

THE AGE



INDEPENDENT. ALWAYS.



TIME TO SLEEP IN

Call for later school starts
EDUCATION PAGE 20



KIWIS TESTED AND BESTED

Australia romp to victory over New Zealand in Perth
SPORT PAGE 48

'WE DON'T GIVE UP'

White Island search goes on as death toll rises
NEWS PAGE 8



'AFGHAN EXECUTED'

New AFP probe of war hero

EXCLUSIVE
Nick McKenzie
Chris Masters

The Australian Federal Police have begun a second war crimes investigation into Australia's most decorated living soldier, former special services corporal Ben Roberts-Smith.

The new police investigation is looking into allegations that Mr Roberts-Smith is implicated in the summary execution of a man at a compound in southern Afghanistan in April 2009. Two separate teams of federal police detectives are now investigating Mr Roberts-Smith over his alleged involvement in the murders of unarmed men, one of them a detainee.

It makes the Victoria Cross and Medal of Gallantry recipient the subject of more serious war crimes inquiries than any special forces veteran in the Commonwealth. The former soldier is among the most decorated veterans to have

served with coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Multiple official sources who cannot be identified have confirmed that both federal police taskforces have separately obtained sworn witness statements from SAS soldiers or support staff who allege they directly saw Mr Roberts-Smith commit war crimes.

The new inquiry is looking into the alleged execution of an Afghan man who was confronted by the SAS during an operation in the village of Kakarak in southern Afghanistan on Easter Sunday 2009. The man was in a compound the SAS named Whiskey 108 and which was the subject of an assault by several SAS patrols, including one in which Mr Roberts-Smith was deputy commander.

The compound was thought to be hiding several militants and was struck by a bomb before Mr

Continued Page 6



Photo: AAP

AMERICAN BEAUTY

Tiger Woods led the US to a 16-14 comeback win in the Presidents Cup over Ernie Els's Internationals.

SPORT PAGE 48

Melbourne driving growth in economy

EXCLUSIVE

Shane Wright
Senior economics correspondent

Melbourne is driving national economic growth on the back of burgeoning finance, construction and health services, with forecasts it will challenge Sydney as the economy's most important city.

A report to be released today also shows the drought is taking a huge economic toll on parts of Queensland, NSW and Victoria, widening the gap between them and urban Australia as Sydney and Melbourne draw away from rural areas and regional centres.

SGS Economics and Planning found that during 2018-19, the Melbourne economy alone accounted for 40 per cent of Australia's total growth. Melbourne gross domestic product reached \$369 billion compared with regional Victoria's \$76 billion.

Australian GDP expanded by 1.9 per cent but Melbourne's own GDP lifted by 4 per cent. Sydney GDP at \$461 billion grew by 2.6 per cent, its lowest rate since 2012-13, to account for a third of national growth.

Adelaide's GDP, though much smaller than Sydney's, grew

Continued Page 4

Farmer leads action over Roundup Surplus plan on track

EXCLUSIVE
Cameron Houston

A former Victorian farmer will lead a major class action against German pharmaceutical giant Bayer over claims that long-term exposure to the popular weedkiller Roundup can cause non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

Nando Maisano, 77, also accuses Bayer, and the original manufac-

turer Monsanto, of repeatedly ignoring and concealing evidence of the carcinogenic impact of glyphosate - the active component in its top-selling herbicide - in a Supreme Court of Victoria writ lodged on December 10.

"Monsanto and Bayer are in possession of a substantial body of internal and external studies, laboratory test results, documents, reports, surveys and correspond-

ence evidencing its knowledge of the inherent dangers of the use and exposure to its Roundup products," the writ claims.

Mr Maisano owned farms in Lower Crawford, Carngham and Clarkefield, where he used Roundup since 1976 to rid his properties of this, build fire-breaks and remove weeds from his vegetable

Continued Page 4

Shane Wright

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg will stand by the Morrison government's promise of a budget surplus in his mid-year update of the nation's finances even as the drought and spending-averse consumers cut federal revenue.

Mr Frydenberg will today use the mid-year economic and fiscal outlook to confirm the government

remains on track to deliver a surplus in 2019-20 - the first surplus in 11 years - despite a hit to company tax and lower GST which will leave the states and territories worse off.

