

**DEFENCE AMENDMENT (DEFENCE HONOURS and AWARDS APPEALS
TRIBUNAL) BILL 2025 – PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA.**

To:

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Copies to:

- 1. Senator for Queensland – Paul Scarr**
- 2. The Hon Darren Chester MP – Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs.
Member for Gippsland**
- 3. The Hon Angus Taylor MP – Shadow Minister for Defence. Member for
Hume**
- 4. The Hon Michael McCormack MP – Member for Riverina**
- 5. Mr Phillip Thompson OAM, MP – Member for Herbert.**
- 6. DHA Tribunal and Directorate of Honours and Awards.**

Prepared by:

Richard Barry OAM (Vietnam Veteran)

26 September 2025.

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“Medallic recognition has been part of the ‘military culture’ since the birth of the profession of arms. Any suggestion it might be a relic of a bygone age and not relevant to the 21st Century is dispelled immediately after engaging in conversation with young Australian servicemen and women. They view medals etc as a vital part of the ‘moral’ component of fighting power, the basis for all successful armed forces.” (Defence Honours and Awards and Commendations Policy Review. February 2008).

BRIEF PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

I was called up for two-years National Service in 1967. In 1969 I was sent as a Forward Scout with 6RAR/NZ (ANZAC) infantry battalion to South Vietnam where I was injured in an accidental aviation explosion.

In 1996 I became a self-appointed facilitator for some 2,500 national service Vietnam veterans who have not been fully recognised with a medallic award of the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (RVCM) for their lawful and meritorious service – through no fault of their own. This campaign continues.

In 2022 the DHAAT Tribunal decided to set aside a decision of Defence for the award of the RVCM to a Vietnam veteran. The current Minister the Hon Matt Keogh MP did not agree to the Tribunal’s recommendation, however Defence implemented advice provided to the Tribunal by the Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) in regard to the RVCM eligibility criteria and how it applied to servicemen ‘wounded in action’ during service in Vietnam. AGS pointed out the provisions in the original Vietnamese Directives. **(Lockrey and the Department of Defence [2022] DHAAT 10. 18 July 2022).**

Therefore, the Minister was rightly overruled however, I was not aware of this ‘fresh’ interpretation regarding ‘wounded in action’ provisions until I received

confirmation from the Ministerial Coordination Officer, Directorate of Honours and Awards on 14 June 2024. I then wrote to Minister on several occasions suggesting he issue a Media Release however, he refused. I wanted Vietnam veterans who had been originally refused the RVCMD an opportunity to reapply and for those who now thought they'd eligible to apply for the RVCMD. So, I decided to do the job that the Minister's staff should have done. I wrote to all major ex-servicemen's associations, the RSL, unit and battalion groups on social media and various ADF newsletters.

This year I have individually assisted 123 Vietnam veterans and families of those since deceased to receive this medal in the mail – more than 50 years after the war ended. My confidential list has the names of 400+ names of affected veterans so, a lot more voluntary work to do. This is a clear example whereby a review of a foreign award offered to the Australian Government some 58 years ago was able to be reviewed again and rectified. These veterans have told me that to be 'thanked' by the former Vietnamese government has gone a long way to partly reduce their chronic PTSD - accentuated from constant 'knock-downs' since coming home.

The one glaring aspect that surfaced on numerous occasions was the fact that around 30 per cent had absolutely no idea that they were entitled to the RVCMD. That is shameful especially after all these years and one of the reasons I wanted the Minister to issue requested Media Release.

Following encouragement from a senior Senator I referred several of these affected men to the recent Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. I have lost many mates by their own hand far too soon.

In 2018 I was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by RSL Australia (NSW Branch) for services rendered to the veteran community. In 2020 I was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) General Division for my continuing work with the veteran community. The voluntary work continues to this day.

