



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Main Committee

CONDOLENCES

Private Benjamin Ranaudo

SPEECH

Friday, 14 August 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Friday, 14 August 2009 Page 75 Questioner Speaker Robert, Stuart, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (11.07 pm)—Benjamin Disraeli said that the legacy of heroes is the memory of a great name and the inheritance of a great example. Private Benjamin Ranaudo is indeed a great example to all Australians. It is with great pride mixed with tremendous sadness that I rise to honour another fallen warrior.

Benjamin Ranaudo was farewelled by fellow diggers in Tarin Kowt in southern Afghanistan, the 11th Australian soldier killed in Afghanistan. He was killed by an improvised explosive device. He was serving in the Baluchi Valley, north of Tarin Kowt, at the time. The 22-year-old was the fifth Australian to die from an IED blast. A cortege of vehicles, including one carrying Benjamin Ranaudo's flag-draped casket, passed between a line of diggers to carry our fallen comrade home.

He was serving with the 1st Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, a battalion I know well, having served with a sister battalion as a very young platoon commander with the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment. I know it is with great sadness that the commanding officer and the men of 1RAR farewelled one of their warriors. It is always a solemn ramp ceremony when one of our fallen men comes home, killed in battle fighting for what he believes. The regimental sergeant major, Warrant Officer Darren Murch, spoke glowingly of Private Ranaudo. He spoke of a man being a pleasure to be around and one who displayed the true qualities of an Australian soldier. We must never forget—not in this place, not in any place—that Benjamin Ranaudo fought for us. He fought for a freedom that we value and that we wish to extend.

We must never forget that the battle in Afghanistan is one of the front-line battles for Western civilisation as we know it. It is a battle to rebuild a nation, to restore a democracy, to remove a safe haven from those who would seek to convert it to an extremist form of government completely incompatible with our way of life—a form of government they wish to see extended throughout the world. The battle in Afghanistan is a forward fight for our Western way of life. It is a fight we must win; it is a fight we will win. It is a battle for the hearts and minds of Afghani people, who do not want to return to an extremist Taliban rule. This is a battle for families—for mums and dads who want to live a life that they have known historically. Let us not forget that Afghani mums, too, love their kids and they want a country where their children can grow up and be educated. They want a country where little girls have the right to go to school and live in a free and fair democracy and where their children do not have to live in fear of warlords subjugating them into a slavery of fighting for a dictatorial regime and an extremist view of government. We are fighting to reconstruct a nation so that it can no longer be used as a safe haven for terrorism. The fight is a worthwhile fight. It enjoys bipartisan support across the political divide, as it should. It is a fight we will continue until it is won, in concert with our allies and partners. It is a fight that Private Benjamin Ranaudo paid the ultimate price for. He laid down his life for a fight he believed in.

There is a saying 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 freedom is indeed the sure possession of those who alone have the courage to defend it, then may I suggest that Ben Ranaudo stands tall in our nation's history. He joins 10 other warriors who have laid down their lives in Afghanistan, because they had the courage to defend the freedom many of us take for granted.

I conclude, as I so often have in this place, in the great tradition of an ancient warrior, statesman and king, Pericles, who founded the great 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.

When we look at Facebook and see Private Ranaudo's partner's comments, when we hear the accolades from peers and superiors alike; when we see the public's reaction to another warrior, another brave Anzac, the son of those who have gone before us, it inspires us to know that heroism remains alive. It inspires us to know that young Australian men continue to fight, that young Australian men and women continue to serve because we uphold freedom as a fundamental, sacred right in this country and we are prepared to fight to ensure that

freedom remains. Private Ranaudo has indeed left behind something significant woven into the lives of others. His sacrifice has indeed touched lives, and this place will not forget that.