

## Betrayal of Duty: Defence Leadership's Political Expediency Over Soldier Welfare



*“Command decisions are driven by political optics rather than genuine commitment to soldier welfare...”*

by Warrant Officer Class 1 (Ret'd)  
Kerry Danes CSM

[www.defencelivesmatter.com](http://www.defencelivesmatter.com)

### **BETRAYAL OF DUTY: Defence Leadership's Political Expediency Over Soldier Welfare**

Opinion: Warrant Officer Class 1 (Ret'd) Kerry Danes CSM

The Royal Commission recommendations have largely been treated as a minor priority, with little regard for whether they address the needs carefully identified in the Final Report. This comment reveals a pattern of inconsistent leadership priorities that represents a systemic cultural command leadership issue:

**Pattern of Selective Urgency:** Defence leadership shows urgency only when politically expedient. They rushed to implement Brereton recommendations without due process, yet treated Royal Commission recommendations; designed to prevent deaths in service; as a "minor priority". This selective action shows that command decisions are driven by political optics rather than genuine commitment to soldier welfare.

**Systemic Rather Than Individual Failure:** This leadership failure has persisted "across many rotations" of Chief of Defence and Chief of Army appointments. The problem isn't about individual leaders but about the institutional culture and incentive structure of these positions. When political appointment shapes behaviour more than military values, the institution itself is compromised.

**Sycophantic Loyalty to Government Over Soldiers:** These leaders appear more loyal to the

government that appointed them than to their soldiers. They abandoned natural justice and due process and disbanded 2 Squadron without regard for those who served honourably; actions that served political interests but betrayed their duty to those under their command.

The Mameluke Sword as Metaphor: Generals are issued a Mameluke Sword as a symbol of their appointment and position. This makes the reference to "falling on one's sword" particularly apt; a military tradition that represents taking personal responsibility for failure. Instead, Defence leadership has:

- \* Prioritised political considerations over soldier welfare
- \* Failed to provide appropriate support during processes they themselves commissioned
- \* Demonstrated no urgency in acting on recommendations aimed at preventing deaths in service

True leadership would have meant accepting accountability for these failures; potentially career-ending accountability. Instead, the pattern continues because there are no consequences for prioritising political survival over soldier welfare.

Cultural Command Leadership Crisis: This isn't just poor judgement; it's a cultural failure where the highest military offices have been captured by political considerations. Successive appointees perpetuate this dysfunction because the appointment process itself creates these incentives. The Mameluke sword becomes merely ceremonial when those who carry it lack the moral courage to fall on their sword.

20/02/2026