

A Heroic Life Still Inspires - The Unveiling of the Cpl. Cameron Baird VC MG Statue

For the first time in Australian history a Victoria Cross recipient of modern day warfare has been immortalised in the form of a statue.

Today, Saturday November 5, a plethora of VIP guests assembled at Currumbin RSL for the unveiling of a seven foot bronze statue of Corporal Cameron Baird VC, MG.

“This statue will honour not only Cameron as Australia’s 100th VC recipient, but all the 41 soldiers that were killed in Afghanistan and will stand as a representation of Australia’s modern day warfare” says Cpl Baird’s father, Doug Baird.

His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and Lady Cosgrove, Keith Payne VC OAM DSC SS (US), Daniel Keighran VC, Chief of the Defence Force Mark Binskin AC, Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, Director of the Australia War Memorial, the Honourable Dr Brendan Nelson AO, BMBS, FRANCP (Hon), FAMA were among the honoured guests.

The statue was been created by Scott Edwards from ‘Naked Army’. Founded in 2005, Naked Army is a Recognised Defence Supplier with its aim to help create tangible connections between Australia’s proud military history and current generations.

The sculpture started as a 12” study, which was completed during 2015 and served two purposes; as a collectable piece to help Cam’s Cause raise funds and as the basis for the monumental sculpture, which in turn was sculpted over a 4 month period in 2016, and then transported to the Sydney Foundry for casting in bronze.

“In the initial designs for the monument I originally intended a strong, informal but heroic pose; portraying a man who knows the ground he fights on – a sculpture that conveyed Cameron’s tremendous physicality but showed little emotion.” said Scott

“Doug and Kaye Baird suggested we bring out Cameron’s personality more, removing the ballistic eyewear which had been proposed, and showing one of Cameron’s traits – his perpetual half-grin. The sculpt relied heavily on photography from Cameron’s family and fellow soldiers”.

Both the 12” and memorial size sculpts were completed using traditional materials and techniques. The monumental sculpt was hand-sculpted using clay over a steel frame, and then cast in bronze.

Cpl Cameron Baird served in Afghanistan and on 22 June 2013, in the [Uruzgan province](#), his heroic actions made him the 100th recipient of the Victoria Cross for Australia and left Kaye and Doug Baird without their youngest son.

The award was given posthumously in February 2014 and an article written in a Melbourne paper followed. It included interviews with Andrew Harrison, Cameron's grade six teacher and football coach and Chris Dyer, Cameron's lifelong friend.

This article reconnected Chris and Andrew who both felt they wanted to do something to honour and remember Cameron. After meeting at a local pub in Melbourne with another long time friend Daniel Carroll, the three set out to create "Cam's Cause"

Cam's Cause stands for raising awareness for Australian modern day warfare and the costs associated; both financial and personal. To remember all 41 soldiers that were killed in Afghanistan, the hundreds that were permanently injured and the many that struggle with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with over 200 taking their own lives since returning home.

"As time went on we realised there was a lot of potential for Cam's Cause to do some really positive work and raise awareness of the work the Australian Modern day forces and in particular the cost that comes with it. We aim to continually honour and remember Cameron for what he has achieved in his military career and also for the amazing person he was in everyday life. Cam lived with a lot of morals and virtues which made him one of the nicest, kindest and loyal people you could have met" says Chris Dyer.

The money raised through Cam's Cause events goes to three main projects. Firstly it donates to the Commando Welfare Trust; they offer both initial emergency funding and then long term financial aid when the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) grants or entitlements are no longer available.

Secondly, through their connection with the Commando Welfare Trust a collaborative initiative between Cam's Cause and the 2nd Commando Regiment (2CDO) has been set up whereby they offer wilderness retreats to soldiers.

"The wilderness camp is offered for variety of reasons. It is offered to soldiers struggling with PTSD, those that are transitioning into civilian life and the broader members of the regiment. It aims to expose them to healthy habits and self-care strategies that promote better holistic health and well-being in generally a long and high stress career as a commando", says Chris.

These retreats help the returned adjust back to civilian life through outdoor activities such as hiking, hunting, bow making etc., plus opportunities to speak with health care professionals about any issues and concerns. "We hope by offering a retreat that brings like minded people together, and offering activities to keep their bodies motivated and opportunities to talk about their feelings, we can play a part in preventing the alarming rate of suicide and help these guys get back on their feet" says Chris.

Part of the funding also went toward the creation of the bronze statue of Cameron.

Currumbin RSL was one of Cameron's favourite drinking holes when home in Australia. After he passed his parents Kaye and Doug organised his memorial

service at the Club and have since become steadfast friends with its board and staff. The Club's upstairs memorial display has a large section dedicated to CPL Cameron Baird VC, MG and it seemed only fitting that Cam's Cause held its inaugural Queensland fundraiser at the Club.

"We want to continually honour and remember CPL Cameron Baird and inspire people with his story. All that he achieved on the battle field; a recipient of both the Victoria Cross and Medal for Gallantry (highest and third highest bravery awards) and also the morals and values that Cameron held in everyday life. We use one of Cameron's life mottos which was; "aspire to inspire". We aim to inspire people to be better in themselves." Said Andrew Harris