

## Sanity Prevails.

On the 23 June, 2011, Dan Oakes and Rafail Epstein reported in the Sydney Morning Herald that the two Australian Army commandos accused of killing five Afghan children in a disastrous night-time raid have been exonerated, ending a two-year battle to clear their names. Apart from that it was kept pretty quiet – why was that???

smh.com.au  
The Sydney Morning Herald

The two special forces soldiers, known only as Sergeant J and Lance Corporal D, released a statement last night saying they would carry the burden of the civilians' deaths for the rest of their lives and thanking their fellow soldiers for standing by them throughout their ordeal. The *Herald* revealed that the military prosecutor, Lyn McDade (Director of Military Prosecutions) who made the decision to charge them, was recently reappointed for another two years. The *Herald* understands there was deep resentment within the senior ranks of the Australian Defence Force over Brigadier McDade's reappointment, because of her decision to prosecute the commandos.



McDade, was fiercely criticised for her decision to charge the two men. She was dealt a heavy blow last month when a military judge threw out manslaughter charges against the two commandos **before the trial began**.

A third soldier, the lieutenant-colonel in command of the raid, still faces a court martial at which the prosecutor will allege there were serious flaws in the planning of the raid.

The two commandos were part of a small force that approached a compound in Oruzgan province on the night of February 12, 2009. After being fired at by a man from the compound, they returned fire and threw grenades into the room the gunfire was coming from, killing five children and an adult. The commandos were charged over the deaths last September.

The prosecution was the first time Australian soldiers had been charged for civilian casualties resulting from troops fighting under orders. "We need no reminding that our actions contributed to the death of five innocent children. We will carry that burden for the rest of our lives," the two soldiers said. "However, we would like people to understand two things: firstly, we did not choose to fight the Afghan male in proximity to children. He forced his callous and reckless choice upon all of us. Secondly, if there had been another reasonable option available to us that reduced the risk of injury to civilians, we wouldn't have hesitated to take it."

"We think it is important to remember that throughout our court martial, the prosecution refused to say what other option we should have taken. We don't think there was one."

*(What next? Issue the blokes with blanks so they can't hurt anybody – it's a bloody war!!! I find the whole episode amazing, obviously this McDade person has never been in a war zone – tb.)*

## **UPDate.**

### **Defence drops last of Afghan raid charges.**

AAP August 30, 2011

Legal action has finally ended against a group of Australian commandos involved in a disastrous raid in which six Afghan civilians died. The Director of Military Prosecutions on Monday (29 Aug 2011) applied formally to withdraw the last of the charges against a regular army officer. The Judge Advocate ordered a charge of failing to comply with a general order and in the alternative, prejudicial conduct, be dropped.

Defence said all legal processes relating to charges over the incident had now been concluded. The charges stemmed from a raid conducted by members of the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) in Afghanistan on February 12, 2009.

Defence force chief General David Hurley said Defence was committed to proper processes to ensure those charged received a fair trial and the integrity of the military legal process was preserved. "The legal processes that were adhered to in relation to this matter were independent of the chain of command," he said in a statement.



Defence Minister Stephen Smith said he would now ask the director of Military Prosecutions Brigadier Lyn McDade to provide a comprehensive assessment of the case and of circumstances which led to it being finalised. (He should also ask for her resignation - tb)

What a mitigating disaster....Mr Smith said these were the first charges for manslaughter in the theatre of war for a very long time. "It is important, given the opportunity, just to run the ruler over the system, given this is the first time we have experienced such matters in living memory," he told ABC television.

"It would of course would be entirely inappropriate to do such a thing in the midst, or in the course, of such proceedings."

Mr Smith said he would make a judgement on whether that assessment could be publicly released, taking advice from General Hurley and Defence Department secretary Duncan Lewis.

## **Carbon Dioxide Price - Veteran Community**

The Federal Government is determined to introduce a Carbon Dioxide tax on the Australian Community, whether it wants it or not and has accepted that the tax will increase prices of all goods and services across the board.

Details of the Carbon Dioxide Tax were released on the 10th July and from next year, large businesses that pollute the atmosphere by pumping out CO<sub>2</sub> will be taxed and to compensate

for the flow on increase in the cost of living, compensation payments will be made to certain individuals to offset these increases.

