

~~PROTECTED~~

PDR: MC19-066867

DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

PM&C
Secretary
Ms Foster
Ms Millar
Mr Reid
Ms Bradshaw
Mr Jones
Mr Rush
Mr Martin

PMO
Dr Kunkel

s 22

CABINET
SECRETARY

AMPMCO


s 22

To: Prime Minister (for decision/signature)

cc: Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**DEFENCE HONOURS AND AWARDS TRIBUNAL – CORRESPONDENCE FROM
MINISTER CHESTER**

s 47C, s 47E(d)



Key Points:

1. The Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel, the Hon Darren Chester MP, wrote to you on 30 September 2019, seeking your agreement to recommend the retrospective award of the *Victoria Cross* to Ordinary Seaman Edward Sheean for his actions in 1942, following a review of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal (the Tribunal): *Barnett and the Department of Defence re: Sheean* [2019] DHAAT 09 (23 July 2019). (Attachment C)

s 47C, s 47E(d)

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5. The Tribunal has provided the report of the 2019 review to the Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel because he is responsible for the Tribunal within the Defence portfolio. However, consideration of recommendation for the *Victoria Cross* requires the involvement of the Minister for Defence and the Prime Minister.
 - a. Minister Chester copied his 30 September 2019 letter to the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC.
6. A recommendation for the *Victoria Cross* is typically generated within the Defence chain of command and, if supported by the Chief of the Defence Force, is the subject of CDF advice to the Minister for Defence in the first place. If supported by the Minister for Defence, the Prime Minister's endorsement should be sought so that the Australian Government's advice can be conveyed to Her Majesty The Queen.
7. Mr Chester's letter summarises Defence's position:

"The Chief of the Defence Force has directed Defence, and has maintained the view, that no retrospective honours and awards are considered unless there has been maladministration or there is compelling new evidence not available at the time. This is to maintain the integrity of the Australian honours and awards system. ... Defence also note that the decision to award [Sheean the *Mention in Despatches*] was based on the evidence and assessment of the day and we should respect original decisions where process has been followed."

s 47C, s 47E(d)

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s 47C, s 47E(d)



12. The draft letter from you to Mr Chester (Attachment B) advises that you do not agree to his proposal, and asks him to write to the Chair of the Tribunal advising the Government response and requesting that the Tribunal advise the parties of the outcome.

John Reid
First Assistant Secretary
Government Division
15 October 2019

Policy Officer: Peter Rush
Phone no: ~~s 22~~
Consultation: Defence and Intelligence
Branch

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~~§ 22 PROTECTED~~

ATTACHMENTS

~~§ 47C, § 47E(d)~~

ATTACHMENT B DRAFT LETTER TO MR CHESTER

ATTACHMENT C INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

~~§ 22 PROTECTED~~

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PRIME MINISTER

Reference: MC19-066867

4 DEC 2019

The Hon Darren Chester MP
Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Thank you for your letter dated 30 September 2019 regarding a review of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal: *Barnett and the Department of Defence re: Sheean* [2019] DHAAT 09 (the 2019 review). I do not agree with your proposed response.

This matter was adequately reviewed by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal in its 2011-13 *Inquiry into unresolved recognition for past acts of naval and military gallantry and valour* (the Valour Inquiry), which recommended that “no action be taken to award Ordinary Seaman Sheean a VC or other further form of recognition for his gallantry or valour”. The Government accepted the recommendations of the Valour Inquiry in 2013.

Clear Government policy, informed by Her Majesty The Queen’s expressed views, would only allow the award of the *Victoria Cross* in the light of compelling new evidence or in a case of manifest injustice.

The 2019 review by the Tribunal does not present any compelling new evidence that might support reconsideration of the decision, made by the competent authorities at the time, to recognise the gallant actions of Ordinary Seaman Sheean on the HMAS Armidale on 1 December 1942 with the award of *Mention in Despatches*.

Implementation of the 2019 review’s recommendations would inevitably result in requests for further reconsideration of the Tribunal’s previous inquiries and reviews, and such an outcome would not be in keeping with the aim of the Tribunal being the final arbiter of Defence honours and awards matters.

