

# Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without the collective efforts of the many contributors. It is a project bigger than one person, with the diverse voices that compile this book painting a truly unique and comprehensive portrait of Australia's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A key strength of the manuscript is the experiences of the authors, who were invited to participate in this project because of their close association with the topics discussed. It is a privilege and rare opportunity to be able to publish a book that includes the firsthand voices and assessments of historical participants, who include a former Minister for Defence, Chief of the Defence Force, Secretary of the Defence Department, Chief of Army, other senior Australian military and police personnel, a currently serving senator, journalists, academics and diplomats.

With such a diverse range of contributors, the manuscript covers a breadth of topics, ranging from the strategic and tactical elements of the military operations in question, and includes themes such as command, the media, and gender aspects. Its presentation of material in short chapters works well, and, given that some of the chapters rely more on the authors' recollections, is appropriate. This mixture of experiences and expertise was a real strength of the 2017 conference 'War in the Sandpit' and remains perhaps the defining feature of the book.

The absence of references in some chapters might be particularly noticeable in a university publication such as this. We would stress, however, that this is characteristic of the lack of records in the public domain and is not an indication of a lack of academic rigour.

We, the editors, have sought to increase the book's strength and appeal by inviting other experts to write chapters on topics that were not part of the conference. We are indebted to the contributors for their frankness, and for their perseverance in turning their speeches from the conference

into polished chapters for this book. Regrettably, Dr Garth Pratten's paper could not be included in this volume, but his talk, along with the other speakers' talks, can be watched and heard at the Australian Army website, 'The Cove'.<sup>1</sup>

The conference would not have been possible without the support of the team from Military History and Heritage Victoria. Thanks must be given to Jason McGregor, Brent Taylor, Peter Fielding, Jim Barry, Peter Edwards and Michael Buckridge for their efforts in the organisation and delivery of the conference. We are also grateful to the Australian Army for the use of Enoggera Barracks in Brisbane for the conference, and the Strategic & Defence Studies Centre at ANU for its support of the conference and this publication.

We wish to express our gratitude to ANU Press for publishing this book and for supporting publications of this nature. Particular thanks go to the peer reviewers and the ANU Press Asia-Pacific Security Studies series editor, Dr Greg Raymond.

We note this work was essentially complete and ready for publication prior to the revelations made public in the Brereton Report released in November 2020.<sup>2</sup> The work here provides important context to much of what Brereton discussed.

Most importantly, thank you to all the men and women who served and sacrificed on behalf of Australia. To those who died serving their nation, and those who have returned bearing what John Cantwell called the 'exit wounds' that last well beyond the time on deployment, we hope this book helps to explain and do justice to your experience.

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1 See 'War in the Sand Pit Conference—Doctor Garth Pratten', 19 July 2017, [cove.army.gov.au/search/node/war%20in%20the%20sand%20pit](http://cove.army.gov.au/search/node/war%20in%20the%20sand%20pit) (retrieved 27 April 2020).

2 Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force, *Afghanistan Inquiry Report* ('the Brereton Report'), [afghanistainquiry.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/IGADF-Afghanistan-Inquiry-Public-Release-Version.pdf](http://afghanistainquiry.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/IGADF-Afghanistan-Inquiry-Public-Release-Version.pdf) (retrieved 24 November 2020).

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