THIS BILL – MY PERSPECTIVE

The main changes would be to:

- ☐ **Abolish the current right of ADF members, veterans and their supporters to seek independent Tribunal merits review of their eligibility for gallantry, distinguished and conspicuous service honours – review of adverse Defence decisions would only be able to be sought by a more senior officer in the chain of command or an eyewitness;**
- ☐ **Altogether disallow the Tribunal from considering honours or campaign awards for ADF service in the Second World War, Korea, the Malayan Emergency Confrontation, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Gulf War, Somalia, Rwanda and (on the Tribunal’s legal analysis) some but not other service in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan;**
- ☐ **Abolish the current right of some family members (such as cousins, nieces or nephews) to apply for review of a decision refusing a defence award for their relative;**
- ☐ **Abolish the current right of a veteran or supporter to apply for review of a decision to refuse to reissue a cancelled honour or award;**
- ☐ **Impose a time limit on making applications to the Tribunal; Allow further limitations on the current rights to Tribunal review, such as by excluding other periods of service, by Regulations rather than by amendment of the Act by the Parliament’ and**
- ☐ **Allow Regulations to be made to further limit the operation of the Tribunal.**

Had the amendments proposed in the Bill been in effect at the time, the Tribunal’s analysis is that the majority of the applications for review decided by the Tribunal since it was created in 2011 would have been invalidated.

Defence force personnel and veterans deserve proper recognition for their service to our nation. Why make it harder for veterans and service personnel to receive the honours and awards they're entitled to? We all need to fight for a fair go for Australian veterans and their families.

Why set a review moratorium of 20 years in terms of medallic recognition for acts of bravery and gallantry? This is the most extraordinary overreach by the Department of Defence. This legislation was presented on 4 September 2025 with no consultation which means it failed the first test. It is a solution trying to find a problem! What's broken? What is the government trying to fix? It will not be defended by the veteran family under any circumstances.

The ADF personnel with the major veteran's groups do not support this legislation and families are furious. There is no shame in the Minister withdrawing the Bill and there has been no explanation in what is being sought to fix.

This compliant Minister seeks to impose and backdate timeframes for an appeal of, or for, an award to 20 years from the original action/event. You can't deny, or rewrite history, or whitewash history completely. Certain politicians never seem to disappoint in their individual or collective lack of empathy, application of justice, or caring for serving members or veterans welfare.

The proposed Bill will strip effectively the rights of our service men and women to be able to effectively review decisions of Defence around honours and awards. Families of veterans will not have a right to seek a review for an honour under this legislation. Veterans, family members, advocates, and historians should have the ability to seek a review under the Tribunal as we all know that sometimes a veteran or their family are not able to take carriage of their matter under such a process. That's why we have an advocacy system, through the Department of Veterans Affairs but that shouldn't stop them from seeking the medallic recognition that they could be entitled to.

The exception to the proposed 20-year period is for length of service awards viz The Defence Long Service Medal (DLSM). The Bill provides that a refusal relating to length of service will be reviewable up until the member has, or would have turned, 100 years old. However, the Bill added another clause whereby a regulation will be created to shorten these 20-year and 100-year threshold periods in the future.

I pose the following scenario which, in my experience, will occur quite often.

The Minister is happy that the DLSP can still be awarded for 15 years' service in the ADF and NOT be subjected to the 20-year restriction. So, an ADF member who sits behind a desk for 15 years, without any overseas service, is exempt under the proposed legislation whereas those Vietnam veterans with multiple deployments and others who were either killed or wounded in action are not appropriately recognised. This anomaly requires more discussion.

Veterans, their families, those with lived experience, and all Australians who support our community must continue to stand firm and demand the government demonstrate the promises they made. We cannot allow ourselves to be treated dismissively on matters of such importance.

The Defence Amendment (Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal) Bill 2025 systematically strips away fundamental rights that veterans and their families have relied upon to seek recognition and justice. This legislation represents a comprehensive assault on veteran entitlements disguised as administrative reform. Rescind the Bill.

Headlines emanating from the proposed Bill:

- ☐ Time Barriers That Deny Justice
- ☐ Family Rights Destroyed
- ☐ Procedural Fairness Eliminated
- ☐ Transparency And Accountability Gutted
- ☐ Regulatory Control Over Justice
- ☐ Systematic Exclusion Of Older Veterans

The Bill transforms the appeals system from a pathway to recognition into a barrier to justice, prioritising administrative convenience over veterans' rights while systematically excluding those who served longest ago.