The budget, released in April, forecast a surplus this financial year of \$7.1 billion to be followed by an \$11 billion surplus the following year.

REPORT Page 4

"Mum says she doesn't want me to grow up poor like her."

Help a child like Beth* break the cycle of poverty.

*Names have been changed to protect the identity of the child and their family.



everyone's family

Change the course of a child's life this Christmas.

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Second war crimes investigation into ex-corporal Ben Roberts-Smith

From Page 1

Roberts-Smith's patrol entered. Federal police are investigating witness testimony from SAS members that has implicated Mr Roberts-Smith in the execution of an unarmed Afghan man with a prosthetic leg who was found at the entrance to Whiskey 108.

Defence sources have confirmed at least three SAS members have agreed to testify against Mr Roberts-Smith in a criminal prosecution, alleging the famous soldier executed the man. Under the laws of war, if the man did not pose a threat he should have been detained.

A photo of the dead man obtained by *The Age* shows him lying on his back with no weapon in sight.

In September, *The Age* revealed that another AFP taskforce was investigating Mr Roberts-Smith over allegations he kicked a handcuffed and innocent detainee, Ali Jan, off a cliff in the village of Darwan in September 2012. The Darwan taskforce has also obtained co-operation from SAS witnesses and support staff willing to testify on oath against the decorated soldier.

Defence and Afghan based sources said their testimony was supported by Afghan witnesses who earlier this year gave sworn statements to the AFP in Kabul.

Mr Roberts-Smith denies all wrongdoing, has a separate account of the day in question and says his accusers are jealous rivals. Sources from the special forces said that, in the case of the Darwan incident, Mr Roberts-Smith was relying on the testimony of an SAS soldier who claimed it was he who shot Ali Jan because he was a hostile insurgent posing a risk to Australian soldiers.

But multiple special forces insiders have said that claim is contradicted by witnesses who say they saw Ali Jan first detained and then kicked off a small cliff by Mr Roberts-Smith.

In addition to the police probes, Mr Roberts-Smith is at the centre of the biggest investigation in recent military history, known as the Brereton inquiry. The royal commission-style probe by the defence Inspector-General is investigating him and a small number of other soldiers over allegations of war crimes in Afghanistan, specifically that detainees were summarily executed.

The defence force chief Angus Campbell commissioned the independent inquiry in 2016. It is led by NSW Supreme Court of Appeal Justice Paul Brereton.

Mr Roberts-Smith has previously attacked the inquiry after learning it was investigating multiple allegations about his involvement in summary executions, the brutalisation of detainees and the bastardisation of soldiers under his command.

Mr Roberts-Smith recently attacked senior defence leaders



Under investigation: (clockwise from main) Ben Roberts-Smith, the body of an Afghan killed in 2009, and Ali Jan's widow and brother Bibi and Abdul Ahmad. Main photo: Sithixay Dittthavong

Police probe hero over 'war crimes'

AN INVESTIGATION by police into an alleged war crime by a decorated Australian soldier has led to a probe into the hero's conduct. The investigation, which is being led by the Australian Federal Police, is the latest in a series of inquiries into the actions of Australian soldiers in Afghanistan. The probe is part of a broader effort to ensure accountability for war crimes and to maintain the integrity of the Australian Defence Force. The soldier in question is a highly decorated member of the Special Air Service (SAS), known for his bravery and leadership in the field. The investigation is expected to be completed in the coming months.

The Age, November 29, 2018

AFGHANISTAN AFP confirms investigation

SAS hero subject of war crime inquiry

EXCLUSIVE: The Age's most highly decorated member of the Special Air Service (SAS) is the subject of a war crime inquiry. The investigation is being led by the Australian Federal Police and is expected to be completed in the coming months. The soldier in question is a highly decorated member of the SAS, known for his bravery and leadership in the field. The investigation is part of a broader effort to ensure accountability for war crimes and to maintain the integrity of the Australian Defence Force.

The Age, September 23, 2019

for abandoning him and disregarding veterans' mental health.

