

29-May-2026

**Heston Russell regarding Andrew Hastie's comments:**

"He mentions you and says he rejects as 'untrue' and 'uninformed' the comments you made on The Karl Stefanovic Show. He also says you were not present on the 2010 SAS Selection Course, nor did you serve in the Special Air Service Regiment."

I was not present on Hastie's selection course. However, his vendetta against Ben as a result of Ben "beasting" him on his course and recommending him to fail is essentially Special Forces folklore. The Special Forces community is a very small one, especially the Special Forces Officer community. With fewer than 50 of us between the 2nd Commando Regiment and SASR serving at one time, I'm sure you can appreciate how tight communications are, especially when talking about selection course recommendations made during the Board of Studies at the end of the once-a-year course. I was within the 2nd Commando Regiment and attached to the Special Forces Training Centre in 2010 - and as a four-year ADFA and RMC classmate of Andrew Hastie, the information flow to me from the instructors was quite specific and detailed.

Have you asked Ben Roberts-Smith's mother about this? I'm confident she can verify it. I've included Sue on the BCC line of this email and will leave it to her to choose whether or not to engage with you.

In 2016, I was the Officer Commanding Selection and Training at the Special Forces Training Centre / Special Operations Training and Education Centre, working within a staff drawn from both the 2nd Commando Regiment and SASR. My time in conversations directly with people who were on Hastie's selection course, without even reviewing his file myself, completely validates my informed and true statements about Andrew Hastie's performance and the recommendations made against him on his selection course.

In 2020, after conducting the press conference in the Senate courtyard with Jacqui Lambie exposing the Morrison Government's amendment of the Letters Patent to revoke the Meritorious Unit Citation and related matters, I was contacted by several members of the SASR, including former members of Andrew Hastie's troop. I had previously met

members of that troop during my deployment to Afghanistan in 2012, when Hastie and I overlapped in Camp Russell as I concluded SOTG Rotation 18 and he commenced his.

I subsequently travelled to Perth and met with a number of those former SASR members. During those discussions, they expressed strongly held views regarding Andrew Hastie's conduct, leadership, and his longstanding animosity towards Ben Roberts-Smith, including references to events from his selection course. While those views were their own, not mine, the consistency and detail of the accounts provided further informed my understanding of matters relating to Andrew Hastie. Including confirming the aforementioned comments with Karl.

Some of those discussions also touched upon an incident in Afghanistan involving the authorisation of an Apache helicopter strike that resulted in the deaths of two children. I personally know individuals who were present at the incident and others who were involved in the subsequent reporting and investigation. As a matter of military procedure, air assets do not engage ground targets without authorisation through the applicable command chain, which is why aspects of that incident have remained a topic of discussion amongst those familiar with it.

Andrew seems to believe that not serving within the SASR is, in itself, enough to discredit any statement I make. I am privileged to draw immense support, both in front of and behind the scenes, from members of all tactical ranks across all the Special Forces units in Australia and many we served with overseas. I do not make these comments lightly, nor do I make them to do anything other than expose the truth. A truth many of us have known for a long time and a truth - including Hastie's agenda or ideals otherwise - I look forward to now finally being tested to the requirements of truth beyond reasonable doubt and before a jury, albeit it will be hard to achieve one of "peers".