

VALE - AIR VICE MARSHAL BRENTON JACK ESPELAND AM



21 January 1948 – 29 September 2017

On Friday 29 September the veteran community lost a warrior and one of life's true gentlemen. Air Vice Marshal Brent Espeland AM passed away peacefully following a short illness.

A man of service who persevered because he believed his efforts would deliver a better life for those who followed, AVM Espeland is part of an unbroken chain of those who have served with honour through the life of our nation.

Educated at Woodville High School, Air Vice Marshal Espeland entered the Royal Australian Air Force Academy, Point Cook in 1966 graduating in 1969. Brent enjoyed a career in the Royal Australian Air Force spanning 36 years that included service flying C130 Hercules in Vietnam, leader of the Roulettes aerobatic team (he could certainly fly) and was selected to attend the Canadian Forces Staff College in 1981-82.

His career encompassed command appointments at unit and formation level as well as having tenure as the Air Officer Commanding Training Command and Deputy Chief of Air Force. His final military appointment was a secondment to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet with responsibility for the coordination of security and intelligence at the national level for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

A second career followed with 10 years in senior sports administration at the Australian Sports Commission with a focus on the governance of national sporting organisations, sports science and medicine and the fight against drugs in sport.

In retirement Brent worked tirelessly in support of many worthwhile causes:-

- He was National President of the Australian Flying Corps and Royal Australian Air Force Association,
- Both National and South Australian President of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia.
- Director of the Sir Richard Williams Foundation,
- A member of the Department of Veterans' Affairs Ex-Service Organisation Round Table.
- Chairman of The Board of Governors of The Repat Foundation.
- Member of the Air Force Heritage Advisory Committee and,
- Was especially pleased to serve as a member of the National Council of the Australian Air Force Cadets.

Most recently Brent was Chair of the Veterans' Advisory Council in South Australia, a Ministerial appointment approved by Cabinet. In this capacity Brent pursued a forward looking agenda that included a focus on better employment opportunities for younger veterans resulting in the development of an employment framework that will be released later this month.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Martin Hamilton-Smith MP, served alongside Brent both in uniform and in other pursuits following their service and remarked that he was proud to have served with someone with the professionalism and integrity of Air Vice Marshal Espeland.

Brent was actively involved as a founding and steering group member of the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations, which works closely with the government, the opposition and the cross benches to shape policies for past, present and future members of the Australian Defence Force.

Brent strongly believed that we owe a profound debt to veterans and service personnel and their families who have suffered related health issues and was proud to be a part of the The Repat Foundation – The Road Home, an organisation that focuses on research to improve outcomes for those affected.

He also believed that, as a nation, we make sure we have the best-led, best-trained, best-equipped military in the world but that our troops wear the uniform for a time, yet they wear another proud title, that of "veteran," for decades -- for the rest of their lives. Brent was firm in his commitment that we devote just as much energy and passion to making sure we have the best-cared for, best-treated, best-respected veterans in the world.

Brent was a man who believed there were better days ahead. His graciousness, smile, reassuring tone, and sense of humour were all qualities that helped him wear so effortlessly the burdens of expectation throughout his life and career.

Brent's approach to life was never more evident than during the last few months dealing with his illness while continuing to work tirelessly on the things that were important to him. His positive outlook, mental strength, and resilience were a study in courage that was, in short, inspirational.

Lest We Forget.