The carbon dioxide tax is proposed to commence on 1 July 2012 and for three years will be a fixed price and then the scheme will move to an emissions trading scheme (ETS) where the ongoing price will be set by the market.

The tax will start at \$23 per tonne of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere and will rise at 2.5% per annum in real terms until 1 July 2015 when the market-linked price will kick in. It is expected that around (initially) 500 businesses will be required to pay for their pollution. The aim of the exercise is to encourage those businesses to reduce energy consumption and move to a cleaner source of energy. The tax is expected to cause higher prices for consumers so the government has proposed to redirect over half of the tax collected to help with higher costs in living expenses. The tax collected will also be used to provide grants and other incentive programs to help with a transition to cleaner energy.



The table below provides a summary of the proposed compensation measures. The measures are subject to legislation being passed and could be subject to change. They are generally proposed to commence from 1 July 2012.

Around 350,000 in the veteran community will benefit from this package of additional payments. The proposed benefits are:

- A nine month up-front advance lump sum will be paid in June 2012, called the Clean Energy Advance.
- In March 2013, an ongoing supplement will be paid, with a choice of either a fortnightly or quarterly payment called the Clean Energy Supplement.
- All service pensioners (full and part), disability pensioners and war widow(er)s will receive both the Clean Energy Advance and the Clean Energy Supplement.
- Assistance for service pensioners and war widow(er)s will be calculated on 1.7% of the maximum rate of service pension or widow(er)'s pension.
- Assistance for General Rate disability pensioners, including those receiving less than 100% of the General Rate, will be calculated on 1.7% of the General Rate of disability pension under the VEA.
- Assistance for beneficiaries receiving an Above General Rate of disability pension (Special Rate, Intermediate Rate or Extreme Disablement Adjustment) will be calculated on the basis of 1.7% of the payment being received.
- Veterans on a disability pension and service pension receive both payments.

Payments will also be made to:

- Wholly Dependent Partners and Permanent Impairment payees under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*
- Partner service pensioners who receive Family Tax Benefit
- Veterans and their partners in receipt of the Seniors Supplement

- Children of veterans and members receiving payments under the VCES or MRCAETS
- Veterans not receiving income support or seniors supplement may benefit through the tax system.

The following tables set out the amounts announced for veterans, their families and war widow(er)s as part of the Government's introduction of a carbon dioxide price – you print it out [HERE](#) and you can read more about it [HERE](#)

	<b>Upfront assistance (9 month advance paid June 2012)</b>	<b>Ongoing assistance (from March 2013)</b>
<b>Service pension (single)</b>	\$250.00	\$13.50 per fortnight
<b>Service pension (partnered -</b>	\$190.00	\$10.20 per fortnight
<b>War Widow(er)s</b>	\$260.00	\$13.80 per fortnight
<b>10% - 100% disability</b>	\$132.30	\$7.40 per fortnight
<b>EDA rate</b>	\$206.60	\$11.50 per fortnight
<b>Intermediate rate</b>	\$253.40	\$14.10 per fortnight
<b>Special rate</b>	\$374.40	\$20.90 per fortnight
<b>MRCA wholly dependent</b>	\$260.00	\$13.80 per fortnight
<b>MRCA permanent impairment</b>	\$132.30	\$7.40 per fortnight
<b>MRCA Special Rate DP</b>	\$374.40	\$20.90 per fortnight
<b>Seniors supplement (single)</b>	\$250.00	\$13.50 per fortnight (paid quarterly)
<b>Seniors supplement (partnered –</b>	\$190.00	\$10.20 per fortnight (paid quarterly)
<b>Carer Payment (single) - paid by Centrelink</b>	\$250.00	\$13.50 per fortnight
<b>Carer Payment (partnered) - paid by Centrelink</b>	\$190.00	\$10.20 per fortnight

	<b>Upfront assistance (12 month advance paid June 2012)</b>	<b>Upfront assistance (6 month advance paid July 2013)</b>	<b>Ongoing assistance (from January 2014)</b>
<b>VCES and MRCAETS (at home, 16-17 years</b>	\$110.00	\$60.00	\$4.00
<b>VCES and MRCAETS (at home, 18 or older)</b>	\$130.00	\$70.00	\$4.80
<b>VCES and MRCAETS (living away from</b>	\$190.00	\$100.00	\$7.20
<b>VCES and MRCAETS (homeless)</b>	\$190.00	\$100.00	\$7.20



EDA	=	Extreme Disablement Adjustment
DP	=	Disability Pension
MRCA	=	Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act
MRCAETS Scheme	=	Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training
VCES	=	Veterans' Children Education Scheme.
VEA	=	Veterans Entitlements Act

[HERE'S](#) the media release from the Minister.

