



Speech By  
**James Lister**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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**LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.31 pm): I too rise to make a contribution in this debate on the motion to take note of Queensland Audit Office report No. 2 of 2017-18 titled *Managing the mental health of Queensland police employees*. As my honourable friend the member for Toohey so eloquently put it, this is an area where we do need to strive for constant improvement. I am fortunate to call a number of former police officers friends. We have five of them on this side of the House. They tell me that, by and large, things are getting better in the field of mental health for serving police officers. The Audit Office examined the progress being made to manage the mental health of police officers and came up with six recommendations. They recommended that the QPS—

1. better coordinates and enhances its staff wellbeing and mental health support services and information within a clear strategy and integrated framework  
...
2. acts to understand and address the mistrust of some employees in its current mental health frameworks and support services  
...
3. improves how it designs, coordinates, delivers, and records its mental health training  
...
4. assesses options for screening employees prior to them leaving the service, and for enhancing post-service support—  
I think that is a very important one—
5. develops processes and measures for analysing its data for trends and to assess the effectiveness of support services so they can be continuously improved  
...
6. improves the consistency and coverage of mental health screening and monitoring ...

Whilst I cannot speak as a police officer or a former police officer, I did serve in the Australian Defence Force and I think there are some similarities there. It was my observation that from time to time service personnel would retire from the service or leave in some way other than a medical discharge and that that departure was prompted or contributed to by an undiagnosed underlying mental health problem. The tragedy of that situation is that those people can then fall through the cracks. They cannot necessarily be given access to their entitlements regarding treatment for their injuries. Also, the public perception of the defence department would be diminished because of the perception that our soldiers, sailors and airmen and airwomen are not properly looked after. I think that is quite unfortunate.

In 2017 the QPS agreed to implement all of the report's recommendations. They subsequently confirmed that they commenced work on all of the recommendations, yet the latest correspondence the committee received was 28 May 2018. In subsequent correspondence they said they were currently

working on or had completed 'all six recommendations, with recommendations either finalised or implemented, or near finalisation with implementation subject to the availability of resourcing'. I think we can rest assured that there is progress being made there.

I would like to pay tribute to the members of the Queensland Police Service and other emergency service personnel who face particularly difficult circumstances in their jobs in terms of stress and so forth. We know that they are exposed to trauma, high levels of stress and difficult situations involving people whose plights are particularly tragic. Over time I am sure that any normal person would be affected by these things, and that is why I believe it is important that these recommendations are accepted and implemented and that every effort is expended to make sure those in whom we place the safety of the public are looked after so they can do their job well. It is important that they feel free to express if they feel they have a problem safe in the knowledge they are not going to be disadvantaged for doing so and that understanding, assistance and ongoing treatment will be available for them when they do. I am quite happy with the report and I commend it to the House.