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I ask that you write to the Chair of the Tribunal advising the Government response and requesting that the Tribunal advise the parties of the outcome.

This letter has been copied to the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC.

Yours sincerely

s 22



SCOTT MORRISON

~~PROTECTED~~



The Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel

MB19-001099

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

On 23 July 2019, the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal (the Tribunal) submitted its report and findings to me in the review of Barnett and the Department of Defence regarding Ordinary Seaman Edward Sheean to be awarded the Victoria Cross.

The Tribunal recommended that I set aside the decision by the Chief of Navy not to award the Victoria Cross and that I recommend to the Sovereign that Ordinary Seaman Sheean be posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia. I agree with the Tribunal's recommendations and therefore seek your support to recommend the award to the Sovereign.

A Victoria Cross is awarded *for the most conspicuous gallantry, or a daring, or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy*. The Tribunal found that Ordinary Seaman Sheean's decisions and acts demonstrated a special and additional element of courage, beyond what was expected of him.

Background

On 01 December 1942, HMAS Armidale came under attack from a number of Japanese bombers and fighters. The ship was struck by two torpedoes and possibly one bomb and sunk quickly. During the action, one bomber and one fighter crashed, the bomber was brought down by the aft Oerlikon manned by Ordinary Seaman Sheean, who remained at the gun until the ship sunk. Ordinary Seaman Sheean was awarded the Posthumous Mention in Despatches for his gallantry.

For a number of years Ordinary Seaman Sheean's family and others, including the Hon Guy Barnett have advocated for a Victoria Cross to be awarded for his actions during the sinking of HMAS Armidale. In 2013, Mr Barnett sought that Ordinary Seaman Sheean's case be included in the Valour Inquiry (Inquiry into the Unresolved Recognition for Past Acts of Naval and Military Gallantry and Valour). The Valour Inquiry recommended that no action be taken to award Sheean a Victoria Cross or any other form of recognition. Mr Barnett subsequently approached the Chief of Navy in August 2017 who informed that Ordinary Seaman Sheean's recognition had already been considered and that as there was no new evidence, recognition would not be reconsidered. Mr Barnett applied to the Tribunal seeking a review of the Chief of Navy's decision in October 2018 which was accepted.

Summary of Tribunal Report

At the Tribunal hearing, evidence was provided by a number of individuals including the Chief of Navy, Admiral Michael Noonan and Commander Paul Fothergill who undertook research for the Defence report. Evidence was supplied by reports of the day, historians as well as written testimonies from members who served alongside Ordinary Seaman Sheean on HMAS Armidale (only one surviving member).

On that fateful day while under attack, an order was given to abandon ship. Evidence suggests that Ordinary Seaman Sheean made his way to abandon, however instead returned to the Oerlikon where his position was actually a loader not a gunner, strapped himself in and began firing, shooting down one and possibly damaging another aircraft. Ordinary Seaman Sheean was likely already wounded when he strapped himself into the gun and soon after, he went down with the ship.

There is documented evidence from the Commanding Officer and a shipmate that Ordinary Seaman Sheean was responsible for bringing down an enemy bomber. Weight was placed on a shipmate's evidence which was published in 1945 and confirmed by the only surviving shipmate which is consistent with recorded evidence. The Tribunal concluded that the Report of Proceedings completed by the Commanding Officer, understated Ordinary Seaman Sheean actions that day.

Defence's Position

The Chief of the Defence Force has directed Defence, and has maintained the view, that no retrospective honours and awards are considered unless there has been maladministration or there is compelling new evidence not available at the time. This is to maintain the integrity of the Australian honours and awards system. The Valour Inquiry relied on this direction which resulted in its finding that no honours are to be awarded. Defence also note that the decision to award was based on the evidence and assessment of the day and we should respect original decisions where process has been followed.

Considerations

Reservations have been expressed regarding the potential precedent this award may set for other retrospective requests, however I do not anticipate this and trust that the Tribunal will appropriately manage any influx and only review what is necessary under its guidelines. It is important to note that the Tribunal has received many inquiries for awarding a Victoria Cross, but this is the first recommendation since its establishment as a statutory body in 2011 that the Tribunal is supportive following its review. Whatever the decision, it is anticipated that there will be significant media commentary.