However, senior defence leaders appear to have distanced themselves from Mr Roberts-Smith after learning of the evidence against him.

The various inquiries have been supported by many serving and former special forces soldiers, most notably Afghan veteran turned MP Andrew Hastie. The Inspector-General inquiry into alleged war crimes is also backed by defence minister Linda Reynolds. Two serving SAS soldiers also backed the inquiry in a series of stories in *The Age*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *60 Minutes* in September.

The Age and *Herald* also reported in September that soldiers from the Commandos—the second wing of Australia's special forces—have confessed to summarily executing detainees.

Multiple defence sources say the Inspector-General is investigating at least eight unlawful killings allegedly conducted by the SAS or

Mr Roberts-Smith has labelled the reporting about him as false.

the Commandos, including the alleged murder of unarmed detainees and civilians.

The inquiries by both Justice Brereton and the AFP have faced significant challenges in piercing the code of silence in the special forces and Justice Brereton has faced pressure from some politicians and media commentators over the time taken to complete his inquiry. It began in 2016 and the defence department has declined to say when it will be competed or whether all or part of it will be made public.

However, the Australian military's leadership team has instructed soldiers to co-operate with police and Justice Brereton and he has interviewed more than 250 special forces personnel,

according to figures released by defence. That revelation suggests that after intensive investigations, the special forces code of silence has been smashed.

Mr Roberts-Smith has hired a team of lawyers including top barrister, Arthur Moses, SC, and a public relations firm to counter the allegations, which he vehemently denies. Experienced PR executive Sue Cato and former journalist Ross Coulthard are being funded by billionaire media mogul, Seven West Media chairman Kerry Stokes, a backer of Mr Roberts-Smith who employed him as a senior manager in 2015.

Mr Stokes is also backing the defamation proceedings that Mr Roberts-Smith has launched against Fairfax Media—now known as Nine—for a series of investigative reports about his alleged misconduct.

Last week, Nine Entertainment lawyers fought efforts in the Federal Court brought by Mr Roberts-Smith to force journalists to reveal their sources.

On Friday, the federal president

of the journalists' union, Marcus Strom, issued a statement backing Nine's legal fight to protect its reporters' sources by invoking source shield laws.

"There is no higher principle for journalists the world over," Mr Strom said.

"To discard the shield at a time when the public's right to know is already under assault would further damage press freedom in Australia."

The Age and *Herald* have already flagged an appeal if they should lose the battle to keep their sources protected.

The court has reserved its decision.

Mr Roberts-Smith has labelled the reporting about him as false and malicious, attacking it in multiple statements and interviews given to *The Australian's* Paul Maley. Mr Maley, a defence reporter, has described Mr Roberts-Smith's treatment as "demonstrably unfair" and suggested rumours or "digger whispers" may be behind some of the allegations.

SATURDAY THE AGE

INDEPENDENT. ALWAYS.



AFL CHIEF'S TALL ORDER

Gillon McLachlan on tackling the thorny issues

GOOD WEEKEND

2019 RUGBY WORLD CUP

How the Wallabies can conquer Japan

SPORT PAGE 50



BEST IN SHOW

Royal Melbourne Show's top dog does pilates

NEWS PAGE 10



AFGHANISTAN Defence Force inquiry

Commando members confess to murder

EXCLUSIVE
Nick McKenzie
Chris Masters



Anguished Australian special forces soldiers have confessed to murdering and brutalising detainees in Afghanistan in incidents that colleagues insist cannot be written off as occurring in the "fog of war".

Members of both of Australia's special forces regiments – the Commandos and the Special Air Service Regiment – have given evidence to the army's war crimes inquiry about the summary execution of at least four prisoners, in breach of the Geneva conventions.

Multiple defence sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, have confirmed that compelling evidence exists of Australian soldiers assaulting or murdering in cold blood unarmed or handcuffed detainees in Afghanistan between June and November 2012.

More than a dozen serving and former special forces members, in-

cluding high-ranking officers, stress that it was soldiers themselves who had brought the conduct to light.

The war crimes inquiry was ordered in 2016 by the Chief of the Defence Force, Angus Campbell, and is being undertaken by Supreme Court of Appeal Justice Major-General Paul Brereton.

