

EDITORIAL HAVE YOUR SAY heralds



Abbott fails our Diggers

TONY Abbott could not have offered a greater insult to Australian troops serving in Afghanistan than by not going there because he didn't want to miss his beauty sleep.

The enormity of what is a moral misjudgment and a political dereliction of duty will not be easily forgotten.

The explanation being offered back in Australia is that he already has a trip planned to Afghanistan and that was why he passed up the opportunity of going with the Prime Minister.

That raises the question: If so, why didn't Mr Abbott say so?

It could hardly be for security reasons if no one knows when he is going.

The excuse that he didn't want to arrive at the British Conservative Party in Birmingham "jetlagged" and that he thought it was important to do the trip "justice" is at the least inept.

A more obvious injustice is his apparent disregard for the sacrifice made by the 21 Diggers who have died in Afghanistan as well as the wounded and others whose lives remain at risk.



Whatever the excuse, this is a very bad look for the Opposition Leader. Mr Abbott was invited to accompany Ms Gillard, who not only strapped on a helmet and talked to the troops, but flew on to Brussels where she had meetings with 11 world leaders and gave the opening address at a two-day summit.

Mr Abbott should have been shaking hands with the Diggers, too, as well as pressing the flesh in Britain, where he has been playing the conservative hero who was nearly elected Prime Minister.

It was during the federal election that Mr Abbott boasted he would go without sleep for the last 36 hours of his campaign so great was his desire to win.

He should spare a thought for the sleepless days and nights of soldiers in harm's way in Afghanistan instead of sleeping, perchance to dream of an early election to win office.

The Opposition Leader has let all Australians down by his inexcusable sense of political priorities. He may carry it as a fatal wound when the nation next goes to an election.

Better that he put on a helmet in Afghanistan than a pair of budgie smugglers on the beach in Bondi.

Andrew Bolt Opinion Piece - Herald Sun, Oct 6 2010

Gillard loses no sleep over her mockery of Abbott

OPPOSITION Leader Tony Abbott this week walked into an ambush on his road to Afghanistan. Not only did Prime Minister Julia Gillard blow him up politically, she may have endangered him physically, too. Want to know how brutally Labor now vs politics? Read on. Gillard dropped in on our troops in ghanistan and — deliberately? — tried up speculation about whether Abbott would visit, too. In fact, Gillard, unforgettably, went there. She mentioned she'd actually ked Abbott along, but he'd refused. So kind of her, you'd think. So callous him. So Abbott was naturally asked by porters why he hadn't gone with Gillard to check on the men and women lang their lives for their country. After like Gillard, he'd been on his way to rope, anyway.

That's when he was caught — suddenly unable to tell a hypothetical truth, for reasons I'll explain. All he could say — and it was especially stupid, I agree — was that he'd wanted "to do justice" to his visit to Britain, where he's meeting the British Prime Minister and attending the Conservative Party conference. "I didn't want to get here entirely in jet-lagged condition," he said lamely. Too tired to inspect soldiers in a war? Cringe-making stuff. And how Gillard has exploited it, jeering that she'd managed to visit Afghanistan on her way to Europe without losing a moment's sleep. "I slept very well last night," she smirked. "I'll let Mr Abbott work out his own sleeping patterns. For myself, obviously, as you know I went to Afghanistan, then to Zurich, then came here and did

manage to get eight hours' sleep last night and that prepared me for a very long day." But I must now speak hypothetically, and hope the full truth will emerge in some not-too-distant future. A NY politician or other VIP planning to visit our troops in Afghanistan is forbidden from saying when — or even if — they are going. The military does not want them to become an even bigger lure for terrorists there. On both my own trips there, even I was forbidden from telling close friends and colleagues of my plans. So if Abbott, hypothetically speaking had already planned to visit Afghanistan on his own, could he today say so? And if Abbott, hypothetically speaking, was going to Afghanistan, wouldn't the Prime Minister have

known that full well, and made sure she got there first? She'd certainly have known it before she mocked him this week. Now ask yourself the questions that a reasonably savvy terrorist would ask. Does Abbott, the marathon man, strike you in the slightest as someone who'd be too tired to visit our troops in Afghanistan? Does Abbott, the man who's now arguing for more troops there, strike you at all as a man who wouldn't want to check for himself the facts on the ground before going into Parliament to debate what should be done? Our terrorist might then ask himself some further questions, particularly after hearing Gillard say Abbott had just turned down a visit to a country he was bound to visit reasonably soon. What would that terrorist conclude. do you think? That he'd read Abbott all

wrong, or that the reason Abbott had refused Gillard's offer of a lift was that he'd had arrangements of his own? Now draw your own conclusions about Abbott's possible plans. See how, by revealing her offer of a lift, Gillard has added to the security risk of any hypothetical visit that Abbott may have in mind? Yes, Abbott spoke stupidly, realising he could not defend himself with the truth. And Gillard trapped him beautifully in her ambush. But here's the bottom line: what does this say about Gillard's morals, that to make a political point she would risk exposing Abbott and the soldiers protecting him to greater danger? Our politicians have told us this is the Parliament of "group hugs". Of "the Age of Aquarius". Of a "gender politics". Let me know when you see it. Right now it seems bloodier than ever.