



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Main Committee

CONDOLENCES

Corporal Mathew Ricky Andrew Hopkins

SPEECH

Wednesday, 13 May 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker Robert, Stuart, MP	Question No.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (10.15 am)—Benjamin Disraeli said that the legacy of heroes is the memory of a great name and the inheritance of a great example. Corporal Mathew Hopkins is indeed a great example to all Australians and it is with great pride mixed with much sadness that I rise to honour this fallen warrior, the ninth lost whilst defending and fighting for freedom in a foreign land known as Afghanistan.

Corporal Mathew Hopkins, known as ‘Hoppy’ to his mates, was actually born in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 27 August 1987. He saw the light and arrived in Australia with his family in 1988. He enlisted in the Australian Regular Army on 28 March 2005. After completing recruit training he was allocated to the Royal Australian Infantry Corps and was subsequently posted to the School of Infantry, where he qualified as a rifleman after completing his initial employment training on 9 September 2005. He was posted to the 5th/7th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, with effect 10 September 2005, where he fulfilled a range of junior soldier roles and qualified as an M113 crewman driver.

Corporal Hopkins deployed to Afghanistan on Operation Slipper with the first reconstruction task force from November 2006 to April 2007. His military decorations include the Australian Active Service Medal with International Coalition Against Terrorism, ICAT, clasp; the Afghanistan Campaign Medal; the NATO International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, Medal; and, of course, the Infantry Combat Badge. He remained with the 7th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, upon the delinking of both battalions and later qualified as an M113 crewman commander. He was temporarily promoted to Lance Corporal in June 2007 and was made substantive in April 2008. He was promoted to Corporal before his 21st birthday in August 2008, which is certainly testimony to his leadership qualities, his hard work and his commitment. Corporal Mathew Hopkins deployed to Afghanistan as a member of the fourth protection combat team, known as Combat Team Tusk, serving with the first Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force. He was a section commander with the fourth protection combat team.

His mates in the 7th Battalion described him as a professional soldier and a bit of a larrikin having a joke when the chips were down. He strikes me as a typical modern Anzac. He was always keen to get the job done, however, which gave his subordinates something to emulate. He was a good leader and was described as a good mate who would go out of his way to provide any assistance within his capacity. He sounds like a bloody good young Australian. He was an approachable bloke with a genuine caring attitude toward his soldiers. He certainly upheld Army values as a source of inspiration—particularly courage, mateship and endurance. All who knew him said that he was a soldier who led from the front, never from the rear, and always looked out for his mates and most certainly for his soldiers. He was a good section commander. He was a keen sports player, and he particularly enjoyed rugby within the battalion and the competition within the brigade.

Mathew was recently married to Victoria and was present during the birth of their son, Alexander. I have two little boys, and I can attest to the wonderful joy of being there when they come into the world and take their first breaths. I have no doubt Alexander will be immensely proud of his dad.

Corporal Hopkins was serving with the Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force in Afghanistan when he was killed while conducting a patrol near Kakarak, when he and his team were engaged by a group of around 20 Taliban on Monday, 16 March. Corporal Hopkins was a valued member of the Darwin based 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. He fought like a soldier. He died a soldier’s death. It is attributed to George Orwell that we sleep safe in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm. If indeed freedom is the sure possession of those alone with the courage to defend it, then Corporal Hopkins stands tall in this nation’s history of warriors who have defended all that we stand for.

This is in the great tradition of an ancient warrior, statesman and king, Pericles, who founded the Athenian empire 2,500 years ago and led that nation during the first two years of the Peloponnesian War. He said, ‘What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments but what is woven into the lives of others.’ The loss of Corporal Hopkins is a tragedy for the nation. He died fighting for freedom, defending all that we stand

for and all that we believe in. His heroism will inspire generations to come. What he has done will have touched the lives of this country. What he has done is to defend a freedom we hold dear. This parliament and this nation will not forget his heroism or his sacrifice.