



# Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck

Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources

Liberal Senator for Tasmania

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Misfire by Keay

I don't decry Justine Keay taking advantage of the Defence exchange program, having the chance to talk directly to our defence personnel in their workplace, while they are undertaking their duties and hearing their stories and getting a sense of their concerns. That is what the program was set up for and it is a good program.

I have participated a couple of times myself, most notably in 2003 around the time of the commencement of the Iraq war, one of the most difficult periods of my time in politics.

What I didn't do though was come home to use that experience as a political weapon, complete with photo.

For Ms Keay to suggest that because she had spent a few days alongside some hard working defence personnel, had a photo taken in uniform and then had all the policy answers that were better than the other side of politics undermines the program and is an insult to those who wear the uniform.

I have had feedback from veterans to that effect already.

Whether Ms Keay's handlers had decided that they needed to make some sort of statement given the real and genuine experience of her challenger at the election, Gavin Pearce, I don't know, but putting such a political slant on her Op-Ed along with the accompanying photo was a huge mistake.

I would take Gavin's view of the experiences and needs of returned service personnel over Ms Keay's any day, his experience is real, hers is fleeting and observational at best, and particularly given that Gavin is so actively involved in helping those with mental health issues through the development of the Lake Sorell Young Veterans' Bush Retreat in the Central Highlands.

Justine Keay may very well have just had her "Dukakis in a tank" moment.

A completely disrespectful move by her handlers and she should have known better.

ENDS

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