




Speech By
Peter Russo
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.26 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 47 titled *Examination of Queensland Audit Office report 2: 2017-18—Managing the mental health of Queensland police employees* tabled on 20 September 2019.

This report presents a summary of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's examination of the Queensland Audit Office report No. 2 for 2017-18 titled *Managing the mental health of Queensland police employees*. Mental health is very complex and mental health issues can take many forms.

In a previous life I worked in the justice department at the Magistrates Court in Cairns. One of my roles was as the coroner's clerk, which meant that I had to put together the reports that had come in from the different remote areas and also locally in relation to people who had met untimely deaths. I remember—I will not say as a young clerk, but I remember as a clerk in that courthouse putting together those reports, and the photos that went with the reports were very stark and revealing.

The reason I raise this is that we are talking about people who are the first at the scene. They are faced with the reality of the scene. I merely read reports and saw photos of the scene much later in the process, but it is as though I can still see some of those photos today. That is the slight effect that those experiences have had on me, so for those on the front line who have to go to motor vehicle accidents or to where people have met disastrous ends it must have a greater impact on them over time.

The Auditor-General's report into this matter looked at how the Queensland Police Service could improve the way they do it but, as we in this House all know, Queensland is a very vast state. We have the tyranny of distance and we have the tyranny of the hard work that frontline services have to do. There are many remote places with one-man stations, for example, and they have to deal with myriad issues, but the isolation that goes along with the vastness of Queensland is something that has to be taken on board.

The report suggests improvements to the system, but if we are realistic about what we are talking about today—the challenges that frontline services face—it is important that we understand that there will always be room for improvement. This is not an area where you can tick all the boxes and say 'Yes, we've got it right.' We are dealing with human beings, and any suggestion or recommendation to make the life of Queensland police officers—for that matter, anyone else on the front line—better and more able to cope with the stresses of their job should be not denigrated but should be taken on board to make the life of those frontline service workers better.