I say this arbitrary restriction, (20-year cut-off period), not only dishonours past sacrifices but also flies in the face of recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

ANY NOTABLE PRECEDENTS

- Edward “Teddy” **Sheean**. RAN WW2 1942. HMAS Armidale.

An inquiry in 2013 recommended that Sheean NOT be awarded the Victoria Cross. Another inquiry held in 2020 recommended that Sheenan be awarded the Victoria Cross, and this was accepted by the Australian Government. Sheenan was posthumously *mentioned in dispatches* which was later cancelled when upgraded to the Victoria Cross for Australia – some 78 years after his brave action.

In 2001 a Bill was introduced into the Australian Senate to have three awards of the Victoria Cross for Australia made, one being for Sheean. The Bill came as part of a campaign by the then leader of the Australian Labor Party and Federal Opposition, Kim Beazley, to secure more rights for War Veterans. However, it was subsequently rejected by the Liberal Government.

In 2011 DHAAT opened an inquiry which included the Sheean case. In January 2013 the tribunal found there was no new evidence to support the consideration of Sheean for the Victoria Cross for Australia.

DHAAT conducted an inquiry in 2019 to consider whether Sheean should be awarded the Victoria Cross. It recommended in July that year that he be awarded the medal. This recommendation was rejected by the Minister for Defence Ms Linda Reynolds MP in May 2020.

Federal Leader of the Opposition, Anthony Albanese, wrote that Sheean should be awarded the Victoria Cross. The Chief of Defence General Angus Campbell AO DSC strongly advised the government to NOT award Sheean the medal. On 10 August 2020, Prime Minister Scott Morrison accepted the findings of the panel and recommended the Queen posthumously award the medal. An investiture ceremony was held on 1 December 2020.

- Richard Leslie **Norden**. 1RAR South Vietnam 1968.

On 7 September 2020 Chief of Army Lieutenant General Rick Burr AO DSC MVO wrote to Lieutenant Colonel George Hulse OAM (Ret’d) refusing the

application for the Victoria Cross for Australia for Richard Norden, stating that in his view the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal was appropriate. (Hulse and the Department of Defence re: Norden DHAAT 11 [20 July 2022]).

In 2024 Norden was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia in lieu of the Distinguished Conduct Medal. This award was announced by Governor-General Sam Mostyn and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese at the Australian War Memorial – some 56 years after his brave action.

The presentation on 15 July 2025 was attended by the Hon Richard Marles MP, Acting Prime Minister and the Hon Matt Keogh MP, Minister for Defence Personnel & Minister for Veterans' Affairs. Keogh said inter alia: *"I'm so pleased that today, almost six decades after his heroic act, his family are finally receiving this important acknowledgement of his selfless service."*

□ The Battle in the Long Tan Rubber. 18 August 1966. South Vietnam. *

In 2008 LTCOL **Smith** was awarded the level 2 Star of Gallantry (SG) in lieu of the Military Cross (MC). Dave **Sabben** and Geoffrey **Kendall**, platoon commanders, were awarded the Medal for Gallantry (MG) in lieu of the Mention in Despatches (MIDs). Against the recommendations of the panel, approved the RVCWPUC for wear by the strength of D Company 6RAR in Vietnam on 18 August 1966 plus other distinguished awards for gallantry and valour were approved to other members of D Company – some 42 years after this well-known battle. It was certainly a big step from when the South Vietnamese government paraded and presented them with dolls in Vietnamese national dress, and also cigarette-cases and lighters for their part in the battle. The government of South Vietnam soon realised that the battle was significant and wished to award decorations to the Australians involved. But at the last moment, with the ceremony already arranged and those attending it already in place, word was received from Australia that the traditional policy of non-acceptance of foreign awards was to be observed. This was embarrassing both to the Vietnamese and to the Australians. A compromise was reached hence the dolls etc.

Fortunately, a review process subsequently occurred and the non-acceptance of foreign awards was overturned.