Military top brass are aware of the evidence, the sources say, the most powerful of which involves recorded confessions from anguished soldiers to colleagues or supporters. It is illegal under the laws of war to murder or brutalise a prisoner or a civilian who is posing no risk.

Continued Page 8

INSIGHT Page 29

2nd PRELIMINARY FINAL RICHMOND 12.13 (85) d GEELONG 9.12 (66)

Dustin Martin celebrates one of his two goals last night. Photo: Getty Images

THIS WAY TO THE BIG ONE!

The Tigers have clawed their way to a second grand final in three years with a valiant comeback win over the Cats.

SPORT PAGES 52-53

1st PRELIMINARY FINAL COLLINGWOOD v GWS, MCG, TODAY, 4.35PM

MOORE THE MERRIER: HOW DARCY FOUND FITNESS

SPORT PAGE 58

GRUNDY LACES UP HIS BIG-BOY BOOTS

SPORT PAGE 56

PUNCTURED LUNG SETS THE TONE FOR GIANT PERRYMAN

SPORT PAGE 54

Thousands march for climate

Sumeyya Ilanbey

Tens of thousands of Victorian students descended on Melbourne's CBD to demand action on climate change yesterday, bringing parts of the city to a standstill.

Melbourne hosted the largest turnout in the country, with event organisers saying 100,000 people filled Treasury Gardens and Spring Street as an estimated 300,000 people marched in cities across Australia in the co-ordinated rallies.

"When I say climate, you say

justice," protesters yelled into microphones. "When I say people, you say power."

The School Strike 4 Climate movement is calling for three things from governments: no new coal, oil and gas projects; 100 per cent renewable energy generation and exports by 2030; and funding for the transition and creation of jobs for all fossil fuel workers and communities.

Placards included: "I bet the dinosaurs thought they had time too".

REPORT PAGES 2-3



Protesters march through the CBD.

New plan for trade war

**Matthew Knott
David Crowe**

Prime Minister Scott Morrison and US President Donald Trump will announce a plan to counter China's dominance of the supply of prized rare earth materials during Mr Morrison's historic state visit to Washington DC.

The "action plan" will open a new front against China in a widening technology and trade war by exploiting Australian reserves of the rare raw materials that are essential for products ranging from

iPhones to batteries and hybrid cars.

Mr Morrison arrived in the US backing Australia's longstanding ally over policies on Israel, Iran and defence. "Australia may not be America's most powerful friend, but we are certainly your most sure and steadfast," Mr Morrison will say in his prepared remarks for his welcome to the White House.

China's control of the market has triggered fears it might respond to a trade war by halting supplies of essential materials such as lithium.

REPORT PAGE 12



Hanson still artless and angry after all these years

DAVID LESER NEWS PAGE 6



Hats off to 45 years of dining out on friendship

NEWS PAGE 14

Commando members confess to murder

From Page 1

One summary execution being investigated by the Brereton inquiry was carried out by a member of the Commandos' November platoon during an operation in southern Afghanistan on October 3, 2012. The commando has confessed that he shot a detained Afghan man in the back of the head, according to documents detailing his admissions. The confession suggests that other detainees were killed in the same manner and that other commandos had participated in a summary execution.

"Various members [of the platoon] ... also carried out orders to get rid of the prisoners by shooting them," says one document outlining the confession, which has been filed with lawyers.

The soldier who unlawfully killed a detainee on October 3, 2012, also disclosed a more senior commando directed him to "take the prisoner ... and get rid of them" in a discreet location. The commando said "he was told it was OK because he was a bad guy".

The commando has confessed that he subsequently "executed with his pistol" the prisoner, whom he describes as an "innocent man".

Many of the most serious acts detailed in confessions or direct witness testimony - which *The Age* and *60 Minutes* have uncovered and confirmed using multiple

sources - occurred in 2012, during the 18th deployment of special forces to Afghanistan. Defence sources said all incidents are under investigation by the Brereton inquiry.

As in the case of a royal commission, soldiers who confess or honestly testify about a war crime before an Inspector-General's inquiry cannot have their admissions used against them in a criminal prosecution.

