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Victoria Cross Awarded for Heroism in Vietnam

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Private Richard Henderson, a 19-year-old Australian soldier, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross (VC) for his extraordinary bravery during the Vietnam War's Battle of Fire Support Base Coral in 1968. His selfless acts, running into enemy fire to save comrades, have been honoured decades later, highlighting Australia's commitment to recognising valour. This article delves into Henderson's heroism and the significance of this recognition.

On May 13-14, 1968, during intense fighting at Fire Support Base Coral in Bien Hoa Province, soldiers from the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (RAR), faced fierce attacks from North Vietnamese forces. Several Australian soldiers were awarded the Victoria Cross for their courage in this battle, including Warrant Officer Keith Payne and Corporal Peter Cocker. These soldiers displayed exceptional bravery, often risking their lives to save others under heavy fire.

The Victoria Cross is Australia's highest military honour, recognising acts of valour in the face of the enemy. It is traditionally cast from bronze sourced from cannons captured during the Crimean War, symbolising

timeless courage. Since its inception in 1991, the Victoria Cross for Australia has been awarded to 15 individuals, continuing a legacy of honour from the original British award.

The last posthumous VC awarded for Vietnam was to Warrant Officer Keith Payne in 1969, who survived the war and was recognised for his actions at Fire Support Base Coral. The Australian War Memorial continues to honour such acts of heroism, and ceremonies to recognise Victoria Cross recipients are marked with great solemnity.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has consistently acknowledged the sacrifices of Australia's military personnel, emphasising the importance of supporting veterans and their families. The government continues to invest in modernising the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and providing resources for current and former service members.