The Tribunal's report is enclosed should you require further information on this review. Should you support my recommendation, our office will engage with British High Commission to facilitate the request to the Sovereign to award the Victoria Cross. A copy of this letter has been provided to the Minister for Defence, the Hon Linda Reynolds.

Yours sincerely

s 22

DARREN CHESTER

30 SEP 2019

OFFICIAL

PDR: MC20-043474

DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

PM&C
Secretary
Ms Foster
Ms Millar
Mr Reid
Mr
Colquhoun
Mr Martin

To: Prime Minister

VIP PRIORITY - POSTHUMOUS VC FOR EDWARD TEDDY SHEEAN

PMO
Dr Kunkel
s 22

AMO
s 22

Recommendation - that you:

1. Sign the attached letters (Attachment A) to four stakeholders regarding the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal (the Tribunal); *Barnett and the Department of Defence re: Sheean* [2019] DHAAT 09 (23 July 2019).

s 22

Signed / Not Signed

SCOTT MORRISON

Date: 12.5.20

Comments:


Key Points:

1. s 47C, s 47E(d)
[Redacted]
You wrote to Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel, the Hon Darren Chester MP, asking him to advise the Chair of the Tribunal of this decision and requesting that the Tribunal advise the parties of the outcome (MC19-066867 copied at Attachment F).
2. Since 11 February 2020, a number of correspondents have written to you seeking an update on the matter:
 - a. the Premier of Tasmania, the Hon Peter Gutwein MP (Attachment B);
 - b. the State President of the RSL Tasmania, Mr Robert Dick (Attachment C);
 - c. the nephew of Mr Edward Sheean, Mr Garry Ivory (Attachment D); and
 - d. former navy shipmate of Mr Edward Sheean, Dr Victor Leonard (Attachment E).
3. The attached draft replies explain that the matter was adequately reviewed by the Tribunal in its 2011-13 inquiry, which recommended that "no action be taken to award Ordinary Seaman Sheean a Victoria Cross (VC) or other further form of recognition for his gallantry or valour" and that there is no new compelling evidence or a case of manifest injustice present to vary this position.

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

Peter Rush
Assistant Secretary
Parliamentary and Government Branch
5 May 2020

Policy Officer: s 22
Phone no: 
Consultation: Defence and Intelligence
Branch

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A LETTERS TO FOUR STAKEHOLDERS

ATTACHMENT B LETTER FROM PREMIER GUTWEIN

ATTACHMENT C LETTER FROM MR DICK

ATTACHMENT D LETTER FROM MR IVORY

ATTACHMENT E LETTER FROM DR LEONARD

ATTACHMENT F PREVIOUS BRIEF AND LETTER SIGNED BY PM

OFFICIAL



PRIME MINISTER

Reference: MC20-043474

12 MAY 2020

Mr Robert Dick
State President
RSL Tasmania
206 New Town Road
NEW TOWN TAS 7008

Dear Mr Dick

Thank you for your letter dated 23 March 2020 regarding a review of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal: *Barnett and the Department of Defence re: Sheean* [2019] DHAAT 09 (the 2019 review). I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

This matter was adequately reviewed by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal in its 2011-13 *Inquiry into unresolved recognition for past acts of naval and military gallantry and valour* (the Valour Inquiry), which recommended that "no action be taken to award Ordinary Seaman Sheean a VC or other further form of recognition for his gallantry or valour". The Government accepted the recommendations of the Valour Inquiry in 2013.

Clear Government policy, informed by Her Majesty The Queen's expressed views, would only allow the award of the *Victoria Cross* in the light of compelling new evidence or in a case of manifest injustice.

The 2019 review by the Tribunal did not present any compelling new evidence that might support reconsideration of the decision, made by the competent authorities at the time, to recognise the gallant actions of Ordinary Seaman Sheean on the HMAS Armidale on 1 December 1942 with the award of *Mention in Despatches*.

I understand this may be a disappointing outcome, but it in no way detracts from the service, dedication and sacrifice of Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean.

Copies of this letter have been provided to the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel, the Hon Darren Chester MP.

