



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Ryan**


**MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD**

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Record of Proceedings, 28 November 2019

**LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (3.54 pm): When I travel around Queensland I meet with police officers who on a daily basis demonstrate their dedication and commitment to keeping the community safe. When Queensland is at its worst when natural disasters strike, our police officers are at their best. We saw it during the devastating floods that hit Townsville earlier this year. We saw police doing whatever it took, putting their own lives at risk to help others. This is what police do: they put others before themselves. Police work is challenging, police work is complex and police work can be dangerous. Police work can take a toll on the selfless individuals who comprise this world-class service.

Mental health issues are the third biggest health problem in Australia behind heart disease and cancer. They can affect anyone and their effect on the sufferer and those around them can be serious. Because of the nature of the work they do dealing with emergency situations or critical incidents, police can be vulnerable to the task and conditions they face. Policing is a people service; it is about police interacting with the public. At times the interaction occurs in tense, distressing and challenging circumstances.

The report we are discussing found that any one or an accumulation of these interactions can affect the mental health and wellbeing of police. The report also found that, coupled with the stress factors that affect the wider population, police are considerably more susceptible to mental illness such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress. The report found that the Queensland Police Service has in place many of the necessary elements to effectively monitor and manage the mental health of its employees and prevent mental illness. Police have established a wide range of mental health related processes, screening, monitoring and support services. However—and this is very important—there is always more that can be done.

I know the Police Service is working to improve the monitoring and support services it provides. The service is progressing its Our People Matter health and wellbeing strategy. The objective is to build and sustain momentum and support for the strategy and other health and wellbeing initiatives. It is a strategy around the health, safety and wellbeing of Queensland Police and their families to help them during the tough times.

Our People Matter committees are established in every district and every command and they promote initiatives that support the strategy. It is about providing wraparound services for all, free help and counselling, access to specialist psychological support and social workers, advisers that offer advice on rehabilitation and injury management, and chaplaincy. Because when it does come to our police, our people really do matter. Our People Matter sets a direction and standard to provide working environments that enhance support to police employees and their families. This strategy represents a significant investment in terms of resources and services to support employees who may be experiencing poor mental health and physical health.

One of my first actions after the last state election was to write to the Minister for Industrial Relations requesting a review of workers compensation arrangements for first responders and emergency service workers with post-traumatic stress. To meet this government election commitment, the Queensland Police Service is assisting the Office of Industrial Relations and WorkCover Queensland in their review of current workers compensation and clinical services relating to police and post-traumatic stress. I note that the Queensland Audit Office also acknowledged the significant work undertaken in implementing the recommendations that were quoted in the committee's report.

The steps that the Queensland Police Service has taken, including through the Our People Matter strategy, are having a positive effect. I am advised that the Queensland Police Service has observed a reduction in work related psychological injuries from 0.72 per hundred employees 10 years ago to 0.62 per hundred employees in the 2018-19 year. Just yesterday I stood with the Police Commissioner and emergency services minister, Craig Crawford, to launch the 'Are they Triple OK?' campaign. This is a campaign that urges people and support networks to support our first responders.