

ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
**WELCOME HOME PARADE FOR IRAQ DEPLOYMENT - 1ST BRIGADE**  
DARWIN, NORTHERN TERRITORY  
5 JULY 2008

As Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Defence Force, it is a great pleasure to welcome you home from the mission you have so successfully and magnificently undertaken in Iraq.

The al-Muthanna Task Group, the Overwatch Battle Group and Australian Army Training Team have established a lasting legacy of professionalism, excellence and effectiveness of which you all can be very proud.

The deployment helped to provide an essential breathing space in a secure environment for the people of Southern Iraq, so that they could begin to rebuild their lives and communities after years of oppression and conflict. That breathing space provided in the overwatch role undertaken by Australian forces and their coalition partners in the provinces of al Muthanna and Dhi Qar, was instrumental in a further seven of these provinces being the first to transfer to Provincial Iraqi Control; a splendid achievement.

At the same time, ADF personnel in southern Iraq have contributed to the individual and collective training of 33,000 Iraqi soldiers - a remarkable feat that has added immensely to the capacity of the Iraqi Army.

Importantly, some 250 Iraqi Army soldiers are now well-versed in the specialised skills involved in counter-insurgency tactics, techniques and procedures to support future operations.

And the humanitarian and capacity-building works you have completed were substantial.

These included more than 180 reconstruction projects involving new or renovated school buildings, sporting facilities and community parks, water and irrigation projects, rural projects to enhance crop and animal production, health clinics and power supply initiatives.

These activities were carried out with the skill, compassion and friendly goodwill for which the Australian Defence Force has been renowned over many decades.

The contribution you have made to a free and self-sustaining Iraq is significant and has been widely applauded by the Australian and Iraqi Governments and our Coalition partners.

I had the great privilege of visiting southern Iraq recently to see your operations at first hand, including visiting the last Overwatch Battle Group (West) and the Australian Army Training Team - Iraq.

Earlier I had visited HMAS Parramatta as she carried out her Gulf protection duties; a wonderful ship and magnificent crew.

In various speeches, I have been proud to say to the Australian people that our soldiers, sailors and airmen in Iraq and Afghanistan are some of the most impressive young men and women I have seen in more than fifty years associated with the Defence Force and that they have been recognised widely and deservedly for their commitment and dedication to the tasks assigned.

In the course of the Iraq deployment, six Australian soldiers were wounded.

This reflects the reality of the operations with direct-fire attacks and some incidents in which Australian infantry and cavalry soldiers have prevented further casualties or damage through their quick and effective response.

Today, I want to acknowledge the difficult and dangerous conditions in which you served and thank you for your courage and commitment, at times under fire.

In farewelling a 2005 contingent, I said that they would be called upon to put their professional and military skills to the test and that I was confident they would excel and prove the Australian capacity for initiative, commonsense and determination in completing their tasks.

That they did so, in such a competent and professional way brings great honour to them, their units and the Australian Defence Force, and you all here who have served in Southern Iraq have certainly followed suit.

Our country and the Iraqi people owe all of you a great debt of gratitude.

To the many family members and loved ones at this welcome home, may I express my sincere thanks on behalf of the Australian people.

I know from personal experience how difficult it can be for families when spouses and loved ones are away on duty.

Our country is rightly proud of its service families who shoulder this particular burden with grace, fortitude and good humour.

As this chapter of our involvement in Iraq draws to a close, all who have served there can take great pride in what has been achieved and the way in which it has been done.

Congratulations to you all, have a well deserved break here at home with your families and friends and be proud of the fact that you have so faithfully upheld the enduring tradition of ANZAC.

Well done and good luck.

Thank you.