

Taking the long road to promote awareness

For sufferers of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) it can be a long, hard road, but one man is taking the time to ensure those afflicted with the disease do not go through it alone.

Former Special Air Service (SAS) Vietnam veteran Laurie "Truck" Sams is on The Long Ride Home, cycling 10,000 kilometres from Vietnam to Sydney to raise awareness of PTSD and money for three organisations instrumental in helping those who suffer from it.

Truck was in Gundagai on Monday where he met with the Gundagai RSL sub branch and locals to talk about one of the biggest single accepted health issues among veterans.

"The Long Ride Home has all been about awareness for PTSD, and I think we're getting the word out there," Truck said.

"I've been on the road for nearly 10,000 kilometres now. Throughout all the communities I've visited it's organisations like the RSL sub branches, Lions, Rotary Clubs, Freemasons and local councils who have been getting behind the ride and getting the word out into their community and that's what it's all about - letting the community know how bad this terrible disease is."

By the time Truck had



On behalf of Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, Penny Nicholson presents a cheque to Laurie "Truck" Sams with Gundagai RSL sub branch president Jim Sharman in Gundagai on Monday.

reached Gundagai, he had already completed 110 days of riding, gone through countless bicycle tyres and faced some of the harshest elements.

"I've been through every known obstacle you could come across," he said.

"Riding through 40 degree heat in the sand dunes to the jungles of Vietnam, climbing through the pot-holed mountains into the coastal tropical rain which I had solid for two-and-a-half weeks from six in the morning until five at night. Then I flew to Perth where I had five degrees coming down through the southwest of WA, wind chill factor hitting me, and then I had the

South Australian storms across the Nullabor with massive head winds. It's been hellish."

Serving in Vietnam from 1970-71, Truck is himself a sufferer of PTSD, and says more needs to be done to raise awareness of a disease that has wreaked havoc on the lives of veterans, young and old.

"A lot of our veterans are slipping through the net coming home from Afghanistan and Iraq. If it was out there and everyone knew more about it, they wouldn't be suffering and they wouldn't be committing suicide," he said.

"A lot needs to be done, there needs to be more re-

search into it, and that's why I'm doing the ride, raising funds for three beneficiaries for more research.

"I know the government can do more and I'm sure they're going to. They've already put out an inquiry into PTSD, and I'll be meeting with the Minister for Veterans Affairs in Canberra. He contacted my people because he heard about the ride. I'm sure we'll have dialogue and talk about it because I know they're onside."

A disease not only prevalent amongst ex-servicemen and women, throughout his journey Truck has seen the disease affecting frontline emergency workers as well.

"I've got to talk to a lot of sufferers on my way across - police and other first responders who are certainly seeing the trauma, often on a daily basis," he said.

"I was taken into the prison department at Port Augusta and I saw some of the trauma that they have to go through and deal with, so the awareness is not just for ex-servicemen, it's awareness for others out in the wider community who also suffer from PTSD."

The repercussions of the disease can be widespread, with families of sufferers being affected as well.

"My father was a prisoner of war and I saw what he went through," Truck said. "I've met hundreds of people across Australia that have had someone in their lives, whether that be a family member or friend, suffer from it. It certainly affects families, it affects the children of veterans, they're subject to it as well."

Whether a sufferer can ever be cured of PTSD remains to be seen, with Truck believing the key lies in research.

"Is it something that ever goes away? Until we have more research into it, I don't know, but I hope I see it in my lifetime," he said.

"I know I'm a lot better. I've dealt with it in different

ways through medical help, talking with others who served in Vietnam, that's one of the things that people can do. I always tell young veterans to go and talk to older veterans at the RSLs, they're always there. When we came home from Vietnam we didn't talk to the World War II veterans.

"I spoke to a young veteran recently who suffers badly from PTSD and I introduced him to some older veterans who've taken him under their wing. It's helped him and he was pleased."

The Long Ride Home beneficiaries include RSL DefenceCare, Bravery Trust and St John of God Trauma and Mental Health Research Initiative.

On behalf of Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, LRC representative Penny Nicholson presented Truck with a \$100 cheque at Carberry park on Monday, while the Gundagai Lions Club provided a barbecue lunch.

On Monday night, the RSL Ladies Auxiliary presented Truck with a \$1000 contribution, having also donated \$8000 to RSL DefenceCare in the past.

Truck will finish his ride in Sydney on November 20 after a meeting with the Governor-General in Canberra on Remembrance Day.

Waste matters

Drop off your household problem waste for recycling

Community Recycling Centres

Your local Community Recycling Centre is open. You can drop off:

FREE SERVICE



Your Community Recycling Centre is located at:

Gundagai Landfill and Recycling Centre
Burra Road, Gundagai

Hours: Mon, Fri: 7am-11am; Wed: 1-5pm
Sat: 11am-5pm; Sun: 7am-1pm (Closed Tue, Thu)

For more information call Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council on 02 6944 0200 or visit www.crcriverinamurray.org.au



Only household quantities accepted.

This project is a NSW EPA Waste Less, Recycle More initiative funded from the waste levy. Visit www.epa.nsw.gov.au

Remembrance Day in the high country

A special high country Remembrance Day service will be held tomorrow to commemorate the loss of the nations thousands of soldiers and horses killed during battle.

High country horsemen, a Light Horse troop in full uniform along with local residents will join together tomorrow for the ceremony at Bullocks Hill (Snowy Mountain Highway) at 11am.

President of the Adaminaby RSL Sub Branch Peter Cochran said this will be a unique and solemn opportunity for Australians to pay tribute to the thousands of young men who

gave their lives in battle with the iconic Snowy Brumby by their side.

"Mounted members of the Light Horse will parade in full uniform and will be supported by local horsemen and women, descendants of those who fought in the Boer War, WW1, WW2 and subsequent conflicts including Vietnam and Afghanistan," he said.

"A service will be conducted by the Adaminaby RSL sub branch which will conclude with the playing of the Last Post and recital of the Ode.

"Those entitled to wear medals and awards should do so."

Mr Cochran said the weekend gathering of mountain horsemen and women will continue on to Saturday with a local historian providing a campfire account of the Light Horse and Waler connection to the Snowy Brumby.

"Saturday afternoon allows for free riding and campfire Karaoke on Saturday night," he said.

"Members of the public, media and visitors are welcome to join our contribution to acknowledging the supreme sacrifice made by an entire generation of young men and women in a conflict which saved the world from an evil invasion of our freedom."

Free workshop to keep kids safe online

An eSafety expert from the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner will be delivering a free workshop on how to keep young people safe online.

The workshop will be held at Tumut High School tonight between 6.30pm and 7.30pm.

It is specifically targeted at parents due to some of the direct materials presented.

"This is an important opportunity for parents to learn about e-safety and protect their children from common pitfalls that come with the use of technology," said Tumut Police Inspector Steve Radford.

"As parents, ipads, video games, mobile phones and the like can be an 'easy baby sitter' at times, but they also bring with them certain risks that we need to be aware of.

"Our local area has not been immune to cyber bullying and harassment, sexting and persons using the internet to groom young children. If you are keen to learn more I encourage you to attend the workshop and ask as many questions as you can."

Tumut High School is in Bogong Place.

For more information visit www.esafety.gov.au.

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