

Video message for SAS Resources Fund Charity Dinner

Good evening.

It is a privilege for me to be with you and to be part of the SAS Resources Fund Charity Dinner.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the families and colleagues of the brave men we are honouring tonight – the 15 members of the SASR and three members of 5th Aviation Regiment who perished in the Black Hawk disaster near Townsville in the early evening of Wednesday 12 June 1996.

We remember them. We honour them. And we acknowledge the outstanding work of the SAS Resources Fund in ensuring that their dependants are not left behind.

While the circumstances surrounding the accident will be well known to this audience, let me say that the 18 members of the ADF who we are honouring tonight lost their lives while in the service of their country.

I remember the accident clearly. I had just completed a posting at HQ 1 Div the week before and was departing for a posting overseas that week. Our nephew was a pilot at 5 Avn, fortunately not involved in the accident. The nature of the accident and the loss of close friends has remained with him to this day. We all lost a part of ourselves on that day. This audience knows that the sacrifices of our service men and women are also the sacrifices of their families.

And that is why organisations like the SAS Resources Fund look after them. Because for those left behind, life goes on. For all the grief, sorrow and loss, there are still hopes, dreams and aspirations to be fulfilled.

For a quarter of a century the Foundation has been looking after the dependants of SAS soldiers killed or severely wounded or injured on operations or in training, and supporting the education of beneficiary children, extending that support to cover health and other needs.

I'm informed the Fund has grown to include two more Trusts.

The second Trust broadens the support available to SAS Regiment members, and their families, when they are experiencing difficulty as a result of their service. The third Trust provides respite and education opportunities for serving members.

What an outstanding contribution to make – a contribution that embodies the Anzac legacy of sticking by your mates and their families.

To that end, I'd like to acknowledge a few groups and individuals:

- All involved with the SAS Fund – the donors, volunteers, sponsors and supporters for their philanthropy, generosity and collegiality
- The Trustees, Committee members and staff at the Fund for not only arranging tonight's anniversary event but in ensuring the wheels of the Trust keep turning.

Thank you, all.

I said in the wake of the recent operation to extract Australians and others from Afghanistan that the men and women of the ADF, Defence and the many Government and non-government organisations who served in or supported operations in Afghanistan should be proud of their service.

Those who served honourably and with commitment cannot, must not, let recent events diminish the personal effort and contribution they made to this war. They did as their nation asked. They

served diligently in very difficult circumstances. They should be confident and assured that their efforts are valued.

It's organisations like the SAS Resources Fund that stand ready to support our veterans.

Thank you all again for your support, generosity and the critically important work that you do.

I wish you all an enjoyable evening.

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