



Australian Government

Chief Scientist

14 June 2017

The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP

Dear Prime Minister,

General Sir John Monash was one of Australia's greatest military leaders. I write in strong support of the Jerilderie Proposition, which seeks to have General Monash posthumously promoted to the rank of Field Marshal.

As Chancellor of Monash University, I often spoke of General Monash to audiences ranging from students to philanthropists. His story was always inspiring. He was a man of extraordinary achievements, both on the battlefield and in his private life as a lawyer, engineer and musician.

The common thread to his success was leadership. For example, having just emerged from the monumental task of preparing the review of our national electricity market, I am in awe of the state-building job that General Monash achieved as the inaugural Chairman and CEO of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria.

Prime Minister, you are a leader who cares about the welfare of your people, and in addition you recognize the critical role of innovation and planning. Among generals leading the troops in the trenches, General Monash was unique in recognising these same values. He wrote:

"the true role of infantry was not to expend itself upon heroic physical effort, not to wither away under merciless machine-gun fire, not to impale itself on hostile bayonets, but on the contrary, to advance under the maximum possible protection of the maximum possible array of mechanical resources, in the form of guns, machine-guns, tanks, mortars and aeroplanes; to advance with as little impediment as possible; to be relieved as far as possible of the obligation to fight their way forward."

General Monash was driven by the assumption that there was always a better way to do things, even in victory. He set himself ambitious goals, and planned every battle meticulously to maximise the likelihood of a successful outcome with minimum loss of life. He was one of the first military commanders to weigh the value of the lives of his men against a hundred yards gained.

Monash made sure that there was candid communication between his commanders so that all units knew each other's goals and methods. Innovation and professional debate were openly encouraged. But at the end of the day, the hard decisions were his to make: and he made them, even if they were unpopular.

Australia rightfully has many tributes to this great man. It would be entirely appropriate to further recognise his achievements by posthumously awarding General Sir John Monash with the rank of Field Marshal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, reading 'Alan Finkel'.

Dr Alan Finkel AO