Yours sincerely,
s 22

SCOTT MORRISON

Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600
Telephone (02) 6277 7700
www.pm.gov.au



PRIME MINISTER

Reference: MC20-043474

12 MAY 2020

The Hon Peter Gutwein MP
Premier of Tasmania
GPO Box 123
HOBART TAS 7001

Dear Premier

Thank you for your letter dated 23 March 2020 regarding a review of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal: *Barnett and the Department of Defence re: Sheean* [2019] DHAAT 09 (the 2019 review). I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

This matter was adequately reviewed by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal in its 2011-13 *Inquiry into unresolved recognition for past acts of naval and military gallantry and valour* (the Valour Inquiry), which recommended that "no action be taken to award Ordinary Seaman Sheean a VC or other further form of recognition for his gallantry or valour". The Government accepted the recommendations of the Valour Inquiry in 2013.

Clear Government policy, informed by Her Majesty The Queen's expressed views, would only allow the award of the *Victoria Cross* in the light of compelling new evidence or in a case of manifest injustice.

The 2019 review by the Tribunal did not present any compelling new evidence that might support reconsideration of the decision, made by the competent authorities at the time, to recognise the gallant actions of Ordinary Seaman Sheean on the HMAS Armidale on 1 December 1942 with the award of *Mention in Despatches*.

I understand this may be a disappointing outcome, but it in no way detracts from the service, dedication and sacrifice of Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean.

Copies of this letter have been provided to the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel, the Hon Darren Chester MP.

Yours sincerely

s 22

SCOTT MORRISON

Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600
Telephone (02) 6277 7700
www.prm.gov.au



PRIME MINISTER

Reference: MC20-043474

12 MAY 2020

Dr Victor Leonard

s22

Dear Dr Leonard

Thank you for your letter dated 11 February 2020 regarding a review of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal: *Barnett and the Department of Defence re: Sheean* [2019] DHAAT 09 (the 2019 review). I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

This matter was adequately reviewed by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal in its 2011-13 *Inquiry into unresolved recognition for past acts of naval and military gallantry and valour* (the Valour Inquiry), which recommended that "no action be taken to award Ordinary Seaman Sheean a VC or other further form of recognition for his gallantry or valour". The Government accepted the recommendations of the Valour Inquiry in 2013.

Clear Government policy, informed by Her Majesty The Queen's expressed views, would only allow the award of the *Victoria Cross* in the light of compelling new evidence or in a case of manifest injustice.

The 2019 review by the Tribunal did not present any compelling new evidence that might support reconsideration of the decision, made by the competent authorities at the time, to recognise the gallant actions of Ordinary Seaman Sheean on the HMAS *Armidale* on 1 December 1942 with the award of *Mention in Despatches*.

I understand this may be a disappointing outcome, but it in no way detracts from the service, dedication and sacrifice of Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean.

Copies of this letter have been provided to the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel, the Hon Darren Chester MP.

Yours sincerely,

s 22

SCOTT MORRISON



PRIME MINISTER

12 MAY 2020

Reference: MC20-043474

Mr Garry Ivory

s22

Dear Mr Ivory

Thank you for your letter dated 16 March 2020 regarding a review of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal: *Barnett and the Department of Defence re: Sheean* [2019] DHAAT 09 (the 2019 review). I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

This matter was adequately reviewed by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal in its 2011-13 *Inquiry into unresolved recognition for past acts of naval and military gallantry and valour* (the Valour Inquiry), which recommended that "no action be taken to award Ordinary Seaman Sheean a VC or other further form of recognition for his gallantry or valour". The Government accepted the recommendations of the Valour Inquiry in 2013.

Clear Government policy, informed by Her Majesty The Queen's expressed views, would only allow the award of the *Victoria Cross* in the light of compelling new evidence or in a case of manifest injustice.

The 2019 review by the Tribunal did not present any compelling new evidence that might support reconsideration of the decision, made by the competent authorities at the time, to recognise the gallant actions of Ordinary Seaman Sheean on the HMAS *Armidale* on 1 December 1942 with the award of *Mention in Despatches*.

I understand this may be a disappointing outcome, but it in no way detracts from the service, dedication and sacrifice of Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean.

Copies of this letter have been provided to the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel, the Hon Darren Chester MP.

