



MEDIA RELEASE – November 10, 2016

## **Ex-SAS Amputee Pedals into Canberra Urging Extra Action on Veteran Suicide and PTSD**

One-legged Vietnam veteran Laurie ‘Truck’ Sams SC has arrived in Canberra on the eve of Remembrance Day seeking extra action for soldiers and veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

The 67-year-old former Special Air Service warrant officer took his message direct to Veteran Affairs Minister Dan Tehan on the steps of Parliament House this morning beside his ride support vehicle bearing the words ‘Victory over PTSD’.

A PTSD victim from his service in Vietnam in 1970-71, Sams said he was impressed with recent Federal initiatives to better diagnose and treat PTSD sufferers and combat suicide amongst veterans.

“But I am undertaking this ride to raise community awareness for trauma-related injury amongst our serving and ex-Australian Defence Force members to make sure all governments continue to keep their feet on the fix pedal,” he added.

Sams is on the final leg of an epic six-month, 10,000km bike ride that has taken him the length of Vietnam, through southern Cambodia, down the Thai-Malaysian peninsula to Singapore and across the Nullarbor to South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Canberra.

He said while the first half of the ride was aimed at building a better understanding between Australia and our Asian neighbors, his Australian message focussed on raising greater awareness of PTSD injury and suicide in the military and civilian emergency worker communities.

“PTSD crept up on me over 20 years and it cost me a marriage and very nearly a lost career,” he said. “For many others – police, ambos, firies and nurses – it can be a slide into alcohol and drug abuse, broken relationships and all too often suicide.”

Sams lost his left leg below the knee in a parachute accident in 1995 and developed PTSD from serving in five-man, deep penetration SAS patrols in Vietnam. He was awarded a Star of Courage for saving the life of his student parachutist in the accident that cost him his left leg.

Since leaving Perth on September 5 the PTSD warrior has been guest of honour at a range of RSL and council-organised events to flag his cause and raise donations for three non-profit organisations focussing on trauma-related injury and suicide – RSL DefenceCare, St John of God Richmond Hospital’s Trauma and Mental Health Research Initiative and WA-based Bravery Trust.

“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 to pop a few bucks in the charity bucket – everyone from truckies to grey nomads, farmers and ordinary townsfolk are coming forward with donations.”

Truck and his trusty Trek bike have logged 115 days and almost 10,000km of riding since leaving Hanoi on May 12 carrying an Australian flag he wants to hand to the Prime Minister at the Australian War Memorial at tomorrow's Remembrance Day ceremony. After that he will transfer to Government House for afternoon tea with the Governor-General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, and senior military personnel including ex-ADF Chiefs Admiral Chris Barrie and Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston .

"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 was the Nullarbor because of its sheer remoteness and the unusually bad weather we encountered in the West Australian wheat belt and later in South Australia when the State's power grid was knocked out."

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](http://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 on his trusty Trek bike (more images available at [www.thelongridehome.com.au](http://www.thelongridehome.com.au))

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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	Cocklebiddy	15-Oct-16	Two Wells	Adelaide	05-Nov-16	Holbrook	Wagga Wagga
23-Sep-16	Cocklebiddy	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	