

GALLANT WARRIOR



On Monday 23 May 2011, Sergeant Brett Wood MG paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of his nation – struck down by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan.

The 32-year-old from the Sydney-based 2nd Commando Regiment leaves behind a loving wife and family who will treasure his memory forever.

Sergeant Brett Wood was born in Ferntree Gully, Victoria in 1978 and joined the Australian Army in 1996. After a relatively short time with the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, he successfully undertook commando selection and training and joined the then 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, now 2nd Commando Regiment, in November 1998.

Sergeant Wood had significant operations experience. His first deployment was to Bougainville in 2000, followed by East Timor in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. In 2006 he deployed on the first of three tours to Afghanistan. He was awarded the Medal for Gallantry, for leadership in action, during his first tour to Afghanistan.



Brett's wife Elvi told the world in a statement shortly after her husband was killed that one of the Army's bravest soldiers was also a brilliant husband, son, brother and friend.

"I have not only lost my husband, I have lost my best friend," she said.

"The past six years with him were the happiest of my life and it was the biggest honour ever to become his wife and to be part of his family.

"Brett was extremely proud to be part of the 2nd Commando Regiment and he considered many of his colleagues to be his second family.

"He was an excellent soldier, a true leader and a friend to all in his unit."

She said her husband was also a much-loved son, grandson and brother who inspired his family with his dedication and generosity.

On 28 May, Sergeant Brett Wood began the long journey home when he was farewelled by colleagues and comrades in a moving memorial service and ramp ceremony at their main base at Tarin Kot, southern Afghanistan.

He was remembered by peers and superiors alike as an exceptional soldier who dedicated his career to serving his nation, his mates and his family.

The commanding officer of the SOTG described Sergeant Wood as the finest example of an Australian soldier.

"Brett was a man amongst men, a soldier's soldier, an outstanding leader, a great mate, a loving husband, courageous and professional to a fault," Lieutenant Colonel G said.

"We should all be immensely grateful for having had the privilege of serving with Brett before his last patrol.

"It was no surprise to anyone to hear that when Brett was killed, he was once again leading a team of commandos, at the front, assaulting the enemy – much like in 2006 when he was awarded his Medal for Gallantry."

Hundreds of family, friends and fellow commandos commemorated the life of Sergeant Wood at a moving funeral service on 3 June at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney.

Sydneysiders and soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder to pay respects as the coffin was marched into the cathedral by his commando mates.

Elvi Wood spoke of her everlasting respect and love for her fallen husband.

"To say Brett was humble is an understatement. He did not want to be defined by his achievements and introduced himself as just an ordinary guy. His most frequent expression was 'no big deal,'" Mrs Wood said.

"Brett died a soldier, a commando, a warrior, a leader, a brother in arms, a true patriot, a hero – my hero.

"You were the one person who could make me feel safe, lift my worries and fears with just a smile or by holding me close. My heart is heavy with the knowledge that you will no longer walk by my side."

Sergeant Wood was laid to rest during a private burial service in western Sydney.



Medal for Gallantry

On 17 July 2006, during Operation Perth, an Australian commando platoon was tasked to clear an anti-coalition militia sanctuary in the Chora Valley, Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan. The Platoon was partnered in support of an infantry company of the United States Army 10th Mountain Division.

At approximately 1pm, the infantry company came under heavy rocket-propelled grenade and small-arms fire on multiple flanks, resulting in six wounded and one soldier killed in action, effectively halting their advance. Through thick vegetation, facing large numbers of dispersed militia and under heavy fire, the commando platoon commenced manoeuvring to assist.

During this move, the commando platoon received a volley of four rockets, which impacted in the centre of the platoon's position, resulting in six Australian soldiers wounded in action.

To regain the initiative, Corporal Wood's team was tasked by the platoon commander to assault

forward and clear a group of compounds from which they were receiving fire. Unknown to the commander, Corporal Wood had also been wounded in the foot by fragmentation from the barrage.

Corporal Wood commenced his task without hesitation, completing a rapid and aggressive clearance of numerous compounds. Once achieved, both the US and Australian elements were free to continue with the battle, providing the necessary time to effect the back-loading of the wounded by helicopter.

Throughout the afternoon, numerous and relentless probing attacks by a determined opponent followed. Corporal Wood displayed extraordinary leadership and courage, inspiring his team and the remainder of the platoon to repel the continued attacks.

He then successfully led a marksmanship team to infiltrate militia-held territory, killing seven.