

War in the Sand Pit

Two-Day Conference: 12-13 May 2017
Monash Centre, Gallipoli Barracks, Brisbane



In Memoriam - Private Robert Poate, killed in Afghanistan 29 August 2012

Perspectives and Lessons from Australia's War in Afghanistan and Iraq 2001-2014

In the wake of al-Qaeda's attacks on the United States in September 2001 Australia embarked on a military-led campaign in Afghanistan and Iraq.

But few, if any, envisaged it would turn out to be **Australia's longest war**. How did this happen? This conference explores how it came about that between 2001 and 2014 over **50,000** members of the Australian Defence Force fought in the Middle East Area of Operations... '**War in the Sand Pit**'.

To date, little is known and few works have been written about Australia's longest of military conflicts. With the **Official History** for these wars still some years away it is time to undertake some preliminary analysis of this period in our history. This conference will pose some thought provoking questions and push for some coherent answers.

What happened? How well did we understand the nature of the fight? Why did Australia contribute the way it did? Were there other viable approaches? Did Australia's contribution add value to the coalitions? **What lessons can be learned for the future?** This two-day conference will examine these and other questions.

On **Friday 12 and Saturday 13 May 2017** a select group of key participants and decision makers in the events of that period are gathering together in

the **Monash Centre, Gallipoli Barracks, Brisbane** to place into the public record different perspectives and responses to many questions for the benefit and further development of history and scholarship. This **nationally significant event is not to be missed**.

Military History and Heritage Victoria in partnership with the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at The Australian National University have gathered an **impressive array of speakers** involved first hand at the national, operational and tactical levels.

On national policy and strategy Professor **Robert Hill, AC** (former Minister for Defence 2001-2006) will provide the **keynote address**. **Ric Smith, AO, PSM** (former Secretary of the Department of Defence 2002-2006) will speak on Australian National Policy. Admiral **Chris Barrie, AC, RAN (Retd)** (Chief of the Defence Force 1998-2002) will speak on Australian Military Strategy.

On Afghanistan, Brigadier **Dan McDaniel, DSC, AM, DSM** (former member Special Air Service Regiment), Brigadier **Mick Ryan, AM** (former Commanding Officer Reconstruction Task Force 1 in 2006 and 2007) and Air Commodore **Chris Westwood (Retd)** (former Officer Commanding

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On Friday evening: Drinks and complimentary canapes along with a performance by renowned author, speaker and singer/songwriter, Fred Smith (the first Australian diplomat to be posted to Uruzgan in 2009) at the 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment. The performance will include songs from his album *Dust of Uruzgan*.

No. 41 in Kandahar in 2007) will speak on different aspects regarding the war in Afghanistan.

On Iraq, Brigadier **Anthony Rawlins**, DSC (former Commanding Officer, Overwatch Battle Group West - 2 December 2006 - June 2007), Vice Admiral **Peter Jones**, AO, DSC (Retd) (former Maritime Interception Operations Screen Commander in 2003) and Major General **Jim Molan**, AO, DSC (Retd), (former Chief of Operations, Multi-National Forces-Iraq in 2004) will speak on different aspects regarding the war in Iraq.

On other partner agencies, Super-intendent **Col Speedie** (Retd) (former commander second AFP mission to Afghanistan in 2008/09) and **David Savage**, AM (former AusAID Stabilisation Advisor, Provincial Reconstruction Team in 2012) will speak on the contribution from other Australian Government agencies.

On joint enabling functions, Major General **Michael Crane**, DSC and Bar, AM (Retd) (former Commander Joint Task Force 633 in 2008 and 2012/13), Colonel **Mick Lehmann**, CSC (Retd) (former intelligence officer in Afghanistan 2007-2015) and Brigadier **Peter Daniel**, AM, CSC (Retd) (former logistics officer in Iraq 2008-2009) will speak on different joint force issues. Professor **Dan Marston** and Doctor **Garth Pratten** from the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre will speak on other coalition perspectives.

On lessons and legacies, Professor **William Maley** (author and editor of *Reconstructing Afghanistan*) and Lieutenant General **Peter Leahy**, AC (Retd) (former Chief of the Army 2002-2008) will speak

about the lessons and legacies of these wars for Australia. Doctor **John Blaxland**, whose recently published book *The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard* includes chapters on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, will open and close the conference and edit the proceedings for publication.

Session chairs include:

- **Karen Middleton** (journalist and author of *An Unwinnable War: Australia in Afghanistan*).
- Corporal **Ben Roberts-Smith**, VC, MG (Retd) (former member Special Air Service Regiment).
- Major General **John Cantwell**, AO, DSC (Retd) (former Deputy Chief of Operations Multi-National Forces-Iraq and Commander Joint Task Force 633).
- **James Brown** (veteran, academic and author of *Anzac's Long Shadow*).
- Dr **Alan Ryan** (Executive Director of the Australian Civil-Military Centre).
- Professor **Craig Stockings** (Official Historian of Australian Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Australian Peacekeeping Operations in East Timor).

The full Conference Program is available at www.mhhv.org.au. The ticket pricing is:

- **General Admission - two-days \$250.00** or one-day only \$150.00.
- Concession Card and MHHV Individual Members - two-days \$200.00 or one-day only \$120.00.

The ticket price includes morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea on both days as well as canapes at 2 CER on the Friday evening.

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