## What are we doing?

Recently the Wall Street Journal had an article on the Australian Government's proposed Carbon Tax. It is compelling reading.

You can see it [HERE](#). And there's [THIS](#)



## The Role of Carbon Dioxide in the Atmosphere.

Carbon dioxide is essential to photosynthesis in plants and other photoautotrophs and in 2011 was present in the atmosphere in quantities of approximately 391 ppm (parts per million) by volume – that's 0.039%. Despite its relatively small overall concentration in the atmosphere and apart from being absolutely essential for plant growth and therefore absolutely essential for our continued survival, it is an important component of Earth's atmosphere because it absorbs and emits infrared radiation at certain wavelengths.

This absorption contributes to the greenhouse effect though water vapour, which is present in concentrations of practically zero over dry desert regions to about 4% over oceans has a far greater effect. The present level of CO<sub>2</sub> is higher than at any time during the last 800 thousand years and likely higher than in the past 20 million years.

**Because I'm a man**, I can be relied upon to purchase basic groceries at the store, like beer, milk or bread. But I cannot be expected to find things like exotic cheeses or tofu. For all I know, they are the same thing.

## Irony??



[Home Harvest® Garden Supply](#), a company that operates out of Michigan in the US, says that research has shown that in most cases the rate of plant growth under otherwise identical growing conditions is directly related to carbon dioxide concentration. The amount of carbon dioxide a plant requires to grow may vary from plant to plant, but tests show that most plants will stop growing when the CO<sub>2</sub> level decreases below 150 ppm. Even at 220 ppm, a slow-down in plant growth is significantly noticeable. Colorado State University in the USA conducted tests with flowers and some vegetables in controlled CO<sub>2</sub> atmospheres ranging from 200 to 550 ppm. The higher CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations significantly increased the rate of formation of dry plant matter, total flower yield and market value.



Costly methods of stimulating plant growth, in order to market them at optimum profit, are presently being used. One of these is extra heat (with open vents). This, however, increases operating costs and decreases profit. Growers using CO<sub>2</sub> are cutting their heating costs as much as 50% while realizing extra profit from increased crop production.

And, in 2010, Dave Levitan reported on the [Solve Climate News Group web site](#) that forests in the eastern United States appeared to be growing faster than they should be and increases in temperature and carbon dioxide are the likely culprits. “We’ve known for 30 or 40 years that extra CO<sub>2</sub> and extra temperature causes trees to grow, most of the climate models predict this,” said Geoffrey Parker, of the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Maryland. “It’s just that there haven’t been many field studies that really corroborated it.”

Parker’s team used a combination of two types of tree data to put together a comprehensive look at how trees along the western edge of the Chesapeake Bay have been growing in recent years. They found that the forest, including both young and old trees, has been adding weight at an exceptionally high rate. In fact, in 90 percent of the measurements taken, the rate of growth of the trees was higher than the expected rate. The results were published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.



The researchers narrowed the causes underlying that growth bonanza to three factors. First, local measurements taken over 17 years showed a 12 percent increase in CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the area. Temperature measurements from the nearby Baltimore-Washington International Airport over about 100 years indicated a significant increase, as well, and the growing season — based on first and last frosts of the winter — has grown by about seven days.

Parker stressed that there isn’t enough information about this effect to truly assess the potential risk or benefit to forests, or to the climate system as a whole. He did say, however, that “if this is a widespread generality that this extra growth is going on, it may well have contributed to slowing the increase in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>.” The “metabolism” of the forest seems to have sped up, he said, and it is certainly possible that some negative effects could be associated with such a process.

Jeff Hayward, the climate initiative manager for the non-profit [Rainforest Alliance](#), said there is often a focus on the beneficial effects of forests with regard to climate change, but there are limits to that side of the story. “One spin on this story might be, ‘Wow, yippee, trees might be taking up more extra carbon, and they’re growing faster and getting bigger. Isn’t this a positive thing?’” Hayward said. However, both Hayward and Parker pointed out that this trend is unlikely to continue indefinitely. At a certain point, other limiting factors including nutrients and available moisture will limit the rate of the trees’ growth.

