



SPECIAL AIR SERVICE REGIMENT'S WANDERERS EDUCATION PROGRAM

"The Wanderers Education Program is the first-ever charity established to provide educational opportunities to serving SASR soldiers who commit to sacrificing their lives to protect our way of life"

Mark Donaldson VC

INTRODUCTION to Wanderers Education Program

The Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) is a special missions unit within the Australian Defence Force tasked to provide Special Operations capabilities in support of national interests, and habitually functions in environments beyond the range and capability of conventional forces and other government agencies.

Since 1957 the SASR – guided by the motto “Who Dares Wins” – has served Australia both domestically and offshore, with heightened demands placed on the unit following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. This tragic day marked the beginning of thousands of SASR combat and discreet mission sets in Afghanistan, Iraq and other undisclosed global locations.

10 men serving with the SASR have paid the ultimate sacrifice since 2001, either in direct combat with, or in preparing for operations against, adversaries seeking to harm Australian interests. Many dozens more have been seriously injured over the same period with a total of 48 SASR soldiers killed in combat or training since 1960. Adding to the physical stressors, SASR soldiers, called Operators, regularly spend months and sometimes years deployed around the world, and continue to do so to this day. This takes a significant toll not only on the Operators, but also on their partners and families as well.

SAS Operators and their families selflessly commit their lives to protecting our way of life and while their military training is world-class, these skills are often not directly transferable to the outside world. After so many years spent honing their unique skills, knowledge and capabilities, transitioning into civilian life upon termination poses significant challenges.

In late 2015 the SASR established its first-ever “in-service” philanthropic initiative to support serving and transitioning soldiers, called the Wanderers Education Program. The program is supported by the SASR’s official charity, the SAS Resources Fund, in the form of the ‘WEP sub-fund’ within Trust No3. The Wanderers Education Program was initially endowed with \$250,000 from three founding benefactors – VGI Partners, the Angela Wright Bennett Foundation, and the Joye family – to support merit-based applications by SASR Operators to pursue further study at leading Australian educational institutions. As of October 2016 the fund has grown to \$1M



Mark Donaldson VC and Ben Robert Smith VC

THE OFFICIAL GOALS OF THE WANDERERS EDUCATION PROGRAM ARE TO:

- To give select and vetted partners the opportunity to contribute to SASR Operators’ welfare by way of assisting with merit-based education;
- Optimise SASR Operators’ opportunities to successfully assimilate into, and actively contribute to, the community upon completion of service;
- To build familial resilience, providing spouses and children with confidence and certainty in post-service life;
- Ensure SASR remains a destination employer of choice for Special Operations personnel globally; and
- To augment and enhance SASR human capital via world-class educational experiences, including non-military programs that help them build on and develop a diverse array of skill-sets and qualifications.

The Wanderers Education Program is directly managed by SASR’s Human Performance Cell. All funds are managed through the SAS Resources Fund (DGR1 & 2 status) and the UWA Business School.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA PILOT

In February 2016 the University of Western Australia (UWA) Business School and the SASR signed a memorandum of understanding to formalise the Wanderers Education Program’s first pilot, which in due course will be rolled out to other leading educational institutions. This was initially funded through the establishment of the Wanderers Capital Fund within UWA’s Business School and administered by its Future Fund (UWABS has charitable status DGR1).

An initial cohort of six SASR Operators were enrolled in the UWA’s MBA program (and precursor courses) as the pilot for this pioneering program – the first of these will graduate in 2017. Following on from the success of this pilot 10-15 SASR Operators will enter the Wanderers Education Program over the next 12-18 months, with further growth in the annual number of participants expected over the medium term. In accordance with the SASR’s high standards, the program’s rigorous application process is overseen by the SASR’s Human Performance Cell and approved by the SASR’s Commanding Officer.

INTEGRATION OF WANDERERS EDUCATION PROGRAM INTO SAS RESOURCES FUND

The SAS Resources Fund (SASRF) is a perpetual trust fund, and was established following the Black Hawk accident on 12 June 1996, in which 15 SASR soldiers were killed in training. This highly respected charity was originally created to provide relief to current and former members of the SASR who become deceased or permanently disabled in or as a result of operational service or in training.

Today the SASRF has scores of beneficiaries including numerous children and disabled soldiers. The children are looked after until they reach the age of 25 years while former SASR soldiers receive support for the term of their natural life. The SASRF received a \$10 million Deed of Gift from the Federal Government in March 2009 that has enabled it to have a strong financial base upon which to look after its beneficiaries.

