



PATHFINDER

Sapper Rowan Jaie Robinson was serving with the Special Operations Task Group when he was tragically killed in action on Monday 6 June 2011.

Twenty-three year old Sapper Robinson was from the Sydney-based Incident Response Regiment (IRR) and leaves behind his loving mother, father, sister and two brothers.

Sapper Robinson was born in Wahroonga, NSW in 1987. He joined the Army in 2006 and, after initial recruit training joined the 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment.

After four years of service he was posted to the Incident Response Regiment at the start of 2010 where he completed his reinforcement cycle.

He was on his second deployment to Afghanistan when he was shot and killed during a small-arms engagement with insurgents in northern Helmand, during an operation in two phases.

The initial phase saw the patrol deploy to an area known to be an insurgent distribution and supply cell. This was confirmed when a large munitions cache – the largest discovered by Australian forces this year – was found. It contained anti-personnel mines, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and ammunition, assault rifles, communications equipment

and components for the manufacture of improvised explosive devices.

At the time of the discovery, the partnered patrol came under small-arms fire from two locations, so the commander on the ground made the decision to destroy the cache in place with explosives.

The patrol then moved on to the second phase of the operation in another area of interest at a separate location. Shortly after arrival at the second location, the partnered patrol again came under heavy small-arms fire from multiple directions.

During this second engagement, Sapper Robinson was shot while in an overwatch



position. His mates quickly moved to him under heavy fire, commenced first aid and called for an aero-medical evacuation. But, despite these efforts, Sapper Robinson could not be saved.

Shortly after the announcement of this latest death on operations, Defence released a statement on behalf of Sapper Robinson's family – parents Marie and Peter, sister Rachael and brothers Ben and Troy.

"Rowan was so proud to be an Incident Response Regiment engineer – and we were proud that he chose to serve his country by joining the Army," they said.

"He took his work very seriously, knowing he was responsible for the lives of those who followed him through dangerous ground. He knew the risk of his job and accepted it.

"It's harder for us to accept he has been taken from us before his time – but we know he died protecting his mates and doing a job that he loved, a job for which he was greatly respected by the people who served by his side."

Sapper Robinson began his final journey home from Afghanistan on 9 June when he was farwelled by his comrades in a moving memorial service and ramp ceremony at Multi National Base – Tarin Kot.

He was remembered as an exceptional soldier and a friend to all.

In his eulogy, the commanding officer of the Special Operations Task Group (who



cannot be named for security reasons) described Sapper Robinson as a young, dedicated soldier who was born for the profession of arms.

"Rowan was highly motivated and had every desire to continue to serve his country for many years. Whether it was clearing a path potentially littered with improvised explosive devices, fighting for his mates or providing over-watch, no task was too great and no request for help was ever unanswered," he said.

"Everything he turned his hand to produced outstanding results. Without fail he jumped at the challenge of leading our operators to their objective, risking his life so that others may live."

After the memorial service, Sapper Robinson's casket was placed onto a Long

Range Patrol Vehicle by fellow engineers and led through an honour guard of soldiers from the Task Group. He was escorted onto a waiting RAAF C-130 Hercules to begin the long journey home to family and friends in Australia.

"Rowan was a man who was as selfless as he was courageous. His actions on the day he was killed led to the removal of several insurgents and the largest cache of weapons, ammunition, drugs and bomb components found this year," CO SOTG said.

"Your country, your mates and your family are extremely proud and you will always be remembered."

A C-17 Globemaster carrying the fallen soldier arrived at RAAF Base Amberley on 13 June, and was met by Incident Response Regiment soldiers who formed an honour guard and bearer party to escort Sapper Robinson's casket to his waiting family.

At the brief ceremony that followed, the then Chief of Army Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie spoke of Rowan's Combat Engineer role within the Special Operations Task Group.

"Every time he was outside the wire, he was alongside his SOTG colleagues. As a sapper, he led from the front, looking for threats and disabling those devices to keep his mates safe," Lieutenant General Gillespie said.

Special Operations Commander, Major General Gus Gilmore, described the highly specialised work of the regiment and the loss felt by the entire command.

"The work of the IRR is at the top end of their game. It is hugely important and dangerous work that contributes enormously to the protection of our troops in Afghanistan," Major General Gilmore said.

"Sapper Robinson loved this work and was held in high esteem by all who worked with him in Special Operations Command. He was highly regarded for the way he approached each mission with courage and conviction."

On 17 June, hundreds of family, friends and colleagues gathered at St Anthony's Catholic Church in Kingscliff, New South Wales, to commemorate the life of Sapper Rowan Robinson, at his funeral service.

