



# **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 frequently 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.

Seven men serving with the SASR have paid the ultimate sacrifice since 2001, either in direct combat with, or in preparing for operations against, terrorists 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 these 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, which in May 2016 was formally embedded in the SASR’s official charity, the SAS Resources Fund, as a 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. About \$1.5 million in generous donations from a small number of vetted Australians has since been raised in total.



Mark Donaldson VC and Ben Robert Smith VC

### THE GOALS OF THE WANDERERS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ARE TO:

- Give select and vetted private sector partners the opportunity to contribute to SASR Operators’ welfare by way of assisting with merit-based education scholarships overseen by the SASR’s Human Performance cell and the SAS Resources Fund;
- Maximise the opportunity for SASR Operators to successfully assimilate back into, and actively contribute to, the community through their professional and personal lives once they complete their service;
- Build familial resilience and provide spouses and children with confidence and certainty in post-service life;
- Ensure that the SASR remains a destination employer of choice for Special Operations personnel globally, and is continuously engaged in augmenting its own capabilities through benchmarking and sharing with select external educational and private sector networks in the name of protecting Australia’s national security interests; and
- Improve the operational capability of SASR by providing Operators with an opportunity to enhance their human capital via world-class educational experiences, including non-military programs that help them build on and develop a diverse array of leadership, management, strategy, negotiation, decision-making and vocation-specific skill-sets.

### 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 has since been 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) and has been subsequently superseded by the establishment of the official Wanderers Education Program sub-trust within the SAS Resources Fund’s Trust No 3 (see more below).

Since its commencement, the pilot program has expanded to support 12 SASR operators enrolled in various tertiary and vocational studies, including MBA program at UWA and AGSM, with an additional 10 candidates currently under consideration via the Wanderers Education Program’s rigorous application process, which is overseen by the SASR’s Human Performance Cell and approved by the SASR’s Commanding Officer.



## INTEGRATION OF WANDERERS EDUCATION PROGRAM INTO SASR RESOURCES FUND

The SAS Resources Fund (SASRF) is a perpetual trust fund (a DGR1 & 2 status organisation), 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 a sub-trust of the SASRF's third trust, called "Trust No3", was established 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 sub-fund acts as the custodian for donations received from benefactors for the express purpose of supporting the Wanderers Education Program. The program is operationally administered through the SASR's Human Performance Cell. The SASRF provides the Wanderers Education Program will governance oversight, full auditability and tax refundable status for benefactors.

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:

- Treasurer Mr Rob Druitt, B.Com MBA
- Commanding Officer, Special Air Service Regiment
- Mr Andrew Forrest
- Mr Nicholas Brasington, B.Com, ACA-Associate
- Ms Michelle Hawksley, LLB (Hons) BEcon
- Mr James McMahon DSC DSM
- Dr Mark Nidorf MD MBBS FRACP FACC FCSANZ
- Mr Kerry Stokes AC
- Mr Tom Wallace OAM FCA
- Hon Peter Blaxell
- Mr Alan Cransberg
- Mr Peter Fitzpatrick AM GAICD

## FUNDING CONDITIONS

All SASR recipients of funding from the Wanderers Education Program are required to formally agree to its conditions, which include the following terms, amongst other things:

*"By virtue of the fact that you have accepted a funded position in the Wanderers Education Program, you are undertaking an enduring commitment to the SASR, whether as an Operator, a student or as future Alumni. This privilege is underwritten by moral obligations against which you may 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 into the future. These moral obligations include, but are not limited to;*

1. All students commit to making enduring, valuable and worthwhile contributions to the program, the people and the inherent relationships so to benefit future SASR students; that is, students will leave the program better than you found it.
2. Whilst students cannot legally be held to a return of service, you are expected to return reasonable service to SASR commensurate with the investment this program bestows. That is, students are expected not to profitably 'study and run'. This may take the form of a commitment to the SASR Reserve as support staff in training and selection for the years following your discharge, where it is reasonable to do so.
3. You have an obligation to the benefactors who support the program to see out your studies and training, and to optimise their investment in the program.
4. Whilst a beneficiary in the program you are expected to support and mentor new students in and applying for the program.
5. Students are obliged to continue to contribute to the program beyond their education. This may take the form of in-kind support, mentoring or fundraising.
6. Whilst in the program you continue to be a representative of SASR and your behaviour, attitude and ethical standards are to reflect the SASR ethos. Any contravention of this will risk your position in the program.
7. 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 students are to ensure this is clear in all external interactions and relationships."







Mark Donaldson VC in Afghanistan



For further information please contact  
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