



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

CONDOLENCES

**Duffy, Captain Bryce, Birt, Corporal
Ashley, Gavin, Lance Corporal Luke**

SPEECH

Wednesday, 2 November 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Wednesday, 2 November 2011 Page 152 Questioner Speaker Mr ROBERT</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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(Fadden) (NaN.NaN pm)

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (16:56): I join the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the defence minister in honouring Captain Bryce Duffy, Corporal Ashley Birt and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin, who were tragically killed in Afghanistan on the weekend and to lend our thoughts and prayers to the seven wounded in action and the families of those touched by this tragedy. We also pause to remember the 29 other Australians who have made the supreme sacrifice in Afghanistan and the over 200 that have been wounded in action in service to their country.

That these three young leaders were killed in action let there be no doubt. Operating a mobile mentoring patrol at the Forward Operating Base Pacemaker in the Zamto Valley in northern Kandahar, these men were astride the main north-south insurgency route. That their assailant was one they had trained, perhaps even fought with, is vexing in the extreme. Yet know this: our men died as they lived, fighting to the end. As our 10 men fell, three never to rise again, they fell with weapons firing killing him who sought their lives. Their quick response no doubt saved other Australian lives.

It says something about the Australian warrior that, immediately after the shooting, the wounded medic applied his own tourniquet and then rapidly attended to his injured mates. An armed patrol of fighting vehicles in the area rapidly converged on the patrol base to provide immediate fire support. I can imagine that every man in that armoured patrol risked exposure out of the vehicle manholes to ensure that every single heavy weapon was manned ready to assist.

Brothers-in-arms fell on the weekend. As the brother of Corporal Birt, whom he served alongside in Afghanistan, accompanies him home, we pause to reflect that Australians have known this type of tragedy before. In World War I alone, 2,800 sets of brothers perished; 153 mothers gave three sons and five mothers gave four sons. Once again, mothers and fathers, wives and children have given their most treasured possession for the cause of freedom. In a few days Mrs Birt will again welcome two sons home yet she will hug only one of them. I do not think we can begin to imagine her pain.

As we collectively grieve as a parliament in joining with our nation and as we express our gratitude, let us renew again today that we will offer more than words and tears, that we will offer nothing less than our unwavering support and complete commitment to those that fight wearing our flag—the same flag that flies here in this place. We mourn you lads as we mourn your loss.