



Speech by

**CARRYN SULLIVAN**

**MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE**

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Hansard 9 September 2003

**SENIOR SERGEANT P. IRWIN**

**Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN** (Pumicestone—ALP) (12.19 p.m.): Senior Sergeant Perry Irwin lost his life doing what he loved to do—serving and protecting his community. On 22 August, the officer in charge of Caboolture Police Station was tragically gunned down as he and his two colleagues investigated reports of an armed man in the vicinity of the local schools. He need not have gone on that call-out, but Perry was not a man to lead from behind a desk nor was he a man hardened by the ugliness that police officers necessarily encounter in their daily duties. He was the embodiment of our aspirations for all of our police officers.

Much has been written in tribute to Perry since that dreadful day, such was the regard in which he was held by all whose lives he touched. He arrived in our community as officer in charge of the Bribie Island station in January 2002. He immediately began to make a difference to our community. It could be argued that the solid support and encouragement he gave to the local neighbourhood watch committees and the close relationships he cultivated between the Police Service and local schools were expected of him in his new position. But those involved with Bribie's neighbourhood watches and schools will say that Perry's contribution went well beyond what was expected.

I frequently saw him at other community events and meetings because he wanted to be involved in our community and because he wanted the community to be involved with him. Perry introduced himself to me in his first week at his new post and so began a working relationship that I will remember forever. We established a monthly meeting and over coffee and his favourite lamingtons we discussed local policing issues and he brought me up to date on matters that I had raised with him previously.

At one such meeting he expressed his concern for the safety of Bribie's children who were paying little or no regard to the bicycle helmet laws. From that discussion emerged an important safety initiative known as the Bribie Road Awareness Team, or BRAT as we affectionately knew it. Positive reinforcement, coupled with roadside counselling, helped children realise the importance of wearing protective equipment while riding their bikes. The success of that initiative is evident on Bribie Island today.

After a little over a year on Bribie Island, Perry sought and was awarded promotion to senior sergeant and took over as officer in charge of Caboolture Police Station in May this year. I was honoured that he asked me to provide a written testimonial and delighted that he gained advancement in his career. I was also delighted, too, that his new posting was to a station that, while not within the Pumicestone electorate, did have police responsibility for parts of the area that I represent.

His farewell function in April was attended by a number of Bribie Island and Ningi residents. They were pleased for Perry's promotion but deep down they all wanted him to stay. I know that Perry felt the new posting presented him with enormous challenges. I know that he believed that he was making progress in overcoming them.

He had begun in Caboolture just as he had done on Bribie Island—to involve himself in the community, to get to know the people and to have them get to know him. Through his own energy, decency and humility he would have transformed community police relations in Caboolture for the better as he had done on Bribie.

Perry's funeral service with full police honours was very moving, the 4,000 people in attendance attesting to the love that people had for him and the esteem in which he was held by his colleagues. Also moving for those of us in attendance during a cultural visit to a local bora ring two days earlier was the request by local Aboriginal elders that we close our eyes and ask the spiritual ancestors to form a guard of honour for Senior Sergeant Perry Irwin to pass through as he began his eternal journey to join the ranks of God's divine forces.

Perry Irwin's love for his family was limitless and I want to express my deepest sympathy to his wife, Melissa, his children, Daniel, Jenna, Elizabeth and Patrick, and to their extended family, friends and colleagues. His loss has left a huge void in their lives and it will be difficult, if not impossible, to fill. But by example he has shown us how to live our lives with compassion and humility and what is truly important—our families and our communities. Perry Irwin was a true hero and we all miss him.