These men would not have received the most correct recognition, that medallic tribute, had it not been for appeal processes. A process put in place to look at decisions made or the fact that they were overlooked at the time of their gallantry – which in more recent times has given them their due honours. No one was prouder of the fact that these brave men received their awards than their own families.

If this proposed legislation was in place today none of these men would ever be recognised for their bravery. Completely un-Australian.

*I served with several of these Long Tan veterans on the second tour of South Vietnam in 1969. My unit was choppered in on the night before 18 August 1969 to secure the area in the rubber plantation for the Long Tan Cross to be lowered in next morning. Even after three years it was an eerie feeling trying to sleep with one eye open that night. One thoroughly disgusted non-smoking veteran told me he gave the cigarette case to his father and the doll to his granddaughter.

- Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation (RVCGWPUC).

“This citation relates only to the United States Army and has no authority for Australian personnel. At no time during the Vietnam War was an Australian unit or individual person under the command of the United States. Every Australian serving in Vietnam did so under command of a discreet and fully independent Australian national command element.”
(Defence Honours & Awards. Issue #3, July 2007).

I applied for this citation on 17 November 2017. It was refused because on 17 April 2015, the Governor-General accepted the Government’s recommendation that the RVCGPUC be approved for wear by members of the 1RAR Battle Group and they became the custodian of the citation. So, because my service with 6RAR was outside the qualifying date of 18 August 1966 I could not wear the citation. On the 8 February 2022 I completed an Application For Review Of Decision.

Colonel Max Ball (Ret'd) applied for the RVCGWPUIC in September 2018 but his submission was refused by DHAAT. I was asked to set aside my 8 February 2022 application pending outcome of Ball's submission. Then, not long afterwards DHAAT wrote to me asking to resubmit my application because Max Ball was successful in having previous decisions set aside concerning the RVCGWPUIC. ***(Ball and the Department of Defence [2021] DHAAT 7 27 May 2022).***

I reapplied for the RVCGWPUIC which was eventually approved by DHAAT on 3 August 2023. In fact, notwithstanding DHA direction of July 2007 almost every Australian unit that served in Vietnam suddenly became eligible. Even though it was a foreign award and the former Vietnamese government ceased to be a sovereign entity in 1975, there was no cause for any perceived diplomatic sensitivities.

Interestingly, I received an email from Defence Honours and Awards on 14 March 2018 from Ms Tammy Hayes – Assistant Executive Officer (DHAAT) stating: *"There are no time restrictions to when an appeal can be lodged. Currently, the only **time** restriction is that the Defence decision has to be made or the service rendered after 3 September 1939. Our most common applications relate to decisions made many years ago."*

I have provided several examples whereby these men would NOT have received the recognition, that medallic tribute, had it not been for an appeal process – a review of these cases more than 20 years after the event. In all these cases it took veterans, despite their age, to provide lived experiences and relate substantiated facts to those decision makers, of whom, many were born decades after the conflicts mentioned.

If the proposed 2025 defence amendment bill was in place back then, none of these heroic veterans would be appropriately recognised for their extraordinary valour.

THREE CURRENT PROPOSALS PENDING DETERMINATION (MY INVOLVEMENT)

ONE. At the RSL NSW Annual Congress in October 2024, my motion was passed by members asking the League to advocate to Government to have the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (RVCM) awarded to some 2,500 Australian National Servicemen or ‘Nashos’, as a matter of equity, fairness, and justice – *“(that) RSL NSW request RSL Australia to advocate to the Australian Government to have the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal awarded on the grounds of equity, fairness and justice to some 2,500 Australian National Servicemen who served in Vietnam for at least 60 days but fewer than the 181 days who left Vietnam due to their national service obligations ending.”*

On 14 August 2025 the RSL NSW State Secretary wrote comprehensive letters to the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader attaching a Clarification Submission encouraging them to work together to find a bipartisan way forward to make certain these servicemen are appropriately honoured for their unique service of our nation. Close to 22,000 Australians signed a petition in the lead up to the 2022 federal election calling for the servicemen to be awarded the RVCM. At that time, the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Defence Personnel in the Morrison Liberal/National Government, the Hon Andrew Gee MP, and his Shadow, the Hon Shayne Neumann, were both supportive of this campaign and working towards righting this wrong. It was on the cusp of approval with the then-Minister for Defence the Hon Peter Dutton MP, was about to take it to whole-of-government when the May 2022 election intervened. It then lost some momentum with a change of government and the appointment of the current Minister.

