

Damien Thomlinson

Ex-commando, Actor, Aspiring Paralympian & Inspiring Keynote Speaker

Damien Thomlinson is an Australian veteran of the war in Afghanistan and former member of the elite 2nd Commando Regiment.

Like many of his comrades in the armed forces, Damien can accurately be described as a war hero but it is his incredible achievements since leaving the forces that have inspired so many around the world. Since returning to Australia, he has become an acclaimed actor, an aspiring Paralympian, an author and a riveting keynote speaker.

Damien's powerfully moving personal story, never-say-die attitude and incredible determination never failed to inspire, motivate and move audiences of all ages and from all walks of life.

In April 2009, while on night patrol in Southern Afghanistan, Damien's unit drove over an improvised Taliban bomb. Damien suffered horrendous injuries in the explosion which resulted in both of his legs being amputated. The damage to his body was so severe that there were many times when his medical team did not think he would pull through.

More about Damien Thomlinson:

Most people could not imagine recovering and moving on from something as debilitating as the loss of two limbs but instead of sinking into self-pity and depression and retreating from the world, Damien Thomlinson decided to treat the loss of his legs as another challenge to be overcome.

He threw himself into his rehabilitation and set about re-claiming his life, on his terms. With a great deal of commitment and hard work, incredible drive and determination, Damien taught himself to walk again with state-of-the-art prosthetic legs.

Damien has since undertaken challenges that would more than daunt an able-bodied person, let alone someone with prosthetic legs. He has participated in the TARGA Tasmania classic car rally to raise funds. He has walked the extraordinarily demanding Kokoda Track - a 96 km trek through the jungles of Papua New Guinea - to remember his best friend Private Scott Palmer, who was tragically killed in a helicopter crash one week before returning home to Australia. Private



Palmer's father walked with Damien to honour his son's memory.

An active athlete and keen surfer prior to his injuries, Damien took up snowboarding as a personal challenge. He was a member of the Australian Team for the 2014 and 2016 Invictus Games and has trained to represent Australia at the Winter Paralympics in 2018.

Damien has also studied acting behind the scenes. His big break came in 2016 blockbuster *Hacksaw Ridge*, where Damien was cast alongside Andrew Garfield, Vince Vaughn and Sam Worthington in the Mel Gibson-directed movie. It went on to be nominated for Best Picture at the 2017 Academy Awards. Damien continues to act and is President of the Australian Veteran's Film Festival.

Damien uses his experiences, passion for life and journey to inspire and motivate. His best-selling autobiography, *Without Warning*, was released in 2013 and continues to sell across Australia, the US and UK. He also commits time to causes important to him as an ambassador for DefenceCare, Soldier On, the Commando Welfare Trust and other initiatives that aim to raise awareness and funds for injured soldiers and their families.

A successful keynote speaker, Damien's triumph against adversity, positive attitude and ambition for the future continues to resonate with people from all walks of life. Above all, his incredible journey stands as proof that no challenge is too great and that the ANZAC spirit truly is alive and well.

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