



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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OFFICER IN CHARGE, ALL PURPOSE ALLOWANCE

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (9.04 pm): I would like to take this opportunity to raise an issue that affects every one-officer police station throughout the state, whether it is a remote police station or a community beat. These officers in charge have been advised that they are not eligible for the officer in charge all purpose allowance because this allowance was only made available to ranks of sergeant or above, even though the police minister issued press statements across this state boasting of the pay increases for officers in charge. These officers in charge have been excluded because of their rank, despite the fact that many of them are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As many of these officers are in small rural communities, the department has added salt to the wound by refusing to continue negotiations on the introduction of a remote area incentive package designed to entice police officers to rural areas. This has been removed in favour of the all purpose allowance that these officers in charge will not receive. This means that they have been kicked in the guts twice. In other words, they have lost their remote area incentive package and will not receive the officer in charge all purpose allowance even though they are officers in charge.

Police officers in rural areas and small communities play a unique role in their communities. They become a recognised and renowned member of the community, and they are expected to perform additional social duties as well as their traditional police duties. They spend time with children at schools, perform duties of the transport department such as licensing, approve liquor licences and perform the duties of many other government departments as well as their traditional duties of law enforcement. They also often spend a large amount of their time fulfilling responsibilities generally assigned to someone with the rank of sergeant. They are isolated by the tyranny of distance. Yet despite all of this, the department has seen fit to not reward the time and effort these officers put into their roles because of their rank.

This discrimination will result in difficulties recruiting officers for rural and remote locations. With no remote area incentive, and no recognition for officers in charge of small community stations, police officers will be understandably reluctant to pursue careers in country Queensland. This is why I call for the intervention of the minister for police to ensure that all officers in charge, regardless of their rank, are able to access the all purpose allowance which she said in her press statement they were entitled to.