Yours sincerely,

s 22

SCOTT MORRISON

Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600
Telephone (02) 6277 7700
www.pm.gov.au



PREMIER OF TASMANIA

23 MAR 2020

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

s22

I write seeking an update on the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal's (the Tribunal) review into posthumous recognition of Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean, of Latrobe Tasmania.

As you would be aware, Sheean is one of Tasmania's best known servicemen. His actions onboard *HMAS Armidale* during the Second World War are considered by the Tasmanian Government, RSL Tasmania, the Sheean family and many others to be deserving of a Victoria Cross.

Sheean went down with his ship, HMAS ARMIDALE, on 1 December 1942 after a Japanese air attack.

Rather than abandon ship, he chose to proceed to an Oerlikon gun (not his normal position), strap himself into the firing position and engage with enemy aircraft, which were strafing his crewmates in the water.

Sheean shot down at least one plane and disabled another before his ship sunk beneath him. He was just 18 years of age when he died.

The Tribunal on 26 and 27 March 2019 in Hobart, in its merits review, was asked to determine whether Sheean's actions met the pre-eminent standard required for the posthumous award of a Victoria Cross for Australia (as opposed to a VC from the UK).

I am aware that the applicant, the Hon Guy Barnett MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Sheean family and Teddy's last remaining shipmate from the HMAS Armidale, Ray Leonard, have made approaches to the Federal Government seeking an update on the Government's consideration. No definitive response has been provided.

The Tribunal is independent, expert and highly credible. An extensive body of work was undertaken in making a recommendation. It is the Tasmanian Government's view that it would be unconscionable for the Federal Government to reject the findings and recommendations of such a distinguished Tribunal, noting in the past the Federal Government specifically welcomed the Tribunal hearing into this matter. Further any suggestion that the granting of a VC could 'open the floodgates'

or is unprecedented is not true based on the facts. In short, the Tribunal undertook a 'merit-based' review and its decision should stand.

The Sheean family and people across Tasmania and indeed Australia are waiting to hear the outcome of the Federal Government's consideration.

Teddy was an ordinary Australian who demonstrated extraordinary bravery. He deserves the best we can give him.

I encourage your positive consideration of this matter and look forward to your response.

s 22



Peter Gutwein MP
Premier
Treasurer



30 April 2020

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA, ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

I write to you today seeking an update on the Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal (Tribunal) review into the posthumous recognition of Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy) Sheean.

As you are no doubt aware, Teddy Sheean, is most likely Tasmania's best-known naval serviceman. His actions on the HMAS Armidale during World War Two, are considered by many, RSL Tasmania included, worthy of the Victoria Cross.

On the 26th and 27th March 2019 the Tribunal met in Hobart and was asked to determine if Edward (Teddy) Sheean's actions met the criteria suitable for the posthumous awarding of the Victoria Cross. Knowing that the Tribunal has conducted intensive research prior to the aforementioned meeting in Hobart, and that over twelve months has now passed since that date, I respectfully request that an update be provided on the Tribunal findings/recommendations.

Edward (Teddy) Sheean a loyal and brave young serviceman gave up his life, protecting his mates to the last, is an exemplary example of the true ANZAC Spirit and rightly deserves the highest recognition for his sacrifice, from his country.

Respectfully yours

s 22

Robert Dick
State President

Mr Garry Ivory

s 22

s 22

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

I write to you on behalf of Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean's family and supporters. We request an update on the Federal Government's consideration of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal's recommendation regarding Teddy Sheean.

I am Teddy's nephew and along with my friend Guy Barnett MP, RSL (Tasmania) and other prominent people have been campaigning to see Teddy's bravery recognised with a Victoria Cross.

I have been campaigning on behalf of Teddy for 32 years.

I presented to the Tribunal in March 2019 with my cousin, s 22. I also presented at the 2012 inquiry unresolved recognition of past acts of gallantry. We and the Sheean family believe that Teddy's action on 1 December 1942 onboard HMAS Armidale represent the highest ideals of bravery and sacrifice on behalf of others.

His actions are held in the highest esteem by the Royal Australian Navy. He is the only lower decks to have a Navy vessel named after him. His story is one of the first shared with new recruits to the Navy.

