



Private Members' Business

Main Committee

19 September 2011

Sharon Grierson MP

NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms Grierson (Newcastle) (12:35): I commend the motion moved by the member for Fowler in acknowledging the contributions made by police officers from across our Australian communities. I acknowledge the member for Fowler's former role within the Police Federation of Australia and New Zealand. On National Remembrance Day on 29 September this year we will commemorate the lives of Detective Constable William Arthur George Crews, Sergeant Daniel Stiller and Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding—brave men who have each made the ultimate sacrifice whilst in the line of duty protecting our Australian communities.

The Prime Minister noted this morning that those who serve in uniform do not seek recognition; they do so because they are honoured to serve. It is our duty to recognise those who have served and who continue to serve in the interests of our community, for each day as they go out to work their parents, their partners, their children and their friends can never be certain that they will return to their homes that night. It is for this reason that we honour and pay tribute to those who take these risks on a day-to-day basis to keep our communities safe. It is also for this reason that we honour and pay tribute to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

In late August a 7½-hour police siege occurred within my own electorate of Newcastle in the early morning in Mayfield West. This siege involved a stand-off, with negotiators and heavily armed police from the State Protection Support Unit present. Thankfully, the event was resolved without incident due to the skill and sheer professionalism of those officers on the front line. Unfortunately, as we know, events like these do not always end without incident, as it is impossible to know what can occur. We should for a moment reflect upon and imagine if our loved ones did not return at the end of the day from their workplace. For the majority of us that worry does not affect us, but for the families of those officers who serve across the nation's police forces it is a sure bet that it certainly does.

It is well known that my city is one that has had a great deal of problems with binge drinking. Alcohol related violence statistics are the second highest of anywhere in the state, and I know that front-line police deal with this every week, every weekend, day in, day out and that it is wearing them down. I have been at the openings of Law Week in my electorate, where barristers and the law societies have stood and talked about the difficult problem that drugs like ice now cause in law enforcement. It is an uncontrollable time of great irrationality and great violence, and it is our police who are at the front line of that. So I pay my respects to and congratulate the inaugural National Police Service Medal recipients today for their past and future dedication to the integral role and service they provide.

I also note that Hunter local Inspector Bruce McGregor, a Lake Macquarie duty officer, recently took part in a second Wall to Wall Ride of Remembrance from Sydney to Canberra in honour of his fallen mates. Each year, the special service held in Newcastle by the Police Association and by the police themselves is one that is well attended and is one that is an opportunity for us to say thank you and to pay our respects. It is important to honour and remember those who have fallen, for it is a consistent reminder of the gravity and sacrifice associated with the role police officers play within our society. It makes us truly thankful, as we should be, for their heroic service to our nation.

In dealing with the local police commander in my electorate, he has raised with me the concerns of police officers who suffer stress and trauma in their job. It is time that state governments took on some of those issues. I know that many people would say that policing today is a job in which perhaps one would consider some early retirement opportunities, as we do with the defence forces and other forces. It seems to me that front-line work in the police can have a very long-term cost, and I certainly am one to suggest that that debate needs to happen. I thank the member for Fowler for moving this important private member's motion today and give it my full support.