.

Jason seemed to be fine and happy. He met up with his mates from Dimbulah and they all said that he was loving being in the army.

Jason was assigned to the 176 Air Dispatch Squadron at Richmond Air Force Base. Jason phoned me and was excited that he was going to go for his wings. This was to come from parachute jumping. He told me that he would phone me on the following Saturday to let me know how he went. I told him he couldn't ring me at home because we would be away at Kurumba camping and that I would phone him at the base.

When I rang him, he sounded very despondent. I asked him if he had got his wings. He said "Yes." I couldn't understand why he was so depressed after being so excited. He told me that getting his wings just proved that he was stupid enough to jump out of a plane.

I couldn't understand what had happened to make him change from being so excited to so down in just a week.

On the night of Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September at about 10:30 pm, I received a telephone call from Jason at the Richmond Air Force Base.

When I answered the phone, Jason told me he wasn't real good. I asked him what was wrong and he said something like he was in trouble and that he should have never been born.

Jason was very distressed but wouldn't tell me why. He said he had found the missing piece to the jigsaw puzzle. I asked him what he meant and he said that now he knew how to do it. I told him to stop talking like that and that no matter how bad things were, we could fix it. He started crying and told me that this time I couldn't fix it and that he was going to be my guardian angel.

By this time, I was very distressed and told Jason that I was going to ring the Army. He told me not to because he would get into trouble. Now I wish that I had. Somewhere in the conversation he told me he had been in the Army Gaol for three days. Jason wouldn't tell me for what reason.

I wish and pray that I had rang the Army. My baby may still be alive today.

I was advised by the police at 7:00 am Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September that Jason had died. Jason's death almost destroyed me. Somewhere along the line, I was told that was Jason's third attempt at suicide.

When I asked why I hadn't been told, the Army said that Jason was over 18 years old and his mother could do nothing. I argued with them and said he was my baby and I had been looking after him all his life.

I still don't know why to this day why Jason killed himself.

I have had to make a conscious choice to survive for the rest of my family, but I know I won't be able to do it for a second time.

Yours sincerely

D.J. Knight