The commando has confessed he shot a detained Afghan man in the back of the head.

Those who lie, however, or who are the subject of corroborated adverse allegations can be referred to the military or civilian justice system for investigation or possible prosecution. If a war crime is proven, sanctions could range from demotion or discharge to a jail sentence. However, the Inspector-General may also release a royal commission-style public report that makes findings of fact and recommendations.

The defence department declined to respond to questions.

The Age and *60 Minutes* will reveal new details of the war crimes allegations involving Australian special forces. Many of the war crimes allegations previously reported by *The Age* have related to the Perth-based SAS Regiment. This is the first time the Commandos' special forces wing - has been implicated.

Members of the SAS have also confessed to more senior soldiers that they either participated in or witnessed the execution or brutalisation of prisoners.

One prisoner assault and death occurred on September 11, 2012, and was directly witnessed by several people, including two working with the SAS. They made disclosures to military superiors. It involved a detainee, Ali Jan, being kicked off a small cliff after being taken prisoner by the SAS in the village of Darwan. He was then shot and killed. The soldier accused of kicking Ali Jan off the cliff has vigorously denied this allegation.

The incident is being separately investigated by the AFP, as revealed previously in *The Age*.

60 Minutes will reveal more about the death of Ali Jan, including interviews gathered in Afghanistan. A mid-2012 incident, also to be detailed on *60 Minutes*, involves the suspected summary execution of a wounded Afghan in the care of Australian soldiers.

INSIDE



"If people have done things, that's up to those individuals to come to terms with. I hope they can find peace with their actions."

Australian Commando David Wegman, pictured.



Watch Nick McKenzie's full report on *60 Minutes* tomorrow night.



Call for applications for appointment to National Boards regulating health professions across Australia

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme regulates more than 730,000 registered health practitioners and over 150,000 registered students across 16 health professions. It also accredits over 740 approved programs of study delivered by over 330 education providers.

Applications are now sought from **registered health practitioners and members of the community** for upcoming vacancies on seven National Boards due to the scheduled expiry of terms of appointment:

Chiropractic Board of Australia	as a practitioner member from New South Wales
Medical Radiation Practice Board of Australia	as a community member
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia	as a practitioner member from Queensland
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia	as a practitioner member from South Australia
Osteopathy Board of Australia	as a practitioner member from South Australia
Osteopathy Board of Australia	as a practitioner member*
Osteopathy Board of Australia	as a practitioner member from Victoria
Pharmacy Board of Australia	as a community member
Podiatry Board of Australia	as a community member
Psychology Board of Australia	as a practitioner member from Tasmania

* Practitioner members from Tasmania, Australian Capital Territory or Northern Territory are eligible for this vacancy.

Applications are also sought for the position of **Chair** on the following National Boards (please note that only registered practitioners from that profession are eligible to apply and must also be applying for the position of practitioner member):

- Chiropractic Board of Australia
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
- Osteopathy Board of Australia

The National Scheme has a commitment to increasing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples' leadership and voices. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are strongly encouraged to apply, as are people from rural or regional areas in Australia.

Visit the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency's **Board member recruitment page** to access the application form and download the information guide. More information is provided about eligibility requirements specific to these advertised vacancies, National Board member roles, and the application process.

For enquiries, please contact statutoryappointments@ahpra.gov.au

Applications close **Monday 21 October 2019 5pm AEST**.

All appointments are made by the Ministerial Council for up to three years, under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

Inspire and Drive Community Outcomes



Senior Leadership Roles

Located on metropolitan Melbourne's eastern fringe, Yarra Ranges is home to a community in excess of 150,000. Covering approximately 2,500 square kilometres, the municipality includes many of Victoria's most iconic landscapes and stretches from the urban fringes to Dandenong Ranges to the Yarra Valley. With rich agricultural lands and vibrant urban communities, it is one of Victoria's largest, most visited and scenic municipalities and is home to more than 55 suburbs, townships and small communities.

Our ambitious agenda includes the delivery of a capital works program in excess of \$80 million, a new civic centre and implementation of "activity based working" and provision of hundreds of programs and projects to our engaged communities including transformational infrastructure projects, complex urban development and innovation in economic development and tourism.

