



PRIME MINISTER

Reference: MC20-094793

Mr Ray James
Acting President
Returned & Services League NSW
Level 5, 341 George Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr James

Thank you for writing to me about Ordinary Seaman Edward ‘Teddy’ Sheean.

Like the RSL NSW, I agree Teddy Sheean was an extraordinary Australian. Our country will remain eternally grateful for his service, dedication and sacrifice.

Overturing a decision relating to a Victoria Cross nearly 80 years after Ordinary Seaman Sheean’s heroic actions in 1942 would need compelling reasons. That is why the Government’s view and clear policy is that consideration of the awarding of a retrospective Victoria Cross would only occur in light of compelling new evidence or if there was evidence of significant maladministration.

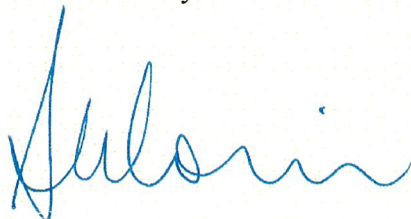
Given there are different views on whether there is compelling new evidence about Sheean’s actions in 1942, I have commissioned an expert panel to provide me with advice as to whether the 2019 review by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeal Tribunal had any significant new evidence, not available to the previous reviews and otherwise available, that is compelling enough to support a recommendation by the Government that Sheean’s Mention in Despatches be replaced by a Victoria Cross.

The expert panel will be chaired by former Minister for Defence and former Director of the Australian War Memorial, the Hon Dr Brendan Nelson AO, and will also comprise former Solicitor-General, Mr David Bennett AC QC, former Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Dr Peter Shergold AC, and Senior Curator and Historian at the NSW Anzac Memorial, Mr Brad Manera. The panel will report to me by 31 July 2020.

The Victoria Cross for Australia is our pre-eminent Australian gallantry decoration. The Government will always uphold the integrity of the Victoria Cross and everything that it stands for.

The evidentiary standards for recommending the award of the Victoria Cross always have been, and always will be, the highest. This is even more so in the case of consideration of a potential historic award, where compelling new evidence must be identified. The Government will continue to apply this very high standard.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott Morrison', written in a cursive style.

SCOTT MORRISON