



31 May 2016

Guy Barnett, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier

Teddy Sheean honoured with book launch

Today I was pleased to host the official launch of the book 'Honour Denied: Teddy Sheean A Tasmanian Hero and other brave warriors of the Royal Australian Navy' at Parliament House.

Written by noted Tasmanian military historian and naval officer, Dr Tom Lewis OAM, and launched by the Premier, the Hon Will Hodgman MP, the book explores the story of Teddy Sheean, one of Tasmania's best known wartime servicemen.

Born in Lower Barrington, Sheean joined the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as a Oerlikon anti-aircraft gunner in 1941, at just 17 years of age.

Whilst on a resupply and evacuation mission to Japanese-occupied Timor, his ship, HMAS Armidale, was attacked by Japanese aircraft and hit by two aircraft-launched torpedoes.

With the ship sinking fast, Sheean—who had been wounded during the attack—was ready to abandon ship when he saw his crewmates being strafed in the water from the enemy aircraft above. Making his way back to his gun, Sheean sustained a second wound, before strapping himself to his gun and shooting at the attacking aircraft even as the ship was sinking beneath him.

He shot down two planes, with crewmates testifying they saw seeing tracer bullets coming from the gun as Sheean was dragged under the water, firing until the end. He died on 1 December 1942, aged just 18.

His bravery was recognised at the time with the award of a Mention in Dispatches.

Many in the community believe that Teddy's sacrifice, courage and dedication to his fellow crew members deserves better.

Along with Sheean's family, I have helped campaign to have Teddy's courage reconsidered and recognised with a Victoria Cross. It is worth noting that of Australia's 100 Victoria Crosses, none have yet been awarded to a RAN member.

Last year I tabled a petition with 4271 signatures calling for Teddy's bravery to be appropriately recognised in Tasmanian Parliament last year. The campaign team also intend to write to the British Admiralty asking for reconsideration of Teddy's actions for more appropriate recognition.

The Hodgman Liberal Government has helped promote Sheean's memory through the annual Teddy Sheean Memorial Grants Program, which offers small grants to RSLs and ex-serving organisations for minor capital works.

The example of this brave Tasmanian continues to inspire today and deserves to be remembered.

Additional book launches will be held in Hobart at Fullers Bookstore (6:30pm, Thursday, 2 June), in Launceston at Launceston RSL (11am, Saturday, 4 June) and Latrobe at Latrobe RSL (6pm, Saturday, 4 June).

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