Due to changing community needs and continued growth, Council now seeks applications from leaders across a range of critical portfolios to successfully deliver on Council's commitments and strategic directions. You will understand the challenges facing the Yarra Ranges community and the local government sector and have a clear commitment to improving the overall liveability for community now and into the future.

These roles include:

- Director Communities Wellbeing - Ref. 139674
- Director Corporate Services - Ref. 139675
- Director Planning, Design & Development - Ref. 139676
- Manager Design & Place - Ref 139678
- Manager Building & Planning - Ref 139679

We are looking for ambitious and positive leaders who bring high energy and an appetite for innovation. Important to your success is your highly collaborative approach, your genuine commitment to build and lead high performing teams and your ability to establish rapport and strong partnerships to achieve great outcomes for our community. Your customer-centric and can-do attitude, and change management experience will help us raise the bar in the way we engage and allow our people to deliver innovation and excellence in service delivery. As part of the executive and senior leadership team, your input into the challenges facing all areas of Yarra Ranges will be strongly valued.

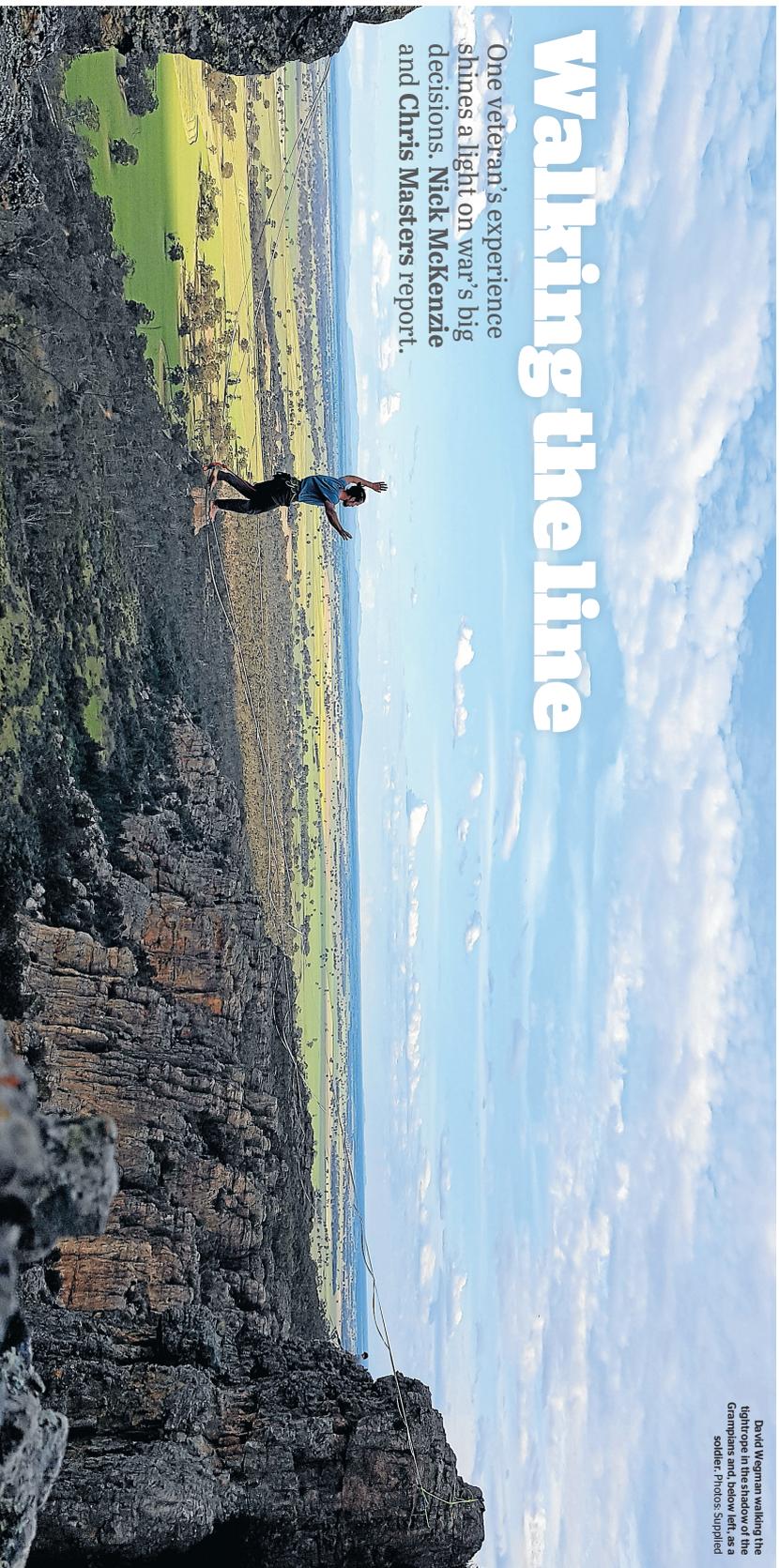
For a full position description or to apply, visit mcarthur.com.au and search under the relevant reference number.