And even if the increased carbon dioxide could be adding mass to certain forests, there are well-documented negative effects that climate change is having on forests as well. The most striking of these may be the ongoing invasion of pine bark beetles over vast swaths of the Rockies, where millions of trees are being consumed by the beetle infestation. In British Columbia alone, an area bigger than Ireland has already been largely destroyed, and the unprecedented beetle swarms have been linked to warming temperatures.



Another study examining how climate change may be affecting forests looked to the north, where vegetation will most likely expand into the Arctic as the region warms. Also published in PNAS, the study led by University of California, Berkeley, graduate student Abigail Swann found that if deciduous trees like poplar and aspen expand into previously clear parts of the Arctic then multiple feedback loops will kick in and help to accelerate climate change.

“When you consider deciduous trees, a pathway through the greenhouse warming associated with additional water vapour is capable of contributing at least equally as the change in the colour of the surface, which was previously considered to be the really important way that trees change climate,” Swann said.

Muldoon lived alone in the Irish countryside with only a pet dog for company.. One day the dog died, and Muldoon went to the parish priest and asked, 'Father, my dog is dead. Could ya' be saying' a mass for the poor creature?' Father Patrick replied, 'I'm afraid not; we cannot have services for an animal in the church... But there are some Baptists down the lane, and there's no tellin' what they believe. Maybe they'll do something for the creature.' Muldoon said, 'I'll go right away Father. Do ya' think \$5,000 is enough to donate to them for the service?' Father Patrick exclaimed..... "Sweet Mary, Mother of Jesus! Muldoon, why didn't ya tell me the dog was Catholic?"

## **The other side of the argument.**

However, in May 2007, David Chandler and Michael Le Page released a report in the New Scientist debunking the 'myth' that an increase in CO<sub>2</sub> levels would result in an increase in plant growth.



They say “It is said that the rise in carbon dioxide will usher in a new golden age where food production will be higher than ever before and most plants and animals will thrive as never before. If it sounds too good to be true, that's because it is”.

“CO<sub>2</sub> is the source of the carbon that plants turn into organic compounds and it is well established that higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels can have a fertilising effect on many plants, boosting growth by as much as a third. However, some plants already have mechanisms for concentrating CO<sub>2</sub> in their tissues, known as C<sub>4</sub> photosynthesis, so higher CO<sub>2</sub> will not boost the growth of C<sub>4</sub> plants. Where water is a limiting factor, all plants could benefit. Plants lose water through the pores in leaves that let CO<sub>2</sub> enter. Higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels mean they do not need to open these pores as much, reducing water loss.”

An elderly man goes into a brothel and tells the madam he would like a young girl for the night. Surprised, she looks at the ancient man and asks how old he is. 'I'm 90 years old,' he says. '90!' replies the woman. 'Don't you realize you've had it?' Oh, sorry,' says the old man. 'How much do I owe you?'

“However, it is extremely difficult to generalise about the overall impact of the fertilisation effect on plant growth. Numerous groups around the world have been conducting experiments in which plots of land are supplied with enhanced CO<sub>2</sub>, while comparable nearby plots remain at



normal levels. These experiments suggest that higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels could boost the yields of non-C<sub>4</sub> crops by around 13 per cent.”

However, while experiments on natural ecosystems have also found initial elevations in the rate of plant growth, these have tended to level off within a few years. In most cases this has been found to be the result of some other limiting factor, such as the availability of nitrogen or water.” “The regional climate changes that higher CO<sub>2</sub> will bring and their effect on these limiting factors on plant growth, such as water, also have to be taken into account. These indirect effects are likely to have a much larger impact than CO<sub>2</sub> fertilisation. For instance, while higher temperatures will boost plant growth in cooler regions, in the tropics they may actually impede growth. A two-decade study of rainforest plots in Panama and Malaysia recently concluded that local temperature rises of more than 1°C have reduced tree growth by 50 per cent.”

“Another complicating factor is ground level ozone due to air pollution, which damages plants. This is expected to rise in many regions over the coming decades and could reduce or even negate the beneficial effects of higher CO<sub>2</sub>”.

