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Tasmanian Government **Media Release**

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Guy Barnett, Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Continued support for our veteran community and their families

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is proud to provide continued support for Tasmanian veterans, their families and their community organisations.

Tasmanians have been at the forefront in serving our nation for more than 100 years and despite having only 2 per cent of the national population, it is widely understood that Tasmania has one of the highest enlistment rates of any state or territory in the country.

Of the 101 Australians who have been granted our nation's highest award for the gallantry, the Victoria Cross, 15 have been from Tasmania, including most recently our hero Edward 'Teddy' Sheean.

It's an extraordinary record and one of which Tasmanians should be justifiably proud.

Tasmania currently has more than 10,500 veterans and ex-serving personnel who call our State home.

While the Australian Government has primary responsibility for the provision of services to our returned service personnel, the Tasmanian Liberal Government is playing its part in supporting the health and wellbeing of our veterans.

As part of our 2021-22 Tasmanian Budget, we are investing an additional \$1.4 million to support our veterans.

This includes an additional \$100,000 for a training centre and additional facilities at the Veterans Retreat Project at Lake Sorell.

This new funding is in addition to the \$100,000 previously provided to the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (Tasmania Branch) to renovate a disused Parks & Wildlife Services shack into a contemporary Retreat for veterans and their families.

It is intended that the Retreat will help support positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes for veterans and their families.

By way of an update, the existing structure has been stripped clean and a substantial new addition, including deck, added to the lake side of the property.

New windows, flooring, wiring and plumbing are in the process of being installed with the aim of having the Retreat completed by the end of November.

Pleasingly, the project has also been generously supported by the Tasmanian community with significant levels of in-kind donations of material and fittings provided.

In addition to this, our 2021-22 Budget provides additional support for our veterans including:

- The ongoing provision of peak body funding with annual indexation to RSL Tasmania, as well as special projects funding of \$50,000 per year;
- \$400,000 to continue our popular Teddy Sheean VC Memorial Grants Program for the next four years; and
- \$200,000 over four years to make Health and Wellbeing Vouchers available to veterans for gym or sporting club membership.

Also, the latest round of the Teddy Sheean VC grants round is currently open with funding available for minor infrastructure, equipment, war memorial works and now welfare initiatives. Applications can be made until 11 October 2021 with further information available at:

https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/csr/Grants/teddy_sheean_grants_program

We also understand that recent events in Afghanistan are distressing for many of our ADF personnel and the veterans' community. ADF personnel, veterans and their families can call the Australian Government's Open Arms counseling service 24 hours a day on 1800 011 046 for support or a helping hand.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government will continue to support our veteran community and we will stick to our Plan and keep focused on securing Tasmania's future.