For a confidential conversation, please contact Nick Kelly on (03) 9828 6562. Applications close: **Sunday 6th October 2019**.

Whether you work, live or visit the Yarra Ranges, you will see how much we value our natural beauty, how connected our communities are, and how balanced growth makes this the best place in the world.

Executive





David Wegman walking the high-tops in the shadow of the Grampians, and below left, as a soldier. Photos: Supplied

Walking the line

One veteran's experience shines a light on war's big decisions. Nick McKenzie and Chris Masters report.

Australian commando David Wegman noticed how much the young Afghan was shaking. He was also straining to look behind, where before, the Australian special forces soldier had ordered the anxious detainee to face him and walk.

The man was doing his best to feign compliance while simultaneously sending to keep his eyes on Wegman. As Wegman ordered him to face forward, the young man's shaking intensified.

It was the second half of 2012 and the Victorian architect, who had joined the Commando as a reservist aged 18, was on his third deployment to southern Afghanistan as part of a special forces sniper team. He did not kill the Afghan, but the interaction was a visceral reminder of the power an armed soldier has over a prisoner, as well as of the little voice in Wegman's head that told him he should somehow try to reassure the petrified man that his life was not about to end.

In the weeks, months and years after his first return to civilian life, Wegman would think about the soldier he had seen in the shadow of the mountain, wondering what, some of his fellow soldiers were hearing. By the end of 2012, Australia had deployed 21 rotations of special forces soldiers to Afghanistan. Wegman went four times. Over time he came to think about the 100 or so soldiers fighting an unmanageable war and how persistently determined they were to do their job, with little regard for consequences.

"If people do some things, that's up to those individuals to come to terms with," he says. "I hope they can find peace with their actions." Pressed further, the veteran suggests that if individual soldiers are to be judged for the things they did in Afghanistan, so too should the system that sent them there.

An inquiry into war crimes in Afghanistan started in May 2016. Headed by Supreme Court of Appeal Justice Major-General Paul Bevan, the inquiry - ordered by the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force - most recently reported that "it is not possible to predict precisely how far the Australian commando inquiry will go."

But what some clear after some 200 witnesses have been interviewed is that Australian soldiers did bad things, unauthorised, in Afghanistan and that we should ignore the claims of critics who demand the inquiry, a whitewash that needs to be wound up. Australian soldiers have confessed to everything from drunken, inhuman

source have confirmed, and in at least one case have cited pressure from more senior soldiers to "get rid of them". Details of one confession uncovered by *The Age* and *60 Minutes* reveals a young soldier in utter anguish at the war's conduct.

... that soldier, although I numbered that also been ordered to face forward, it also started back at the Australian guarding him, his eyes peering for his life. The commando later told supporters that he'd known at the time the detainee was defenceless, and also that he was "innocent". With that thought in mind, he had squeezed the trigger anyway.

US Marines war here and special forces in Afghanistan. The US has asked themselves a similar question in relation to accusations that a small number of US special forces soldiers summarily executed prisoners. The accusations have divided the US public and military and prompted the intervention of President Donald Trump.

