

*On the evening of Wednesday 12 June 1996, two Army Black Hawk Helicopters from 5 Aviation Regiment collided in mid-air and crashed at the High Range Training Area, south west of Townsville, Queensland, during a training exercise with the Special Air Service Regiment. Black Hawk 1, on crashing to the ground upside down, burst into flames and was quickly engulfed. The second helicopter, Black Hawk 2, crash landed and also rapidly burst into flames. The situation was made even more hazardous due to live ammunition and explosives being on board the aircraft at the time.*

## AUSTRALIAN BRAVERY DECORATIONS

### Awarded the Star of Courage:

#### Corporal Dominic **Boyle**

For conspicuous courage at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

Corporal Boyle was aboard Black Hawk 2 when it crashed. Although he sustained a fractured left elbow in the crash, he placed the lives and welfare of others above his own safety. He made numerous attempts to save those trapped, to free the bodies of those killed in the wreck of the burning fuselage and to quell the fire with extinguishers. With complete disregard for his own safety, he entered and re-entered the wreckage of Black Hawk 2, despite the added danger of exploding ammunition and devices. When ordered to, he left the wreckage to obtain treatment for his arm and, during the evacuation trip to hospital, performed cardio-pulmonary resuscitation on another injured airman.

#### Corporal Gregory **Kirkham**

For conspicuous courage at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

Corporal Kirkham was an Aircrewman Loadmaster in Black Hawk 2 which crash landed and rapidly burst into flames. Corporal Kirkham left his aircraft and proceeded to the wreck of Black Hawk 1 which was upside down and burning fiercely. He discovered a badly injured soldier in the doorway of the aircraft and using a pocket knife began to cut him free of his harness. He was soon joined by another member who assisted him in dragging the casualty clear of the burning wreck. Despite the great danger to himself from fire and exploding ordnance, Corporal Kirkham again entered the wreck in search of survivors. This he did on at least four occasions, each time clearing his way by removing bodies and throwing explosives clear. He found another survivor and assisted in moving him to safety. At one stage Corporal Kirkham deliberately placed himself against the fire to shield other rescuers from the heat as they moved through the wreck.

Mr (formerly Corporal) Gary **Proctor**

For conspicuous courage at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

Corporal Proctor was aboard Black Hawk 2 when it crashed. Although suffering from a broken coccyx and shock, he placed the lives and welfare of his fellow soldiers above his own pain. He placed himself in great danger by assisting the pilots and crew of Black Hawk 2 to get clear of the wreckage, before attempting to free others who were injured and remove the bodies of those killed. Corporal Proctor disregarded his own injuries and showed no concern for his personal safety in his numerous attempts to save those trapped and to free the bodies of those killed in the wreck of the burning fuselage, despite the added danger of exploding ammunition and devices.

### **Awarded the Bravery Medal:**

Lance Corporal Brian **Morriss**

For considerable bravery at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

Without hesitation, Trooper Morriss placed himself in great danger and showed no concern for his personal safety in his numerous attempts to save those trapped and remove the bodies of those killed in the wreck of the burning fuselage. He entered Black Hawk 1 on numerous occasions disregarding the additional danger of exploding ammunition and devices. At one stage, after being temporarily overcome by heat and burnt on the face, he re-entered the fuselage and pulled at a safety line, freeing a person trapped inside. Trooper Morriss was directly responsible for the successful rescue of a number of the injured and the freeing of the bodies of those killed.

Captain Jim **Ryan**

For considerable bravery at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

Captain Ryan was one of the first men at the crash site. He showed complete disregard for his personal safety by placing himself in great danger in his numerous attempts to remove those trapped and the bodies of those killed in the wreck of the burning fuselage. The added danger of exploding ammunition and devices did not dissuade him in his endeavours and he was directly responsible for the successful rescue of a number of the injured and the recovery of the bodies of those killed. Despite sustaining burns to his face during these rescue actions, Captain Ryan persisted with his efforts to save lives and free bodies.

