




Speech by

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MEMBER FOR INALA

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MOTION—DEATH OF SOLDIERS IN AFGHANISTAN

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.11 am): Of all the sad sights perhaps there is none sadder than the bodies of fallen soldiers making the long and lonely journey home. Last Wednesday in Brisbane, we witnessed this threefold when three coffins, draped in the Australian flag, came home to the RAAF base at Amberley, also bringing home the true horror and devastation of the worst day for our troops since the Vietnam War.

It is images such as these that remind us not only of the tragic loss that comes with any war but also that the sad procession of Australian men continues as to we strive to stand with our allies and help Afghanistan forge a new and free country. While it will be cold comfort to the families, partners and friends of those tragically killed two weeks ago, every war has a terrible human cost.

I rise to pay my respects and offer my condolences to the families of Lance Corporal Rick Milosevic, Sapper James Martin and Private Robert Poate. I tell their families and their friends and, indeed, their Army colleagues that these three fine young men gave their lives for our country and for freedom and democracy the world over. They are heroes to everyone who knew them and to their country.

Sapper Martin was on his first operational deployment, but it is a sign of his dedication to service and his commitment to his tour of duty that, in his first letter to his family, he said—

I would not give up this opportunity for anything ... I will be an Australian soldier.

I offer my sympathies to his mother, Suzanne, brother, Angus, and sister, Holly, and to his grandparents, Lucille and Ralph Thomas.

Lance Corporal Milosevic was on his second operational deployment. This devoted family man leaves behind his partner, Kelly, and two young daughters, eight-year-old Sarah and six-year-old Kate. I offer them my condolences.

I also offer my sympathies to Private Poate's parents, Hugh and Janny, and his sister, Nicola. Private Poate had been in the Army since 2009. He is described by Defence personnel as having 'outstanding leadership potential' and is remembered as an incredibly professional soldier.

On 29 August we suffered one of our darkest days as a country involved in an international conflict. It was on the same day that these three young men from the Enoggera Barracks lost their lives that two other Australian soldiers died in Afghanistan. I offer my deepest sympathies to the families of Lance Corporal Mervyn McDonald and Private Nathanael 'Nate' Galagher who were killed in a helicopter crash. I make special mention of Private Galagher's partner, Jessie, who must face this difficult time while awaiting the impending birth of their child.

I pay tribute to each of these fine soldiers and to each of the others who have gone before them. May their families take comfort in the fact that they died serving their country and may they rest in peace.