Letters were also sent to the Governor-General, as Commander in Chief of Australia’s Defence Forces, NSW Governor, as Patron of RSL NSW. The letter to the Prime Minister was cc’d to the Hon Matt Keogh MP, while the letter to the Opposition Leader was cc’d to the Shadow Minister Darren Chester and Senator Paul Scarr.

We have consistently stated that we have accepted the 2014/15 DHAAT Tribunal's statement that we are NOT endeavouring to alter or indeed change the eligibility criteria for the RVC. I appeared before Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal in Canberra on 11 September 2013. The panel consisted of Professor David Horner AM, Mr Adam Bodzioch and Mr John Jones AM.

This campaign was initiated by me in 1996 and it has been fine-tuned over the years resulting in a strongly argued case backed by a military lawyer and supported by scores of politicians from all sides together with former Prime Ministers and a former Governor-General plus various ex-service organisations.

TWO. Inquiry into recognition for members, and families of members of the Australian Defence Force who are injured, wounded or killed in, or as a result of service.

I sent my submission to DHAAT on 10 March 2021. On the 12 May 2021 I was asked to conduct an oral submission via videoconferencing with the Constituted Tribunal panel: -

Mr Stephen Skehill (Chair)
Mr David Ashley AM
Rear Admiral James Goldrick AO CSC RAN (Ret'd)
Ms Josephine Lumb
Ms Jane Schwager AO
Major General Simone Wilkie AO (Ret'd)

The 168-page comprehensive report of the inquiry with several recommendations was sent to the Minister for Defence Personnel, the Hon Andrew Gee MP in December 2021. A change of government in May 2022 saw these DHAAT recommendations handed to the Hon Matt Keogh MP. After more than three years the Minister has yet to release his response.

Then a full inquiry by Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee was conducted into Defence honours and awards system and its report was released in June 2025.

Particular attention is directed to recommendation #5 which appears both on page xi and page 52 (3.63) of the report which reads: -

The committee recommends that the Australian Government considers how to implement the recommendation from the 2021 Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal inquiry report *'Recognising their sacrifice'* to create new forms of medallic and emblematic recognition for current and former Australian Defence Force members and their families who are injured, wounded or killed in, or as a result of, their service.

Minister Matt Keogh has not yet responded.

THREE. My 27-page submission with attachments sent to the Department of Defence – Recognition for multiple deployments with ADF Personnel in Vietnam from 1962 to 1973 dated 18 September 2024. Response from the Acting Director, Honour and Awards 7 November 2024, *"Defence does not plan to revisit this matter"*.

It's estimated that some 1,500 Vietnam veterans will be affected.

An addendum submission has been sent on 30 August 2025 to the Acting Director, Honours and Awards together with strong words from a selection of high-profile supporters: -

Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia
National Servicemen's Association of Australia

Air Force association of Australia
United Nations Association of Australia
Australian Army Training Team Vietnam Association of Australia
Vietnamese Veterans of Australia (Rangers & ARVN)
Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans Association
Two former Prime Ministers of Australia – John Howard & Kevin Rudd
Two former Governors-General of Australia – Peter Cosgrove & David Hurley
Dan Keighran – Victoria Cross of Australia
Matt Anderson – Director Australian War Memorial.

Clearly, these cases are so compelling the only way they can deny us is to change the rules.

A senior defence personnel member told me that the possible significance to my ongoing efforts are the transitional provisions involved in the Bill. These would mean that applications for medals made to Defence or applications for review lodged with the Tribunal before the amendments proposed in the Bill would not be affected by the proposed limitations. However, where a Defence decision refusing an application was made before the proposed changes took effect, an application for review of that decision would still be able to be made to the Tribunal, but only if it was lodged within 6 months of the date of the decision – however, older refusal decisions would be reviewable if application was made to the Tribunal before the Bill comes into effect.