**Sergeant Mick Williams**

For considerable bravery at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

Sergeant Williams continually placed himself in great personal danger in his endeavours to save the trapped men. Without regard for his own safety, he entered and re-entered the burning fuselage of Black Hawk 1 to rescue those trapped and recover the bodies of those killed. Disregarding the flames and the exploding ammunition, he continued in his endeavours to reach those who were injured or dead.

**Awarded the Commendation for Brave Conduct:**

**Staff Sergeant Nicholas Coenen**

For considerable bravery at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

Sergeant Coenen quickly moved to the site of the crashed helicopters and was instrumental in cutting an opening and freeing an aircrew member from the burning wreckage. The wreckage at this stage was in an extremely hazardous state from the fire and exploding ammunition. After this initial act, he was involved with removing the bodies of those killed from the crash site, despite the danger from the continued burning of the crashed aircraft and the exploding ammunition. Ignoring his personal safety and under hazardous circumstances, Sergeant Coenen was again directly involved in the freeing of one of the injured. He then continued to search the fuselage for other survivors, at great risk to himself.

**Warrant Officer Robert McCabe**

For considerable bravery at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

Sergeant McCabe was initially asked to establish a landing point for the evacuation helicopters. He then moved quickly to the site of the crashed helicopters where he proceeded to provide assistance to the injured and to extricate the bodies of those killed. Both helicopters were burning fiercely and there was the added danger of exploding ammunition. Disregarding his personal safety, and under hazardous circumstances, Sergeant McCabe was involved in freeing one of the injured men and assisted in the recovery of the bodies of those killed. At great risk to himself, Sergeant McCabe then continued to search the fuselage for other survivors.

## AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE COMMENDATIONS

### Awarded the Chief of the Defence Force Commendation:

Mr (formerly Trooper) Scott **Carnie**

For exemplary actions and professional conduct at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

At great risk to his own personal safety, Trooper Carnie approached the blazing wreckages and set about pulling individuals clear of the fire. In addition, Trooper Carnie was involved in providing life saving medical assistance. Faced with the most hazardous of circumstances his determination and commitment were instrumental in the saving of lives.

Corporal Rob **Cousins**

For acts of valour and exemplary performance of duty at the crash site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

Lance Corporal Cousins placed himself in a most threatening position when he ran to the burning wreckage in order to help those entrapped. Through his actions Lance Corporal Cousins was instrumental in freeing a number of the victims and their subsequent movement to the casualty evacuation point.

Mr (formerly Lance Corporal) Craig **Naumann**

For courageous and exemplary actions at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

In the face of great personal danger Trooper Naumann made every attempt to save entrapped personnel from the two blazing Black Hawk wreckages. Although thwarted by heat and exploding ordnance at Black Hawk 1, he assisted in freeing one of the injured from Black Hawk 2. Furthermore, Trooper Naumann provided invaluable medical assistance in maintaining the life of a comrade who had serious injuries.

Lance Corporal George **Taulelei**

For effective treatment of individuals and selfless action to save lives at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident on 12 June 1996.

In the face of great personal danger Trooper Taulelei assisted in cutting free an occupant from one of the blazing Black Hawk helicopter wreckages. As a Patrol Medic he then effectively and proficiently treated the injured, performing life saving procedures.

### **Awarded the Chief of Army Commendation:**

Corporal Steven **Frerk**

For acts of valour and courage at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident 12 June 1996.

Disregarding his own safety Corporal Frerk approached the burning and exploding fuselage and ably assisted in freeing an individual who was caught inside the wreck by a retaining strap. In addition, Corporal Frerk assisted in the treatment and movement of individuals to the triage and casualty evacuation areas.

Corporal Jamie **Sharpe**

For commitment and courage at the site of the Black Hawk Helicopter accident 12 June 1996.

Disregarding his own safety Corporal Sharpe approached the burning and exploding fuselage and assisted in freeing an individual from the wreckage. In addition he also assisted in life saving medical procedures and movement of the critically injured to the triage and evacuation points.