

**Statement of Adam Veale**

No. NSD 1485, 1486, 1487 of 2018

Federal Court of Australia  
 District Registry: New South Wales  
 Division: General

**Ben Roberts-Smith**

Applicant

**Fairfax Media Publication Pty Limited ACN 003 357 720 & Ors**

Respondents

1. My full name is Adam Wade Veale.
2. I am an accountant and registered tax agent, and am a director of Alleviate Group, an accounting firm based in Perth.
3. I have been friends with Ben Roberts-Smith since about 1993, when we went to high school together at Hale School, Perth.
4. I am aware that Ben received his Victoria Cross medal in January 2011. He thereafter commenced speaking professionally on the 'talking circuit', and from about 2012 to about 2014 I was his manager.
5. I have also been Ben's personal accountant since about 2005.
6. I am aware that Ben has issued defamation proceedings in relation to a number of articles published by The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age and Canberra Times newspapers. I recall reading the online article "*Special Forces Rookie 'blooded' by executing an unarmed man*" on or about 9 June 2018 or shortly thereafter. At the time of reading the article, I did not know who the soldier referred to in the article as 'Leonidas' was.
7. I also recall reading the online article headed "*Beneath the bravery of our most decorated soldier*" on or about 10 August 2018. That article made serious allegations about Ben, accusing him of being a war criminal, and of engaging in domestic violence. I consider myself a good friend of Ben's and regularly speak with him both as to personal and professional matters. In my opinion, Ben is a person of upmost

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integrity. He is a loyal friend, a compassionate person and has extreme devotion to causes he believes in.

8. By reason of the allegations of war crimes made against Ben in the article of 10 August 2018, I also then understood the allegations made in the article of 9 June 2018 referred to above to also be about Ben.
9. I spoke with Ben shortly after the publication of the said article of 10 August 2018, and we had a conversation in words to the following effect:

Myself: *How are you feeling about what has been written about you?*

Ben: *I am very angry. I can't believe what they have written about me. I feel that I am under attack. I'm not a war criminal and I did not hit the woman.*

Myself: *How are Emma and the kids handling this?*

Ben: *Emma is very upset. I hope the girls won't be affected.*

I could tell from the tone of my conversation with Ben that he was extremely upset and angry about what had been written in the said article about him.

10. I still regularly meet with many of my old school friends from Hale School. Prior to publication of the articles, amongst those friends who know that I am in contact with and friends with Ben, Ben had a reputation as being a decent and straight-talking person. Those friends also knew that Ben received the Victoria Cross medal, and amongst those friends, Ben had a reputation as being a brave and admirable person for what he did to receive the medal and in general for what he did as a member of the SAS, putting his life on the line to keep the rest of us safe. He also had a reputation for behaving in a gentlemanly and respectful manner towards women. Since publication of the articles, friends have said to me words to the following effect about Ben:

*"I guess he won't be in such demand anymore"*

*"I'm sure he was just doing what he was sent over there to do"*



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28 June 2021