Ackerman served with the Marines for eight years. He deployed to

Afghanistan and Iraq and received the Silver Star for valor in combat. Now an author, he's written eloquently about a soldier's "godlike powers" to "choose who to live and who dies". Ackerman's Silver Star was earned after Iraq and has since endured a long career in the intelligence industry. He's written a book, *Killing an Estimated 30 enemy fighters*.

In his recent book *Peace and Names*, Ackerman describes one of his harrowing Marine memories who would change his soldiers' attitude by telling them: "One of the most noble things you can do is kill the enemy."

Major-General Sengulhan blamed a collapse of leadership, "ethics" and government policy that exhausted special forces through multiple deployments to Afghanistan. But he also singled out the failure by individuals to take responsibility for their actions. A growing body of evidence and anecdotes led to a report on the actions that were undertaken on the ground.

Major-General Jeff Sengulhan

But the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were fought among civilians rather than against a clearly defined enemy. Ackerman says the US had a "strategy" before we "went started fighting". Without a clear outcome to fight for, soldiers fought instead for each other and for a shared sense of what was just. Like Wegman, Ackerman relied on a little voice in his head to navigate decisions made in a complex war against an uncertain war and killing has become a constant part of the war.

His experience of war and killing has made him a vocal critic of the US and those who use the "fog of war" argument to justify atrocities. "I don't know how we got to this place where former soldiers need to be reminding the general public that we don't execute prisoners," he says.

"There's so few things in war that are black and white. That actually happens to be one of the few things that is and if we allow ourselves to believe

He thought I was going to shoot him in the back of the head and that if he stopped looking at me, he'd be dead."

By 2012, the Australian mission in Afghanistan had been going for 11 years and David Wegman says the mood had changed. The US had coalition's military justice system disintegrating, splitting out detainees almost as soon as they were arrested. When those former prisoners were found to have been summarily responsible for the deaths of coalition soldiers, there was a collective hardening of the heart.

Major-General Jeff Sengulhan

Major-General Sengulhan blamed a collapse of leadership, "ethics" and government policy that exhausted special forces through multiple deployments to Afghanistan. But he also singled out the failure by individuals to take responsibility for their actions. A growing body of evidence and anecdotes led to a report on the actions that were undertaken on the ground.

Major-General Sengulhan

things working". The nature of war is inherently chaotic, and so you need to be constantly revisiting your policy, adapting and changing, and I don't think we saw that."

Wegman now 38, out of the Army since 2014, is now a senior partner in Victoria. Last year with Hastie and Ackerman he looked beyond the guilt and self-remuneration that ornaments some returning veterans. While no defined rule of engagement justified the execution of detainees, in an increasingly messy war, there was latitude in interpreting what constituted a threat.

Wegman exemplified the eclecticism of the special forces community. The trained architect comes across as more bipartite than alpha male. And like many returning veterans, he has been forced to relearn how to confront the demons that were part of his life in the shadows of the Grampians, we saw in the shadow of the mountain, wondering what the hell was going on.

Among the clinicians are fellow veterans. The rare accommodation and the natural beauty of the surrounds is an ideal environment to reflect on some conundrums. What was the purpose of the Australian mission? What were the consequences of the war? What was not the job of ordinary soldiers, but the job of ordinary soldiers, but without answers, they were forced to search within for the "little voice".

Those who ignored that voice were putting themselves in danger of what psychologists have as "moral injury" - the psychic wounds from such incidents that are not treated with trauma therapy, but with a "moral injury" that is not treated with trauma therapy, but with a "moral injury" that is not treated with trauma therapy.

When asked about moral authority on the battlefield, Wegman becomes animated. "It's absolutely essential. The second that you send your own sense of what is right you've lost the game. Those old adages [like] 'I'm not the only one who's suffering in the game' are the ones who suffer in the game."

Which is McKenzie's full report on *60 Minutes* on Sunday night.

David Wegman, former Commando



A growing body of evidence from the past decade suggests that the ethics of some have been deeply compromised.

Major-General Jeff Sengulhan



He thought I was going to shoot him in the back of the head and that if he stopped looking at me, he'd be dead."

David Wegman, former Commando