IT WOULD BE DISINGENOUS OF ME TO THINK THAT THE 'DECISION MAKERS' WERE TRYING TO THWART ALL MY INCOMPLETE HARD WORK ON BEHALF OF AFFECTED VIETNAM VETERANS FOR THE PAST THIRTY YEARS!

REACTION TO THE PROPOSED BILL.

I understand because the government had the numbers some 90+ parliamentarians voted for the Bill in the first reading. However, only one representative from the government turned up for the second reading to support the compliant Minister – the Member for Sturt, Ms Claire Clutterham MP, elected to the House of Representatives in July 2025. She read a statement prepared by others and said inter alia: *“the amendments proposed by this bill are reasonable and appropriate.”* No substance!

I strongly feel many of the government members don't have any real intention of defending this legislation because they know how poorly it will be regarded by the public at large.

Nine members of the Opposition stood up in parliament on 3 September 2025 and read their statements. Extracts from these statements appear in **Annexure A**.

The Minister said inter alia: *“The difficulties of making assessments regarding defence honours and awards for historical actions are considerable, given the senior members of the time are often sadly no longer with us and therefore objective evidence is difficult to obtain and verify.”* This statement is fallacious!

It's estimated that around 75 per cent of Vietnam veterans are still with us today. In any case families of those since deceased are still alive and can apply.

This proposed legislation does not specifically highlight insignias to be affixed to existing campaign ribbons. Precedents are set in stone. It is not an honour or an award – it is very simply a tiny recognition of service – identifying multiple deployments and/or if they were killed or wounded whilst in the service of the ADF.

Reference is made regarding the predicated 2,500 national service Vietnam veterans seeking recognition for their lawful and meritorious service by way of the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. The records held by the Departments of Defence & Veterans' Affairs and the Australian War Memorial Nominal Roll are concise and accurate and are easily obtainable by the general public to enable correct assessments without any difficulties regarding verification.

There is no need to be seeking out any senior members of the time to verify anything in relation to these proposals. That's the least we owe these people who were willing to die in a foreign country in the name of freedom and democracy at the behest of their government.

"I've never wanted to be a Labor MP – but if I were one, I would want to be one of the four who happened to be out of the chamber and did not vote with the government on this contemptuous Bill. Only they will escape the inevitable condemnation and derision of their RSLs and veterans when word of this disgraceful folly gets out.

When Coalition MPs, including decorated Army veteran Phillip Thompson OAM, tried to debate against this nonsensical legislation, Labor gagged us and used the weight of its numbers to put the issue to a vote and ram it through to the Senate.

Labor wants the medallic recognition consideration restricted to just 20 years, instead of back to 1939, as it presently stands. Given this, it will not be long before this even precludes those who served in Iraq. Why this had to be raised in the parliament at all is anyone's guess. The shame of it all is that this would have been a recommendation put to Veterans' Affairs Minister Matt Keogh and for whatever stupid reason he has dutifully taken it up." (Michael McCormack is the federal Member for Riverina. A former deputy prime minister, he was Veterans' Affairs minister in 2017-18. *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 September 2025).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel the Hon Matt Keogh immediately withdraw the controversial Defence Amendment (DHAAT) Bill 2025 and commence consultations with all major Australian Ex-Service Organisations and other stakeholders for their input particularly regarding proposed amendments to Subsection 110V (2) – Additional rules for defence honours (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) under the *Defence Act 1903* and;
2. Notwithstanding this proposed Bill that the following proposals be allowed to proceed unabated towards final outcomes: -
 - (a) Campaign to fully recognise some 2,500 National Servicemen Vietnam veterans from across the nation to be awarded the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal and;
 - (b) To acknowledge those ADF members (and families) who were KIA or WIA in, or as a result of service and;
 - (c) Recognition of multiple deployments for Vietnam veterans as submitted.

Prepared by:

Richard Barry OAM

Vietnam Veteran [6RAR South Vietnam 1969].

25 September 2025.

For what they have done, this we will do. [Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant 2019].