Over the years I have travelled all over Australia, sharing Teddy's story. Wherever I have been, the overwhelming feedback has been in favour of a Victoria Cross for Teddy.

When I started my campaign, five of Teddy's siblings and nine of his shipmates were still alive. Sadly all of Teddy's siblings and all except one shipmate, Ray Leonard, have passed away. Ray is 96 years old and the wider family is ageing. Teddy's story will soon pass from living memory although it will never die.

This has made me more determined than ever to see Teddy honoured with a Victoria Cross while Ray and others are still with us.

On behalf of the Sheean family, I respectfully ask for an update on the Government's consideration of the Tribunal's recommendation.

If you require any further information, please feel free to contact me on s 22 or at s 22

Yours sincerely

s 22

Garry Ivory

Dr Victor (Ray) Leonard

s 22

11/2/20

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

I write to you seeking an update on the Federal Government's consideration of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal's recommendation, following hearings in March 2019, regarding Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean.

Sheean is one of Australia's best known servicemen. His actions onboard *HMAS Armidale* during the Second World War are considered by many to be deserving of a Victoria Cross.

The 77th anniversary of the sinking of *HMAS Armidale* and Sheean's extraordinary acts occurred on 1 December 2019. Of the 149 personnel onboard *HMAS Armidale* on 1 December 1942, I am the sole surviving shipmate of Teddy Sheean.

I was with Sheean as Japanese aircraft attacked our ship on resupply and evacuation mission to Japanese-occupied Timor on 1 December 1942.

We were attacked by a number of Japanese aircraft—at least nine bombers, three fighters and a float-plane. We were strafed initially by Zeros before the bombers came in and dropped bombs and torpedoes. Despite the best efforts of the crew, we were hit by a torpedo on our port side, listed heavily to port and started going down by the bows.

The order to abandon ship was given and most of us went over the side. Most of my shipmates left the ship on the port side, as the vessel was virtually down to the level of the water, where the machine gunning by Zeros continued. I abandoned ship on the starboard side, which gave me a bit of cover, and started to swim away from the ship to avoid being pulled down with it.

I was heartened as I swam away to hear an Oerlikon gun fire, reassuring me that some degree of protection was in place as we swam completely vulnerable in the ocean. After swimming what I deemed a safe distance, I turned back just in time to see the *Armidale* sinking and the last few feet of her stern going down. She looked as if she was perpendicular by the angle and then she was gone.

The Zeros continued to machine gun us for a while as we floated in the water—another very frightening time as we had no way of defending ourselves and nowhere to hide other than a duck

FOI 900184 - Released under EOI
dive. Then they were gone after ten minutes—presumably after their ammunition had been depleted.

I swam over to a group of heads bobbing around in the water where almost the first thing that I heard was 'Did you see Teddy Sheean?'

A number of my shipmates had seen Sheean go to abandon ship but return to his Oerlikon gun and start firing on the Japanese. This in itself was unusual as it was not Sheean's ordinary position; he was a loader. He was or became badly injured during this action and slumped over his gun, still firing as he went down with the ship.

He was just 18 years of age when he died.

An ongoing campaign to see Sheean's bravery recognised with a Victoria Cross has since been run by Teddy's family, especially his nephew Garry Ivory, and Guy Barnett, now Tasmanian Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

It is supported by many members of the community.

This campaign resulted in the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal undertaking hearings in Hobart in March 2019 at which the Chief of Navy, Sheean family representatives, Minister Barnett and others presented. Minister Barnett was the applicant.

In determining its recommendation, I understand that the Tribunal undertook an extensive body of work over the months prior to the public hearings. This work included a review of available documentation and a visit to a surviving Bathurst-class corvette, sister ship to our vessel *HMAS Armidale*, to better understand Sheean's actions.

I wrote a letter to the Tribunal supporting a Victoria Cross for Teddy.

Guy Barnett has kept me up to date and I understand that the Tribunal has made a recommendation to the Government.

Sheean was a loyal and brave man who gave his life for his shipmates, including me. Many of us went on to live long and productive lives and have been privileged to give much to our community and country.

