

'When the War is Over'

Australia's first female soldier fighting 'outside the wire' with Australian Commandos in Afghanistan

Cris Ashcroft launched into the international sporting spotlight as an Australian athlete competing in the 2016 Invictus Games in Orlando. Despite suffering Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), eye and hearing impairment and shoulder issues, Ashcroft proudly represented her Nation in powerlifting, swimming and cycling. [Link to RN Radio](#) Interview.



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"The games have given me the motivation to get back into life and to confront a lot of fears I had developed as a result of frontline military service," said Ashcroft.

Before Invictus, most Australians knew Ashcroft as the courageous soldier who took to Channel Nine's 'The Voice' stage, singing a heartfelt rendition of Cold Chisel's *When the War is Over*. Capturing the heart of the Nation, Ashcroft, who had spent 13 years in the Australian army and deployed to Afghanistan in 2009, was still recovering from the aftershocks of a war zone. [Link to Story and Video](#)



"When I deployed to Afghanistan, I saw things I can't un-see, and they'll be with me forever.... so many times since coming home, I've said I can't do this...I just want my war to be over..."

Few Australians knew then that Ashcroft was Australia's first female soldier to fight 'outside the wire' in Afghanistan with Australian Commandos. Australian Special Forces realised that women could play a unique role on a Special Operations team: accompanying male colleagues on raids and, while those soldiers were searching for insurgents, question the mothers, sisters, daughters and wives living at the compound. More importantly, a soldier like Ashcroft could search adult women for weapons and gather crucial intelligence. Build relationships—*woman to woman*—in ways that male soldiers in an Islamic country never could. Ashcroft's experiences are unique; she came face-to-face with an enemy that took the lives of 41 of her comrades, and triple that number of Veterans who have taken their own life since Afghanistan. *Suicide* has claimed more *Australian soldiers'* lives than any conflict.

A medical discharge in October 2016 forced Ashcroft to leave a military career she loved. But new doors have opened to new adventures – Ashcroft is training for the 2017 World Para-powerlifting championships, a qualifier for the 2018 Commonwealth Games and has her sights set on gold in the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics in powerlifting and swimming.



Cris with daughter Grace

"I love the person I've become, because I've fought so hard to become her" says Ashcroft.

Cris Ashcroft's story is one of courage and resilience. Hers is an incredible journey: a singer, a soldier, an elite athlete who truly inspires hope in winning the fight against the war within!

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