ANNEXURE A

“There’s a fair bit of hypocrisy in this place, and this bill is right up there in it. In opposition, Labor was very happy to play politics with the Sheenan case and they publicly demanded a Victoria Cross for his heroic actions after the tribunal made its recommendation. The then opposition leader and now prime minister, Anthony Albanese, led the charge.

Defence has always been hostile to the tribunal and the retrospective nature of examining past actions, and it openly opposed Teddy Sheean receiving the Victoria Cross.

Not even the RSL was asked for a review before the minister made his second reading speech last week. The largest ex-service organisation in the nation was completely blindsided when this bill was introduced last week.

Minister should have the decency to consult with impacted stakeholders and understand the consequences of this flawed approach.” (Hon Darren Chester MP. Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs. Federal Member for Gippsland).

“They have voted for a piece of legislation that will stop the future Teddy Sheean and Richard Norden from getting recognised, and that’s not right. This is folly.

This piece of legislation is not right. It’s not right for those who have received medallic honours in the past through a process. It’s not right for those who should have in the future. It’s just wrong. Lest we forget.” (Hon Michael McCormack MP. Federal Member for Riverina. Former Deputy Prime Minister).

“On 18 June 2020 the Prime Minister said in a speech in the parliament at the time Teddy Sheean received the Victoria Cross inter alia: ‘the point of having an independent Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal is to ensure that the only considerations are the evidence and merit.’

In the toughest strategic era in generations., let us send a signal to every serving member and every veteran: the parliament has your back not just in what we say but, in the systems, we build and defend. That is how we will move from rhetoric to readiness, put people first and earn the trust that national security demands.” **(Hon Angus Taylor MP. Shadow Minister for Defence. Shadow Cabinet Minister. Shadow Treasurer. Federal Member for Hume).**

“I think it’s quite noticeable that none of the veterans from the Labor party who sit in parliament are in the chamber or speaking on this today. They know that this is wrong. The RSL doesn’t know about it. No ex-service organisations know about it. Ex-Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT) has no idea about it. I don’t want to see people left behind by a bad bill that hasn’t been widely consulted on. I will be opposing this.” **(Mr Phillip Thompson OAM MP. Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence. Federal Member for Herbert. Afghanistan veteran WIA).**

“I’ve spoken with RSL Victoria who, likewise, feel blindsided that this bill’s being rushed through without the voices of veterans truly being heard. But, as I stand before you right now, with an unclear case for change – and, I think, very likely negative impacts for veterans in my electorate of Indi and right across Australia – I simply cannot support this bill in its current form.

When it came to seeking the award for Teddy Sheean and finally, having it approved, it was compelling. But at least it was done – it could not be done under this legislation.” **(Dr Helen Haines MP. Federal Member for Indi).**

“As I said at the start, there is no problem here to solve. There is no need for this legislation. In fact, it completely contradicts the statements of the Prime Minister in 2020. It is disappointing and it is heartbreaking that the veterans of our country now have to go through this change when it is not needed, it is not required, it is going to cause damage to our veterans and it serves no purpose for the Australian people.” **(Mr Aaron Violi MP. Chief Opposition Whip in the House of Representatives. Federal Member for Casey).**

“I support the coalition’s amendments which would remove the 20-year eligibility limit for tribunal reviews. I believe the bill is deeply flawed right now. I understand that the tribunal, which is an independent statutory body, is also expressing opposition to some of the changes. Let us ensure that our defence honours and awards system truly uphold the values and sacrifices that members of the defence forces have made and which it purports to honour.” **(Ms Allegra Spender MP. Federal Member for Wentworth).**

“I urge the government to reconsider their position on the bill. At the very least, this bill must be reviewed and those impacted must be consulted.” **(Mr Andrew Wallace MP. Federal Member for Fisher).**

“It unfortunately focused on themselves rather than the Australian people, and we need to call it out because the consequences and the on flow to the Australian people will be significant. Now is the time for good people to stand up and call it out.” **(Hon Tim Wilson MP. Shadow Cabinet Minister. Federal Member for Goldstein).**
