

Thank you Your Excellency.

I too wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Ngunnawal People, and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. I would also like to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of peace and war, and those in our Australian Defence Force serving our nation today.

It is indeed a great day – for our Navy, our nation and a young, Australian sailor who paid the highest price to save his shipmates from certain death.

I welcome the announcement that today, the late Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean, will be recognised with the award of a Victoria Cross for Australia. The first for a member of the Royal Australian Navy.

There is no higher honour than the Victoria Cross. Teddy Sheean's story of bravery is well known in our Navy and we have long recognised his heroic and gallant actions.

This story, this account, is the stuff of legend. Sheean's actions on that day, 1 December 1942, were absolutely amongst the most conspicuous and most gallant we've seen in our Navy.

Ordinary Seaman Sheean joined the Royal Australian Navy in 1941 from his hometown of Lower Barrington in Tasmania, when Australia was in the grip of the Second World War. Fresh from recruit school, he trained hard, took his duty seriously and showed loyalty to his mates.

In 1942, at only 18 years' of age, he was posted to HMAS *Armidale* as a loader for one of the ship's three Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns. He was the youngest member of *Armidale*'s Ship's Company. Less than six months later, in the vicinity of East Timor, HMAS *Armidale* came under a coordinated torpedo and bomb attack by enemy aircraft. Listing heavily to port from battle damage, the order was given to abandon ship. As the ship sank, Ordinary Seaman Sheean returned to his Action Station, and was wounded on the way.

He strapped himself in to the Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun, potentially giving up any chance of survival, and opened fire at enemy aircraft.

As bullets strafed his shipmates, Teddy continued to fire that gun until he himself, went down with the ship.

His heroism has become a standard our men and women of our modern Navy aspire to. His spirit of courage, of sacrifice and of service is an enduring part of our Navy, living on through our Fleet and our people. Our values are borne from the actions of those who have served before us, like Teddy, who in the face of adversity, showed service, courage, respect, integrity and excellence.

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I cannot understate the esteem in which he is held by our Navy People, past and present. HMAS *Sheean*, a Collins class submarine, is the first and only ship in the Royal Australian Navy to bear the name of an Ordinary Seaman. More than 500 of our submariners have proudly worn his name on their cap tally band over the last 20 years, and at least another 500 will do so in the years ahead.

As His Excellency has said, this is a proud moment for Teddy Sheean's family, who have fought for many decades for this outcome, and I congratulate them on their perseverance, and today's announcement.

This award, the Victoria Cross for Australia, is a great honour for the late Teddy Sheean, for his shipmates, for his family, for the Royal Australian Navy, for the Australian Defence Force, and for our Nation.