

ADDRESS BY
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING QC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
ON THE OCCASION OF
**PRESENTATION OF NEW QUEEN'S AND REGIMENTAL
COLOURS TO THE 5TH BATTALION
THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT**

East Point, Darwin

5 June 2008

It is with a great deal of pride that I stand here today at this historic location, addressing you at this ceremony honouring the identifying symbol of the 5th Battalion of The Royal Australian Regiment: your colours!

The tradition of colours, the strict conventions and respect accorded to them must be a matter of common knowledge for every soldier. A Battalion's colours represent all that has made the Regiment great and they embody the loyalty and spirit to the Regiment they belong to.

The significance of a Battalion's colours harks back as far as Roman times, most notably to the Roman Legion where Julius Caesar implemented the Eagle Standards of the Roman Legion to provide ease of identification and "esprit de corps" within his army.

"Esprit de corps": It's that spirit that gives a soldier strength and endurance to carry on where others might give up. This epitomises the strength and commitment of the men and women who continue to, or have served in Australian forces in peacetime and through conflict.

The ceremony held here today for the consecration and presentation of new colours for the 5th Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment recognises centuries old traditions when in the Middle Ages there were no national standing armies. However, noblemen maintained their own private armies for the protection of their land holdings for their families.

These armies carried a banner where the nobleman's personal coat of arms featured, and had been blessed and consecrated by the local priest. Eventually, these "noblemen" armies merged into a national army of which the reigning Monarch was the head.

From here, colours have registered battle honours and stand as an historic record of regimental achievement and are endowed with symbolic meaning. This tradition has not changed over many hundreds of years and is recognised globally.

On the 1st of March 1965, The Fifth Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment was raised at Holsworthy Barracks in New South Wales to support operations in Vietnam.

Within a short period of time and, with what would seem as a series of coincidences: namely, the final exercise before departing to Vietnam being named "Ben Tiger" and the task force helicopter pad in Vietnam named "Tiger 5", 5RAR soon became known as the "The Tiger Battalion". This was acknowledged by the then Governor of New South Wales Sir Roden Cutler in a speech he made in October 1967 at the presentation to 5RAR of the Queens and Regimental colours.

Shortly after, a mascot for 5RAR was sourced. A tiger cub named "Quintus" from the Taronga Park Zoo in Sydney who, with zookeepers, was tended to by Battalion members.

When Quintus “retired”, the Battalion adopted another tiger and named him “Quintus Secundus” but in 2003, with 5RAR being based in Darwin, a Bengal Tiger named Sabre living at Crocodylus Park was adopted as mascot for the Battalion.

Sabre is here today in his official capacity.

Like regimental colours, a mascot is important to the identity of a Battalion. A tiger is a perfect mascot. It is a symbol of strength and unity, it can hunt individually or as a team and will defend itself and its young with courage and energy.

As I stand here today I can clearly see the strength and identity that “The Tiger Battalion” proudly displays. Your colours and your mascot will continue to reinforce and support your commitment as they have for the last forty years of The 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment.

Henry V in Shakespeare’s play musters the tenacity of his troops

*“Once more unto the breach dear friends, once more,
Or close the wall up with our English dead”:*

It goes on:

“In peace there’s nothing so becomes a man

As modest stillness and humility:

But when the blast of war blows in our ears,

Then imitate the action of the tiger;

Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,

Disguise fair nature with hard-favour’d rage:

Then lend the eye a terrible aspect.”

Shakespeare's words and sentiment are timeless. Similarly, the revered nature of colours stands the test of time as they symbolise the courage, sacrifice and steadfastness of men and women who have served under them.

To you all; proudly honour these colours of the 5th Battalion, they are yours, they recognise your history and will inspire you towards the future.

Thank you.