




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 9 August 2017

ADJOURNMENT

Harms, Mr O

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (10.06 pm): Last week saw the sad loss to his family and to the Miriam Vale community of police officer Sergeant Owen Harms. Following his shock death, tributes are pouring in for this highly respected and loved family man, husband and father. Sergeant Harms was stationed in the small and tight-knit community of Miriam Vale in my electorate for 20 years, and he dedicated his life to protecting, serving and improving the community he loved so much. He was a decorated officer held in the highest regard by his fellow officers over a 30-year career of service. In addition to the Australian Police Medal and National Medal, Sergeant Owen Harms received a Certificate of Merit from the Royal Humane Society of Australasia for his part in trying to save two boys trapped in a collapsed sand tunnel in Agnes Water. Described as a 'true blue Aussie with a heart of gold', Owen was presented with an award and recognition for his diligence, ethical conduct and commitment to his community.

Owen rallied the local sports and volunteer community around him as he championed the upgrade of the facilities at Gary Larson Oval. His commitment and vision to encourage families to get out and get active was highlighted when 800 Miriam Vale residents attended the unveiling of the facilities that he worked so hard to get. I personally worked alongside Owen to support the Miriam Vale community in their calls for funding to upgrade the lighting at Gary Larson Oval and can attest to his deep love of his local community.

Owen had recently heard that his long battle with cancer was over, but his battle with the demands of one of the hardest, most selfless jobs in society was not. Owen's struggles with the confronting requirements of his role as a police officer came at a cost, and that price is one we all bear responsibility for. His passing is a devastating loss to his family—Lyn, Brendon and Bree—to his police colleagues and to all of us, and we mourn with them the loss of a fine man and a fine police officer. It is most fitting that I quote from a message by his beloved Miriam Vale Magpies Rugby League Club—

Owen, our community pillar, our hero, our mate!

Forever etched in our hearts and minds are the memories of this tremendous man! May you rest in eternal peace Owey. We love you and will miss you terribly.

On behalf of the Maggies family we are all holding Lyn, Brendon and Bree very close in our hearts and thoughts at this devastating time. May you draw strength and courage from the outpouring of love and support.

My reflections are that he never wanted to let anyone down. That was the sort of guy he was. He would never speak ill of anyone and he always strived to make his community a better place. Members, we must in this place ensure our community knows and seeks support before tragedy confronts us. We must deal with the issues of mental illness and suicide. I remind everyone in our community that if they need help please call on Lifeline or beyondblue.