

Media Release

OVER 5000 TEDDY SHEEAN VICTORIA CROSS PETITIONS PRESENTED TO ANDREW NIKOLIC, MP

Wednesday 27 November 2013

More than 5000 signed petitions to have Latrobe war hero Teddy Sheean's bravery recognised with a Victoria Cross have been presented to Andrew Nikolic, Federal member for Bass for tabling in federal parliament.

"This is a great result, said Mr Garry Ivory and Mr Guy Barnett, former Senator and State Liberal candidate for Lyons today. We thank Mr Nikolic for receiving these petitions.

"We want the federal government to reconsider our claims that Teddy Sheean deserved a Victoria Cross.

"Teddy Sheean served on the HMAS Armidale and, when attacked on 1 December 1942 and ordered to abandon ship, he returned to his anti-aircraft gun and fired at enemy aircraft to protect his mates being strafed in the water. Teddy Sheean did this in total disregard for his own safety and life, and was seen continuing to fire as the ship went down.

"The Defence Tribunal Report decided that Teddy Sheean's bravery was not worthy of a Victoria Cross. We at the Teddy Sheean VC Award Fight team believe this is a grave injustice. Bravery such as that shown by Sheean should be appropriately honoured.

"Our petition asks the Tribunal findings be set aside and Sheean's bravery re-considered for a VC," they concluded.

Attached: Petition text, photo and information on Teddy Sheean

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: GARRY IVORY 0427 633 105 or GUY BARNETT 0428 622 333

PETITION

TO THE HONOURABLE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE SENATE IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED:

The undersigned petitioners express disappointment that the Report of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal Inquiry into unresolved recognition for past acts of naval and military gallantry and valour failed to recognise any of the thirteen nominated brave Australians for a Victoria Cross or some other award, including and especially ordinary seaman Teddy Sheean. Teddy Sheean served on the HMAS Armidale and when attacked on 1 December 1942 and ordered to abandon ship he returned to his anti-aircraft gun and fired at the enemy aircraft to protect his mates being strafed in the water. Teddy Sheean did this in total disregard for his own safety and life, and was seen continuing to fire as the ship went down.

The Tribunal stated “Sheean’s actions displayed conspicuous gallantry but **did not reach the particularly high standard required for recommendation for a VC**”. We believe the Tribunal’s Report was flawed and their assessment of Teddy Sheean and his bravery was incorrect.

Your Petitioners therefore ask the Senate to note our disappointment and ask the Government to **set aside the report of the Tribunal** and **reconsider the acts of valour demonstrated** by the thirteen nominated brave Australians and specifically Teddy Sheean.

Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean - a selfless act

Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean was born in Lower Barrington, Tasmania on 28 December 1923. His family soon moved to Latrobe and he was educated at the local Catholic school and worked as a farm labourer until he enlisted in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve at 17 years. In June 1942 he was posted to the HMAS Armidale as an Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun loader.

The Japanese were moving south ferocious and fast and on 1 December 1942 the Armidale, then in the Timor sea just north of Australia, came under repeated attack by at least 13 Japanese aircraft. By 3.15pm the *Armidale* had been struck by two aerial torpedoes and began to sink, an event that would take less than 5 minutes. Lieutenant Commander David Richards ordered the ship to be abandoned. Out of the 149 on board, only 49 would be rescued from the water.

As the ship was sinking, and the survivors in the water tried to board life-rafts, the Japanese aircraft continued to strafe the men in the water. Ordinary Seaman Sheean possibly already wounded, and seeing his mates in distress and being shot at, returned to his Oerlikon gun, strapped himself in, and began firing at the Japanese aircraft and attracting enemy fire. He reportedly shot down at least one Japanese Zero in his efforts. Witnesses report that tracer fire could still be seen leaving the gun after she sunk below the waves. Sheean would have known his fate when he returned to his gun but in an act of conspicuous bravery offered up his life for his mates and his country. He was not yet 19 years. (There is a well-known painting at the Australian War Memorial which commemorates this incident and a submarine named in his honour.)

