

# Fine man, warrior chief, servant of the nation

One of Australia's most distinguished wartime leaders, General Sir Francis Hassett AC KBE CB DSO LVO psc IDC, Chief of Defence Force Staff from 1976 to 1977, died on June 11.

General Hassett entered the Royal Military College, Duntroon aged 16, graduating in 1938. His career, spanning more than 42 years, saw him undertake a wide variety of positions, including Chief of the Defence Force Staff.

He saw active service in World War II, Korea and Malaya. At 23 he was the youngest officer promoted to Lieutenant Colonel during World War II, a rank at which he served with great distinction in the Korean War. As the Commander of the 3rd Battalion of the newly formed Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) he led the battalion through some of the toughest fighting of the Korean War.

## Feat of arms

General Hassett is best remembered for his achievements in command of an under-strength battalion at Maryang San, regarded as perhaps the greatest single feat of arms by the Australian Army in the Korean War.

He went on to be an innovative leader in Malaya, developing successful counterinsurgency techniques that still inform Army tactics today.

He served his nation with distinction, being mentioned in dispatches for bravery twice and receiving an immediate Distinguished Service Order after the battle of Maryang San.

A significant, enduring legacy was his reorganisation of the Army from state-based regional commands to commands based on the core functions of training and field forces. As his many decorations and honours testify, General Hassett was recognised for his inspiring leadership, constant achievement and relentless dedication to duty, in a sequence of tough and challenging appointments.

General Hassett served as Chief of the General Staff (now Chief of Army) and as Chief of Defence Force Staff.

Shortly after his appointment as Chief of Defence Force Staff, General Hassett was made a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1976. He retired in April 1977 and lived in Canberra. He was a fine man, warrior chief, and remarkable servant of the nation.

## Darwin posting

Francis George Hassett was born in Sydney on April 11, 1918. After completing his education at Canterbury High School, he entered the Royal Military College Duntroon, graduating in 1938. His first posting was to the Darwin Mobile Force, where he commanded the Mortar Platoon. Ironically, because of the constraints of the Defence Act, the DMF was officially designated an artillery unit and he thus began his infantry career in the artillery.

The experience gained in this unusual unit clearly prepared him well for the demands of war service. The outbreak of the war saw the then

## OBITUARY

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Photo By: Corporal Ricky Fuller

*The casket of General Sir Francis Hassett is mounted on a military gun-carriage as it leaves Duntroon.*

Captain Hassett posted as Adjutant to the 2/3rd Infantry Battalion. His career progressed rapidly, to Brigade Major of the 18th Brigade and, at 23 years of age, to Lieutenant Colonel and a senior staff job on the headquarters of the II Australian Corps. He finished the war as GSO I of the 3rd Australian Division on Bougainville. He was mentioned in dispatches twice and wounded in the Libyan campaign while serving with the 2/3rd.

After the war he was able to hone his professional education with a stint as instructor at the Staff College before the Korean War saw him thrust once more into battle. After briefly commanding 1RAR in Australia, he took command of 3RAR, part of the 28th Commonwealth Brigade in Korea, on July 6, 1951 and led the Battalion through some of the toughest fighting of the war. This reached its peak in October–December 1951 in Operation

## Disabilities treaty agreed

The Federal Parliament's Treaties Committee has recommended that Australia ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

"The Committee took the slightly unusual step on June 19 of tabling its recommendation [before] the final report on this inquiry to allow ratification of this Convention to proceed as quickly as possible," Committee Chairman Kelvin Thomson said.

"The Attorney General and the Human Rights Commissioner represented to the Committee the advantages that early ratification of this treaty will provide for Australia. Through timely ratification, Australia will have the opportunity to participate in selection of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. [Comprising] individuals with recognised competence and experience, this committee will monitor and promote implementation of the convention."

"As an active party in convention negotiations, the committee considered it was important that Australia continue to take a leading role in promoting the rights of people with disabilities. One way to do this is to ensure [that] we can participate in the nomination process for the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities."

The convention will promote, protect and ensure the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people with disabilities. Parties to the convention will be obliged to eliminate discrimi-

nation on the basis of disability and to enhance the inclusion and participation of people with a disability in society.

Report 92 and background information on the convention is available on the committee's web site: [www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct.htm) or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4002.

## Discrimination law

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's revised edition of *Federal Discrimination Law* was launched in Sydney on June 26. It provides a comprehensive overview of federal unlawful discrimination case law and a detailed analysis of the relevant principles that have been developed by the courts.

## Health and safety champions

The 2008 Defence Occupational Health and Safety awards were made in four categories:

Category 1: Leadership Award for Injury Prevention and Management Commendation awarded to Navy's Fleet Command for Exemplary Leadership of the Fleet Command in part Evidenced by the Efforts to Influence and Shape the Safety Culture of the Fleet.

Category 2: Best Workplace Health and Safety Management System awarded to HMAS Harman for its Safety

Commando. In this operation, designed to strengthen the Allied position, the Commonwealth Division's objective was a line of hills to its front, 3 RAR's being Hill 317, perhaps better known as Maryang San. With careful and innovative planning and decisive leadership, 3 RAR succeeded where several previous attempts by American forces had failed.

After Korea he spent several years in key instructional and administrative posts before returning in 1960 to the 28th Commonwealth Brigade, now in Malaya, as its commander. The brigade was a key part of the Far East Strategic Reserve. On leaving Malaya, he attended the Imperial Defence College in London then spent a period as DCGS and 1968 to 1970 as GOC Northern Command.

However, in the words of the entry in the Oxford Companion to Australian Military History, his most important over-all contributions to the Army were still to come. In 1970–71 he headed the Army Reorganisation Planning Staff and was instrumental in a major overhaul of the Army's internal structures. Having proposed the new structures, he was appointed Vice-CGS and charged with implementing the changes.

In 1973 he was appointed CGS of the revitalised Australian Army and in 1975 Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

After a diverse and demanding career, General Hassett retired in April 1977 to live in Canberra. He published a number of learned articles and papers on Defence topics.

## More evidence on obesity

The House of Representatives Health Committee heard from some of Victoria's leading experts on obesity when it held a public hearing in Melbourne on June 20 for the federal parliamentary inquiry into obesity in Australia.

Also giving evidence were the lead authors of a recently issued report, *Australia's Future Fat Bomb*, Professor Simon Stewart of the Baker Heart Research Institute, Professor Boyd Swinburn, Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University.

For more information contact the Inquiry Secretary on by telephone on (02) 6277 4145 or visit the Committee's web site: [www.aph.gov.au/haa](http://www.aph.gov.au/haa)