



MEDIA RELEASE – October 31, 2016

Victoria Serves up VIP Welcome for ex-SAS Amputee's 10,000km Charity Ride to Support Injured Veterans

One-legged Vietnam veteran Laurie 'Truck' Sams SC has arrived in Melbourne on the final stages of an epic six-month, 10,000km bike ride from Hanoi to Sydney to raise awareness of veteran suicide and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Since crossing the border from South Australia a week ago the 67-year-old former Special Air Service warrant officer and his support team have been welcomed by a range of RSL and council-organised events that will continue to the New South Wales border and beyond.

"The response is amazing. Everyone seems to be aware of the damage PTSD is inflicting on our troops and veterans, and they're coming out in droves to wish me well," he said on his arrival in Melbourne from Rye.

Truck lost his left leg below the knee in a parachute accident in 1995 and suffers PTSD as a result of his experiences in five-man, deep penetration SAS patrols at the height of the Vietnam War. He was awarded a Star of Courage for saving the life of his student parachutist in the accident that cost him his left leg.

RSL sub-branches, town councils and businesses at Nhill, Horsham, Ararat, Ballarat, Melton, Queenscliff, Sorrento, Rye, Portsea, Rosebud, Seymour, Euroa, Violet Town, Benalla, Wangaratta and Wodonga have run or are planning welcome events ranging from wreath layings and memorial flower plantings to museum visits, musical presentations and barbecues.

"The Cup has taken over the city this weekend so I'm taking the chance to have a good rest and get some physio going on my good leg, and perhaps having a flutter on Our Ivanhoe, given I stayed overnight in Ivanhoe here in Melbourne with friends who are kindly supporting the ride."

Truck was officially welcomed to Melbourne by Mr Hong Lim MP, representing Victorian Veteran Affairs Minister John Eren, and RSL State Executive member and fellow Vietnam veteran Lee Webb, himself a keen cyclist.

Truck and his trusty Trek bike have logged 111 days and more than 9500km of riding since leaving Hanoi on May 12 carrying an Australian flag he wants to hand to the Prime Minister when he passes through Canberra on Remembrance Day.

"We had to contend with bucketing rain and the chaotic roads of Asia in the monsoon season, almost being beheaded by a front-end loader on Route 1 in Vietnam, and sliding under an out-of-control gravel truck in heavy mud down near Vinh city," he said.

"But the toughest test has been the Nullarbor because of its sheer remoteness and the unusually bad weather we encountered there and in the West Australian wheat belt where we were whipped by 85 knot winds straight off the Antarctic."

Truck said while the first half of his ride was aimed at building a better understanding between Australia and our Asian neighbors, his Australian message was about raising awareness of PTSD injury and suicide - not just amongst veterans but serving soldiers and civilian emergency workers as well.

“The response has bowled me over, not just in the number of people who’ve heard about the ride but by how many are waving and tooting their horns or stopping us to pop a few bucks in the charity bucket. We’re supporting three leading PTSD charities and almost everyone from truck drivers to grey nomads, farmers and ordinary townsfolk are coming forward with donations.”

He said sponsors were still being sought and anyone interested in donating or finding out more about the ride and our charities could go to www.thelongridehome.com.au.

The Long Ride Home’s patron is former Australian Governor-General Major General Michael Jeffery AC, AO(Mil), CVO, MC (Retd), a former Governor of Western Australia and Commanding Officer of the Perth-based SAS Regiment.

Photo shows Truck and his trusty Trek on arriving in Perth from Singapore (more images available at www.thelongridehome.com.au).

Bill Gray

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Date	From	To	Date	From	To	Date	From	To
05-Sep-16	Perth	Narrogin	06-Oct-16	Kimba	Whyalla	28-Oct-16	Sorrento	Portsea
07-Sep-16	Narrogin	Wagin	07-Oct-16	Whyalla	Port Augusta	29-Oct-16	Portsea	Melbourne
07-Sep-16	Wagin	Katanning	09-Oct-16	Port Augusta	Port Pirie	31-Oct-16	Melbourne	Seymour
08-Sep-16	Katanning	Jerramungup	10-Oct-16	Port Pirie	Crystal Brook	01-Nov-16	Seymour	Violet Town
11-Sep-16	Jerramungup	Ravensthorpe	10-Oct-16	Crystal Brook	Clare	02-Nov-16	Violet Town	Wangaratta
12-Sep-16	Ravensthorpe	Esperance	12-Oct-16	Clare	Kapunda	03-Nov-16	Wangaratta	Wodonga
15-Sep-16	Esperance	Norseman	14-Oct-16	Kapunda	Two Wells	04-Nov-16	Albury	Holbrook
18-Sep-16	Norseman	Cocklebidy	15-Oct-16	Two Wells	Adelaide	05-Nov-16	Holbrook	Wagga Wagga
23-Sep-16	Cocklebidy	Eucla	18-Oct-16	Adelaide	Murray Bridge	07-Nov-16	Wagga Wagga	Gundagai
26-Sep-16	Eucla	Border Village	19-Oct-16	Murray Bridge	Tintinara	08-Nov-16	Gundagai	Yass
27-Sep-16	Border Village	Yalata	20-Oct-16	Tintinara	Bordertown	09-Nov-16	Yass	Canberra
30-Sep-16	Yalata	Bookabie	21-Oct-16	Bordertown	Nhill	11-Nov-16	Canberra	Canberra
01-Oct-16	Bookabie	Penong	23-Oct-16	Nhill	Horsham	14-Nov-16	Canberra	Goulburn
01-Oct-16	Penong	Ceduna	24-Oct-16	Horsham	Ararat	16-Nov-16	Goulburn	Bowral
03-Oct-16	Ceduna	Wirrulla	25-Oct-16	Ararat	Ballarat	17-Nov-16	Bowral	Parramatta
04-Oct-16	Wirrulla	Wuddina	26-Oct-16	Ballarat	Geelong	18-Nov-16	Parramatta	Sydney
05-Oct-16	Wuddina	Kimba	28-Oct-16	Geelong	Queenscliff	20-Nov-16	Opera House	