“In the oceans, increased CO<sub>2</sub> is causing acidification of water. Recent research has shown that the expected doubling of CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations could inhibit the development of some calcium-shelled organisms, including phytoplankton, which are at the base of a large and complex marine ecosystem. That may also result in significant loss of biodiversity, possibly including important food species.”



“Some have suggested that the increase in plant growth due to CO<sub>2</sub> will be so great that it soaks up much of the extra CO<sub>2</sub> from the burning of fossil fuels, significantly slowing climate change. But higher plant growth will only lock away CO<sub>2</sub> if there is an accumulation of organic matter. Studies of past climate changes suggest the land and oceans start releasing more CO<sub>2</sub> than they absorb as the planet warms. The latest IPCC report concludes that the terrestrial biosphere will become a source rather than a sink of carbon before the end of the century.”

“What's more, even if plant growth does rise overall, the direct and indirect effects of higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels will be disastrous for biodiversity. Between 20 to 30% of plant and animal species face extinction by the end of the century, according to the IPCC report.”

“As for food crops, the factors are more complex. The crops most widely used in the world for food in many cases depend on particular combinations of soil type, climate, moisture, weather patterns and the infrastructure of equipment, experience and distribution systems. If the climate warms so much that crops no longer thrive in their traditional settings, farming of some crops may be able to shift to adjacent areas, but others may not. Rich farmers and countries will be able to adapt more easily than poorer ones.”

“Predicting the world's overall changes in food production in response to elevated CO<sub>2</sub> is virtually impossible. Global production is expected to rise until the increase in local average temperatures exceeds 3°C, but then start to fall. In tropical and dry regions increases of just 1

to 2°C are expected to lead to falls in production. In marginal lands where water is the greatest constraint, which includes much of the developing world but also regions such as the western US, the losses may greatly exceed the gains.”

SO!!! Who do you believe, who do you trust, is it all one great hoax or are we on the brink of destruction??

You be the judge!!

## Another suburban myth??

This story is doing the rounds via emails – all proclaiming it to be true.

*An SAS trooper collecting toys for children was stabbed when he helped stop a suspected shoplifter in east Perth. The 'Toys-R-Us' Store Manager told 'The West Australian' that a man was seen on surveillance cameras last Friday putting a laptop under his jacket at the store. When confronted, the man became irate, knocked down an employee, pulled a knife and ran toward the door. Outside were four SAS Troopers collecting toys for the "Toys For Tots" program. Smith said the Troopers stopped the man, but he stabbed one of them, in the back. The cut did not appear to be severe. The suspect was transported by ambulance to the Royal Perth Hospital with two broken arms, a broken leg, possible broken ribs, multiple contusions and assorted lacerations including a broken nose and jaw...Injuries he apparently sustained when he tripped whilst trying to run after the stabbing.*

*One of the Troopers said, "He was a clumsy bastard."*

Like all good stories it's a fabrication but it does have a glimmer of truth. The true story is as follows:

On the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2010 those manning the security cameras at a [Best Buy](#) store in Augusta Georgia (a bit like our Good Guys Stores) noticed a shopper nicking a lap top computer. When approached, the shopper got all agro, put back the lappy, pulled a knife and ran for the door. 4 US Marines and 7 other volunteers were out the front of the store collecting donations for a kids' charity. One of the Marines saw what was happening, gave chase and dropped the shopper who managed to get back to his feet, swung his knife and wounded the Marine. His mates saw this and stepped in and the shopper was 'detained' until police arrived. The marine was taken to the local hospital where he received a few stitches and was allowed to leave.



The shopper was charged and jailed, however, he was not harmed in anyway. The broken bits in the email story have been “added” by someone to make it ‘more interesting’ and somewhere/somehow, the story has been changed to Australianise it.

## **Blonds – again??**

At risk of being chastised for picking on Blonds – again!!! you gotta admit they don’t do themselves too many favours – have a look at [THIS](#). (Sorry to all blonds!!)

A tough old cowboy from south Texas counselled his grandson that if he wanted to live a long life, the secret was to sprinkle a pinch of gunpowder on his breakfast cereal every morning. The Grandson did this religiously to the age of 103 when he died. He left behind 14 children, 30 grandchildren, 45 great-grandchildren, 25 great-great-grandchildren and a 15 foot hole where the crematorium used to be.