



Guy Barnett MP

LIBERAL MEMBER FOR LYONS

Corporal Cameron Baird VC MG A time to reflect

By Guy Barnett, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and Liberal Member for Lyons

“For the most conspicuous acts of valour, extreme devotion to duty and ultimately self-sacrifice at Ghawchak village, Uruzgan province, Afghanistan, as a commando team commander in Special Operations Task Group on Operation Slipper.”

This was the citation describing Corporal Cameron Baird's acts of bravery in June 2013 which saw him awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross—the nation's highest honour, and only granted to 100 Australians since the medal's inception in 1856.

Corporal Baird was born a Burnie boy. Growing up, he enjoyed his football and went on to play at a high level in his later years.

His father Doug played for the Cooee Football Club and coached the Ulverstone football club before the family moved to Melbourne in 1984.

With football such a part of the Baird family story, it is ironic that a football injury to Cameron's shoulder nearly prevented him from joining the Army.

Cameron was twice knocked back from enlisting because of this injury.

On his third attempt—and with the support of his parents—he was successful and was enlisted on 4 January 2000.

Cameron Baird deployed to East Timor and Iraq before leaving the Army in July 2004.

He re-enlisted in September 2006 and by mid-2007 was deployed to Afghanistan.

It was on this tour, during a night-time operation on 22 and 23 November 2007, that then-Lance Corporal Baird was awarded the Medal of Gallantry—the nation's third highest award for bravery—for 'gallantry in action during close quarters combat'.

By 22 June 2013 Corporal Baird was on his fourth deployment to Afghanistan and leading his Special Operations Task Group team to attack an insurgent network deep in enemy territory.



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The citation continues the story of this day:

'With complete disregard for his own safety, Corporal Baird charged towards the enemy positions, supported by his team. ...Corporal Baird was engaged by enemy machine-gun fire, the bullets striking the ground around him. Displaying great valour, he drew the fire, moved to cover, and suppressed the enemy machine gun position. On three separate occasions Corporal Baird charged an enemy held building...Despite being totally exposed and immediately engaged by enemy fire, Corporal Baird pushed forward. ...For a third time Corporal Baird selflessly drew enemy fire away from his team and assaulted the doorway. Enemy fire was seen to strike the ground and compound walls around Corporal Baird, before visibility was obscured by dust and smoke. In this third attempt, the enemy was neutralised and the advantage was regained, but Corporal Baird was killed in the effort.'

For his valour, he was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia.

He was Tasmania's 14th and Australia's 100th Victoria Cross recipient.

Corporal Baird is one of only two Australian servicemen to be awarded both the Victoria Cross and the Medal for Gallantry, the other being Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith VC MG.

Chief of the Australian Defence Force General David Hurley AC DSC said to his parents, Doug and Kaye, and brother, Brendan, on the day they received the VC medal: "Thank-you for his service with us and for the everlasting example of leadership, courage and mateship that is his legacy. Cameron has earned his place in the pantheon of those who have served their country with valour in times of war."

Cameron's courage deserves to be remembered.

Already, a memorial plinth has been unveiled in his birthplace of Burnie early last year by Her Excellency Professor Kate Warner AM, Governor of Tasmania, and a scholarship in his name was announced by the Tasmanian Government last year.

The inaugural CPL Cameron Baird VC Scholarship was awarded to Scamander's Ethan McArthur in January at the Newstead College prize night. It was a proud moment and a time to reflect on the ultimate sacrifice by Cameron for his mates.



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An official opening of the Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC MG Room at the Burnie RSL will take place on Saturday, which will be used to encourage interaction between the different generations of veterans.

Cameron's personal ethos was 'Aspire to Inspire'.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, Guy Barnett MP, has responsibility for supporting Tasmania's veterans and ex-serving community.



| Doug and Kaye Baird with son Cameron's medals