It is now more than 77 years since Sheean's astonishing bravery. Teddy deserves a Victoria Cross.

I respectfully request an update on whether Teddy will get his Victoria Cross.

I say this as the last remaining survivor and I know on behalf of all my shipmates. They would all support it.

Yours sincerely

s 22

Dr Victor (Ray) Leonard

Minister for Primary Industries and Water
Minister for Energy
Minister for Resources
Minister for Veteran Affairs

Level 5, 4 Salamanca Place HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Phone: +61 3 6165 7678
Email: guy.barnett@dpac.tas.gov.au



26 NOV 2019

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

s22

I write to you seeking an update on the Federal Government's consideration of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal's recommendation, following hearings in March 2019, regarding Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean'.

Sheean is one of Tasmania's best known servicemen. His actions onboard *HMAS Armidale* during the Second World War are considered by many in the veterans' and broader community to be deserving of a Victoria Cross.

The 77th anniversary of the sinking of *HMAS Armidale* and Sheean's extraordinary acts will be occurring this coming Sunday, 1 December 2019. Of the 149 personnel onboard *HMAS Armidale* on 1 December 1942, only one remains today: Ray Leonard.

Dr Leonard is the sole surviving witness to Sheean's astonishing bravery as Japanese aircraft attacked their ship whilst on a dangerous resupply and evacuation mission to Japanese-occupied Timor on 1 December 1942.

Sheean was wounded during the attack and *HMAS Armidale* mortally damaged. The order to abandon ship was given. Rather than abandoning ship as *HMAS Armidale* sank, Sheean was observed by a number of crewmates to return to the aft Oerlikon gun.

Sustaining a second wound on the way, Sheean strapped himself into the firing position of the gun (not his normal position) and shot at the attacking aircraft, which were also strafing his crewmates in the water, as the ship sank beneath him.

Sheean shot down at least one plane and disabled another, with his crewmates stating that they saw tracer bullets rising from beneath the surface as he was dragged down with *HMAS Armidale*.

He was just 18 years of age when he died.

Sheean's bravery was recognised at the time and he was mentioned in dispatches. His crewmates also later recounted that his actions likely hindered the Japanese in their attacks on his crewmates whilst they were in the water.

An ongoing campaign to see Sheean's bravery recognised with a Victoria Cross has been spearheaded by Mr Garry Ivory, Sheean's nephew, and myself, with the support of RSL (Tasmania Branch) and the veterans' and ex-serving community.

This campaign resulted in the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal (the Tribunal) undertaking hearings in Hobart in March 2019 at which the Chief of Navy, Sheean family representatives, myself as applicant and others presented.

Along with others, I submitted that Sheean's extraordinary bravery was deserving of our nation's highest honour: the Victoria Cross.

I understand that the Tribunal has considered the material presented to it and subsequently made a recommendation to the Government.

With significant local and national interest in the matter—and likely to be more so around the anniversary—I would welcome an update on the Government's consideration of the Tribunal's recommendation regarding this outstanding Australian.

Yours sincerely

s 22

The Hon Guy Barnett MP
Minister for Veteran Affairs

cc The Hon Darren Chester MP, Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel



THE HON BEN MORTON MP
ASSISTANT MINISTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

Reference: MC19-081298

The Hon Guy Barnett MP
Minister for Veteran Affairs
Level 5, 4 Salamanca Place
HOBART TAS 7000

Dear Minister

Thank you for your correspondence from 26 November 2019 to the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, regarding the Defence Honours and Awards appeals tribunal review into the posthumous recognition of Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean. I have been asked to respond on his behalf.

As responsibility for this matter currently sits with the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, I have referred your correspondence to her office for consideration.

I have copied the Minister for Defence Personnel, the Hon Darren Chester MP.

I commend your advocacy in this case.

Yours sincerely

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BEN MORTON

5/12/2019

13/05/2020 04:20:37 PM

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Victoria Cross - Ordinary seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean

Wednesday 13 May 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

Ordinary seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean deserves the Victoria Cross.

He is an Australian war time hero, who deserves to be remembered.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-13/world-war-ii-hero-teddy-sheean-denied-victoria-cross/12244456>

Sincerely,

s 22