



RSL
NSW

Merriwa RSL Sub Branch

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Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade

RE: The Defence Amendment Bill (Defence Honours Awards and Appeals Tribunal) 2025

On behalf of the members of Merriwa RSL sub-Branch we write to lodge the most stringent objection possible to the potential introduction of a 20-year time limit on reviewable actions with regard future consideration of medals and honours.

This would significantly impede the ability of the Defence Honours Awards and Appeals Tribunal (DHA&AT) to independently carry out the review process. It would in effect abolish and curtail current and significant rights of ADF members, veterans and families and others to seek external and independent merits review of Defence decisions refusing to recommend an ADF member or veteran for a defence honour or award

It was this process which led to the decisions to posthumously award a Victoria Cross to both Teddy Sheean and Richard Norden, along with individual recognition for the bravery of Delta Company at Long Tan.

The government has provided no proof the existing system is inefficient and the capacity to review decisions made by defence was a deliberate design feature of the Tribunal when it was established.

The independent Tribunal members have always acted with diligence, integrity and professionalism. They have weighed up complex issues, carefully considered the consequences, and made recommendations which are balanced and responsible.

Our sub-Branch contains members who are ex Vietnam veterans, Afghanistan veterans, those that were drafted and completed National Service, active service members etc. None of these veterans enlisted or were drafted for personal glory – all served this country with honour. We believe the responsibility lies with the government to ensure that if and when compelling information arises that a proper process is followed to ensure that our veterans receive the honours and medals, they deserve. There can be no time limit on these processes, serving with valour should never have a “use by date”.

We respectfully request that this time limit be abandoned and that the DHA&AT be allowed to continue their valuable work unhindered.

Kind regards

Bob Baihn
Cunningham

Warren Gunning

Terri

President

Treasurer

Secretary