



---

## A Foreword by

### His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery

AC CVO MC (RETD)

Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

for the Royal Australian Infantry 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary issue of CONTACT

---



The Australian infantryman has played a magnificent role in the defence of our country and its interests since the arrival of the first European settlers. He has gained recognition as one of the best combat soldiers in the world. He has proven himself on the battlefields of Europe, North Africa and the Pacific during the World Wars and subsequently in Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam. More recently the Australian infantryman has proven his adaptability on peacekeeping and enforcement operations in Somalia, Rwanda, East Timor and the Solomon Islands. Importantly today we have soldiers proving themselves in complex, three-block style conflict in both Iraq and Afghanistan, involving some heavy fighting against determined foes.

To quote Field Marshal Earl Wavell, 'Let us be clear about three facts. First, all battles and all wars are won in the end by the infantryman. Secondly, the infantryman always bears the brunt. His casualties are heavier; he suffers greater extremes of discomfort and fatigue than the other arms. Thirdly, the art of the infantry is less stereotyped and far harder to acquire in modern war than that of any other arm. The infantryman has to use initiative and intelligence in almost every step he moves, every action he takes on the battlefield.'

As Field Marshal Wavell noted, the life of an infantryman is particularly arduous and demanding, whether it is in barracks, on exercise or on deployment. It takes an incredible variety of skills and qualities of character to make a good infantryman – courage, determination, teamwork, a sense of duty and loyalty.

Although tough in combat, the Australian infantryman has a reputation for humour and compassion. It is that sense of humour that has served us so well in the villages of Malaya, Borneo, Vietnam, East Timor and the Solomon Islands, to the towns of Iraq and Afghanistan. Our soldiers enjoy popular support because of their ability to meet with and interact with the locals, for the respect we show to civilian populations, to enemy wounded, POW and their dead.

It is about spirit, that special something that defines a battalion, its ethos, its character. It is something that makes the battalion a family of brothers – bound together by pride, tradition and a special bond of mateship peculiar to our Corps. Or in the words of Jo Gullet:

'An effective battalion, in being ready to fight, implies a state of mind – I am not sure it is not a state of grace. It implies a giving and a taking, a sharing of almost everything – possessions, comfort, affection, trust, confidence, interest. It implies a certain restriction, and at the same time a certain enriching and widening of the human spirit. It implies doing a hundred things together – marching to the band, marching all night long, being hungry, thirsty, exhausted, filthy – being near but never quite mutinous. It involves not the weakening but the deferment of other bonds and interests, the acceptance that life and home are now with the battalion. In the end, it is possible to say "the battalion thinks" or "the battalion feels" and this is not an exaggeration.'

Being a good soldier in a battalion doesn't happen by chance. The Recruit Training Centre at Kapooka, the School of Infantry at Singleton, the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra, the Battle School at Tully and the Royal Military College, Duntroon, have all played key roles in our Corps' development. Further, prior to operational deployments, our battalions have been magnificently prepared.

The infantryman of today has to be a very flexible operator. He can be involved in a hostage situation in the morning, a hearts-and-minds activity an hour later and a conventional battle that afternoon. He has to be ready for deployment anywhere in the world at very short notice.

I'm sure that you would agree that the future in our region, and in other areas of the world, remains uncertain and volatile. In meeting those uncertainties, the infantryman of today can reasonably anticipate that the ADF will continue to be involved in providing much the same support to what can be termed its three main security objectives. First; dealing with the continuing threat of global terrorism. Second; responding to law and order – and institutional-breakdown-type crises closer to home, such as in East Timor and the Solomon Islands. And, third; operating at the higher end of the war-fighting spectrum as part of coalition or United Nations forces – for example the two Gulf wars and Afghanistan.

It is currently a very exciting time in the ADF and in particular the infantry. Today's soldiers will be ably supported by the M1 Abrams tank, unmanned aerial vehicles and the Tiger armed reconnaissance helicopter. However, regardless of the huge advances in technology in recent years, it is still the well-trained, disciplined infantryman who will close with the enemy, seize and hold ground and repel attack by day or night, regardless of season, weather or terrain.

As I end my time as Commander-in-Chief, and after 53 years closely associated with the Infantry Corps, I look back with pride, humility and gratitude in having had the privilege of being so closely associated with the finest soldiers in the world. On behalf of the nation, I thank those fine infantrymen who have served Australia proudly and I wish those of you still serving every success and good fortune as you carry on the great traditions of our Corps.

I know that this infantry edition of CONTACT will be enjoyed by former and current-serving Australian infantrymen and I hope it will also give families, friends and other members of the community an insight into this distinguished group of men who have given so much to our nation.

*Michael Jeffery*

(Michael Jeffery)