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**AFGHANISTAN WAS 'NATION BUILDING AT GUNPOINT'**

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Sky News, 25 April 2016

Liberal MP Andrew Hastie say Australia and its allies engaged in a failed attempt to build a nation at gunpoint by sending troops into Afghanistan.

Mr Hastie made the comments when speaking to Sky News about his two tours with the Australian Defence Force in Afghanistan following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001.

Mr Hastie says there was a disconnect between national strategy and what was happening on the ground.

'There was an absence of strategy,' he said.

The member for Canning says when he first arrived in Afghanistan he believed it was 'possible to create democracy it was possible to create the rule of law, it was possible to create functioning institutions in Afghanistan'.

However he came to the eventual conclusion that 'the people of Afghanistan have their own culture, for us to come over as the West and to seek to impose democracy is very difficult to do', he said.

Mr Hastie says like a lot of Veterans he came back with 'quite a few questions' about Australia's role in the conflict.

'The ideals that we were fighting for were very difficult to implant in another culture you need

certain cultural preconditions for democracy to arise and nation building at gunpoint can't achieve that,' he said.

'We set the bar high by having a global war on terror , fighting for freedom, democracy and rule of law and then there was no clear strategy.'

'We started out by trying to remove Al Qaeda from Afghanistan, Australia went back in 2006 and we started reconstructing then it morphed into mentoring, it was just very unclear.'

'It was difficult to make sense of what we were trying to achieve'.

Before entering parliament Mr Hastie was a SAS troop commander serving two separate tours in Afghanistan.

Andrew Hastie was elected as the member for the Western Australian seat of Canning in a 2015 by-election, following the death of a local member.

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