



## **Stuart Robert MP**

**Federal Member for Fadden**

**Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel**

### **\*\*MEDIA RELEASE\*\***

9 September 2011

#### **EDINBURGH TROOPS STILL LIVING IN PRISON-LIKE CONDITIONS**

'Today's media release by the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence, Senator Feeney, is a crude attempt to white wash over the fact that soldiers at Edinburgh are still living in sub-standard conditions,' Mr Robert said in response to the Labor Government's media release concerning facilities at RAAF Edinburgh.

Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel, Stuart Robert, who recently toured the temporary accommodation at RAAF Base Edinburgh, said single live in soldiers from 7 RAR were not only required to live in cramped temporary accommodation comparable in size to a prison cell, they were also forced to pay for it.

'It is absolutely outrageous that soldiers are having to not only live in these conditions but are also having to pay for the sub-standard accommodation,' Mr Robert said.

'The accommodation is over a kilometre away from the soldiers mess and has been described as being of a lower standard than what is available to soldiers living in Afghanistan's mounting base at Al Minhad in Dubai.'

Mr Robert said he had written to Minister Snowdon weeks ago about the deplorable situation that over 100 soldiers find themselves in and requested that as a bare minimum the accommodation should be provided to soldiers free of charge.

Mr Robert said Minister Snowdon had not even bothered to reply to his letter.

'Given the construction of the soldier's permanent accommodation has not yet even begun, I find it totally unacceptable that the soldiers are having to pay for the Labor Government's inability to manage basic soldier accommodation requirements,' Mr Robert said.

'Our soldiers deserve better. This Labor Government talks about our soldiers being the military's greatest asset, well if that is true then they deserve to live in proper accommodation and they deserve a Minister that actually takes an interest in their situation, rather than one that wholly fails to acknowledge that there is a problem.'

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## Stuart Robert MP

Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel

16 August 2011

The Hon. Warren Snowdon MP  
Minister for Defence Science and Personnel  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister Snowdon

I write to you in my capacity as Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel with regard to the current sub-standard accommodation available to 7 RAR soldiers at RAAF Base Edinburgh in Adelaide.

As you would be aware, I recently travelled to RAAF Base Edinburgh where I visited the new facilities constructed for use by 7 RAR personnel. I was impressed with some of the facilities, including the new gym and training infrastructure; however, I am deeply concerned with the poor quality of the temporary demountable accommodation for 7 RAR soldiers, particularly as construction of the permanent soldier accommodation has not yet begun.

I acknowledge that single soldiers, regardless of length of service, have been provided with the option to live outside the base; however, I understand they are only being provided with rental assistance that is half the maximum available amount. This has led to a situation where over 100 soldiers are currently living in the tiny on base demountables where they are still required to pay a co-contribution amount of approximately \$55 a week.

Given the on base accommodation is over a kilometre from the soldiers mess and the rooms are comparable in size to a prison cell, this accommodation, *at the very minimum*, should be provided free of charge. Further, those soldiers approved to live off base should be given the full amount of rental assistance available to them.

As 7 RAR's transition from Darwin to Adelaide has been a long term project and well known to government for many years, I am disappointed that soldiers were asked to move from Darwin to Adelaide to live in temporary accommodation that is of a lower standard than that available to soldiers living in Afghanistan's mounting base at Al Minhad in Dubai.

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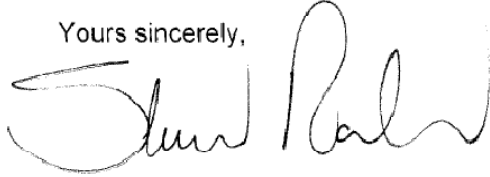
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I am further disappointed that the construction of the new accommodation has not yet begun. Soldiers are our finest asset in the Army and deserve better.

Given permanent on base accommodation for soldiers is still a few years away, I urge you to provide the maximum financial assistance to those soldiers required to live in the on base demountables by dropping the weekly charge to \$0.00 and to provide the full amount of rental assistance for those living off base.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart Robert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stuart" and the last name "Robert" clearly distinguishable.

**Stuart Robert MP**