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From: [Canberra Times public service team](#)
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Subject: More proof transparency is not the enemy
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More proof transparency is not the enemy

Hello readers,

With the release of the Brereton report last week confirming what had long been suspected, that Australian special forces soldiers are accused of committing heinous crimes during the Afghanistan War, the nation has been dealt a heavy blow.

There's not an Australian school student who isn't introduced to the Anzac

legend and this has been expanded to encapsulate diggers both historic and modern. Aussie diggers are always painted as the hero, and to be confronted with the knowledge they are also allegedly capable of committing atrocities has been a hard pill to swallow for many.

This has been particularly true for the veteran community, the vast majority of which served with decency and integrity and are rightly appalled by what their fellow soldiers are alleged to have done. Our managing editor, John-Paul Moloney, [observed that Canberra is, among other things, a Defence town](#), and these revelations will have hit our community particularly hard.

He also noted this saga has been conducted under a veil of secrecy, both by a government and Defence Force that does not appreciate transparency. It took the bravery of whistleblowers and the actions of a group of the most senior commanders, notably including ADF Chief General Angus Campbell, to ensure this no longer remained in the shadows.

Liberal MP and former special forces soldier Andrew Hastie this week called for greater oversight of the Defence Force and Defence Department, by both the media and Parliament. He went so far as to suggest that had the media been given greater access to special forces units, perhaps some of the alleged crimes in the Brereton report would not have occurred. With greater transparency and accountability crucial to ensuring actions such as those alleged never occur in future, those in the Defence media behemoth designed to obfuscate at every turn should be on notice.

Columnist Jack Waterford argued politicians, ultimately responsible for deploying our troops and therefore fostering the culture in Australia's Defence Force, got off lightly [by being essentially exonerated for the alleged war crimes committed on their watch](#). Nicholas Stuart articulated how Australia's tactics in Afghanistan, [especially the over-reliance on special forces regiments](#), were always doomed to fail. He argued the atrocities allegedly perpetrated by Australian soldiers played into the hands of the Taliban who could then easily paint the foreign forces as the enemy.

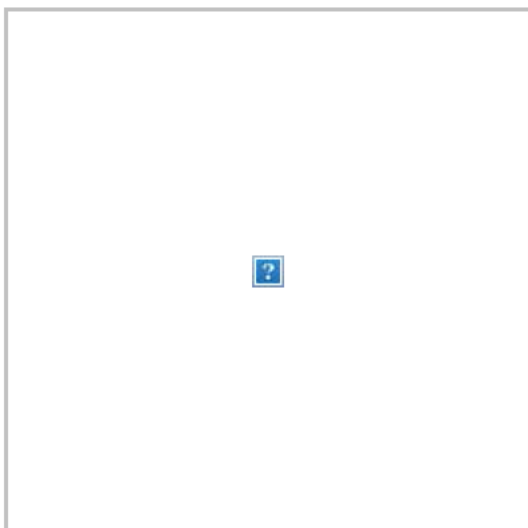
While the release of the Brereton report represents the culmination of years of complicated work, it is really only the beginning. The Defence Force will face years of further investigations, prosecutions and cultural overhauls. Hopefully this will be conducted in a more transparent manner to ensure the media, including the *Canberra Times* team, can continue to bring you these hugely important stories.

Thank you for reading,
Elliot Williams
Canberra Times public service reporter

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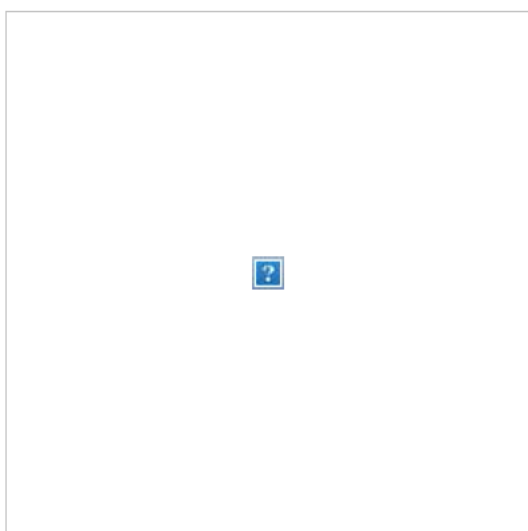
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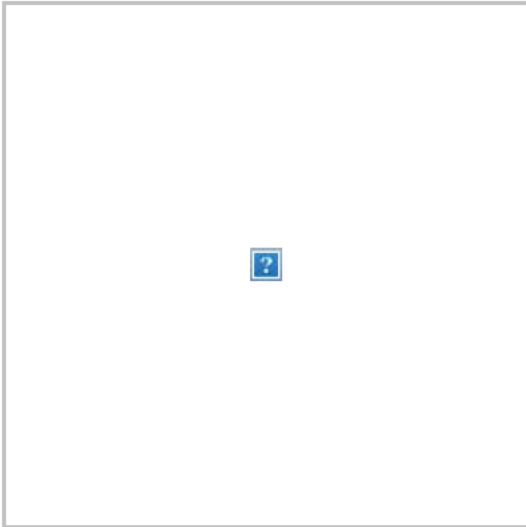
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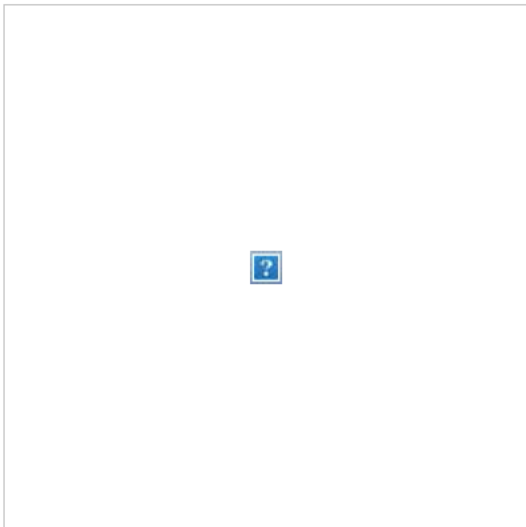
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Subscriber only: The Auditor-General has warned the ABS to lift its game and implement the lessons of the 2016 census meltdown.



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No jab, no fly: who decides on a vaccine mandate?

Qantas CEO Alan Joyce has fired the starting gun on COVID-19 travel rules - and it's sparked a debate on whether politicians should step in.