In May 2016 the Wanderers Capital Fund was established as a sub-fund of the SASRF's third trust, called "Trust No3", for the purpose of financially supporting the Wanderers Education Program in the provision of education pathways for serving and transitioning members of the SASR across a multiplicity of the nation's best educational institutions.

Under the auspices of the SASRF, Trust No3's the 'WEP sub-fund' acts as the custodian for donations received from benefactors for the express purpose of supporting the Wanderers Education Program. The program will continue to be operationally administered through the SASR's Human Performance Cell. The SASRF provides the Wanderers Education Program with governance oversight, full auditability and tax refundable status for benefactors; specifically, DGR1 and 2 statuses.

Michael Jeffery AC, CVO, MC, the former Commanding Officer of the SASR and Governor General of Australia, is the Patron of the SASRF, with Corporal Mark Donaldson VC and Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith VC MG serving as Ambassadors. The SASRF's Chairman is Mr Greg Solomon and the SASRF's Deputy Chairman is Dr Grant Walsh CSM. The SASRF's Trustees include:

- Commanding Officer, Special Air Service Regiment
- Mr Nicholas Brasington, B.Com, ACA-Associate
- Mr Andrew Forrest
- Mrs Michelle Hawksley, LLB (Hons) BEcon
- Mr James McMahon DSC CSM
- Dr Mark Nidorf M.D. M.B.B.S. F.R.A.C.P. F.A.C.C.
- Brigadier Terry Nolan, AM (Retd)
- Mr Kerry Stokes AC
- Mr Tom Wallace OAM F.C.A.
- Hon Peter Blaxell

FUNDING CONDITIONS

All SASR recipients of funding from the Wanderers Education Program are required to formally agree to its conditions, as well as successfully complete a rigorous selection process which is guided by the following principles, amongst other things:

"By virtue of the fact that your application for funding under the WEP has been approved, you explicitly undertake an enduring commitment to the Unit, whether as an SASR soldier, a scholar or future Alumni. This privilege is underpinned by moral obligations against which you will be measured by your peers. These obligations are designed to safeguard the articles of the program as stated above, and to ensure the program remains successful and sustainable into the future. These moral obligations include, but are not limited to;

1. *The WEP does not recognise a participant's rank, gender, ethnicity, background, age or station. All participants are equal inside the architecture of the program. In settings and contexts specifically related to the WEP, all participants are expected to treat each other with equal respect and regard at all times, commensurate with the Code of Conduct herein.*
2. *All soldiers commit and contribute to the ongoing development of the WEP and its inherent relationships so as to ensure its sustained future benefits to SASR soldiers; that is, soldiers will strive to 'leave the program better than they found it'.*
3. *Whilst soldiers cannot legally be held to a return of service, they are expected to return reasonable service to SASR commensurate with the investment this program bestows. That is, soldiers are expected not to profitably 'study and run'. This may take the form of a commitment to the SASR Reserves as support staff in training and selection for the years following separation, where it is reasonable to do so.*
4. *Soldiers are obliged to continue to contribute to the program beyond their education. This may take the form of in-kind support, mentoring or fundraising support as Alumni.*
5. *Whilst a beneficiary in the program you are expected to support and mentor new soldiers in and applying for the program.*
6. *IAW Articles 1 & 2 soldiers are to vigilantly protect unit OPSEC and PID imperatives, and therefore monitor and manage all external relationships related to the program. It is beholden on all soldiers in the program to actively seek and identify potential OPSEC gaps or vulnerabilities of the program.*
7. *Soldiers are not to directly refer to SASR or its soldiers in any external communication, research, writing or public interactions. Where required the word Special Forces Unit or the WEP are to be used in place. Any requirements outside of this guiding principle must be authorised by the Commanding Officer (CO) SASR or his delegate.*
8. *Whilst in the program soldiers continue to be a representative of SASR and behaviour, attitude and ethical standards are to reflect the SASR ethos. Any contravention of this will risk the student's position in the program.*
9. *Soldiers have an obligation to the benefactors who support the program to complete their studies and training, in order to acknowledge and validate those benefactors' investment in the program.*
10. *In due course soldiers will leave the unit and program however until this point, active poaching or 'headhunting' of soldiers in the program by business is discouraged and as such, all soldiers are to ensure this is clear in all external interactions and relationships."*
11. *Participants who engage in independent and informal relationships with benefactors and external organisations, that have been developed as a result of their participation in the WEP, are obliged to identify those relationships and inform the WEP / HP manager of those engagements.*



Mark Donaldson VC in Afghanistan



For further information please contact
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