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## **\$254 a week for SAS war widow**

By Simon Kearney  
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HAD widowed bride Kylie Russell been married to a federal politician her future would be secured by a generous pension.

Instead, she was married to a war hero, and faces years of hardship raising her young daughter alone.

Her husband, SAS trooper Sergeant Andrew Russell, was killed in Afghanistan last year by a land mine.

He died 11 days before the birth of their first child.

"We were in the process of building a large family home. I've had to cancel those plans -- our dream that we worked and saved so hard for, for many years," Mrs Russell said yesterday.

"All I ask is that we can live in the same financial situation as we did when my husband was alive, so we can live in the same lifestyle and not have to worry about the next mortgage payment."

Because her husband was a soldier, Mrs Russell has received a compensation payout of \$92,000, a war widow's pension of \$13,000 a year and a military pension of \$17,000 a year.

Had she been married to a federal MP who died in office, even if elected only for a week, she would have received a minimum pension of \$50,000 a year, forever linked to the growing salaries of federal politicians.

In addition -- and unlike frontline troops who cannot take out even the most basic life insurance -- an MP's family would receive a minimum life insurance payout of around \$50,000.

Mrs Russell said she was outraged by the disparity.

"Soldiers have a very stressful job and they spend many months away from their loved ones," she said.

"No matter how much politicians debate about war, they are not the ones in the line of fire."

While her situation can no longer be changed, she is campaigning for a better compensation deal for the families of troops currently being sent to Iraq.

"I understand how she feels; it disturbs me," Prime Minister John Howard told The Sunday Telegraph.

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