

Response from Heston Russell:

When did you officially lodge a complaint with the ABC? If your initial complaint was on 17 October 2021, why did you wait a year before lodging that complaint?

I Officially lodged a complaint with the ABC on October 17th, the reason for the delay is outlined in the response to this question by ABC's Kirstin McLiesh per the attached PDF "Response to ABC Head, Audience and Consumer Affairs - extract below:

"The reason we delayed making this complaint was primarily based on our assumption that the ABC would initiate its own review. We respected the process undertaken by the establishment of the Brereton report and decided to wait for that report to be published. We then assumed that the ABC would review this story after the release of the Brereton Report in November 2020, and the establishment of the Office of Special Investigator. We also assumed that the Department of Defence would surely take up the request for this review, or any one of the respective Ministers responsible for Defence and Veterans within Australia given the severity of the accusations and the well-known impact of such across the Veteran community. However, it was only after Heston Russell spoke directly with Mark Willacy, 28 September 2021, and asked if a review was being conducted, that we released none of the above, nor the responsible ABC journalists, were undertaking or considering any review. We therefore compiled our letter and submitted to the ABC complaints process on 17 October 2021, three weeks after speaking with Mark Willacy (4)".

Has the ABC approached you for an interview at any time re the allegations from "Josh" about what happened in Helmand province in mid-2012 (contained in the ABC story published in October 2020)?

No I have not, and have openly offered to do so. Per the attached "Email - Offer to be Interviewed" I have openly offered. I have additionally spoken with Josh Robertson this week when he rang me and repeated my offer for a live interview. Ben Fordham 2GB has also offered this and to host such an interview live on his show. I would also add note, The ABC had corporate knowledge of my position and role within the 2012 November Platoon through my previous engagement and support to the ABC in the development of the 'Australian Story' on Cameron Baird VC, MG. This was during 2014 when I was the Adjutant of the 2nd Commando Regiment and was the direct contact and PR officer for the entire project, including the provision of footage for the Story. During this time I also supported and facilitated the direct access of Chris Masters in the development of his book 'No Front Line' and even personally met and had lunch with Chris Masters after writing to him to express the disappointments and frustrations of many members from FE-Bravo 2012, after reading his book and the particular information missed or of error in his book accounting for our period in

Afghanistan 2012. In relation to Josh's story, Defence has said the 'Marine heard a pop' story is not under investigation but the ABC story and headline suggesting explicitly that it is - remains online.

Why? <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/national/new-timeline-throws-doubt-over-abc-war-crimes-claim/news-story/ab976cc58f60399f5547ea164db652c6%3Famp&ved=2ahUKEwiGzrOQmsn0AhWtTWwGHefaCugQFnoECAMQAQ&usq=AOvVaw3dtsdsbU7TNHZxWTVQGZeI>

What is your response to this [report](#) published in September 2019 from Nick McKenzie and Chris Masters? Do you accept that there are serious allegations against November platoon during your time as commander?

I Did not know of this article until last month. I do not know of any incidents currently being investigated by the OSI - however I welcome their work. I have not been questioned by the OSI. When I first spoke out last year against this 'trial by media' myself and members of our Veteran community have witnessed, I simply asked that any allegations be allowed to go through the due process. The OSI has been stepped up to do exactly this, testing all accusations, confessions, eye and/or ear-witness accounts against the rules of evidence. The nature of combat and the operations we conducted in Afghanistan must be allowed to be taken through the legal process, as I myself have seen and experienced first hand accounts of individual actions and missions become different to what was originally experienced, seen or even believed. This is the unique nature that the impacts of such extreme conditions can have. I have also seen how elements of the Brereton Inquiry process may have been harnessed by some who meant to do harm to others, by even incriminating themselves in actions that may or may not have occurred. Again, the unique nature of war, combat and the operations we conducted over there leave their impacts on many in their own ways. I have seen those who have excelled and demonstrated themselves to the most outstanding and inspiring examples of human courage and example. I have also seen those who have found themselves not achieving their own expectations of performance, or those others may expect in such circumstances, and how this can easily develop into animosity, toxicity, and even destructive behaviour. I have chosen to refrain from commenting on this story since discovering it as I want to allow this specific incident, that alleges a specific individual has made such a confession to be taken through the due process and meet actual evidence within a judicial process, as opposed to the now hyper emotional and extremely complicated context we find this public discussion at the moment.