




Speech By
Bryson Head

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2023

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE: ARNOLD, MR M; DARE, MR A; MCCROW, MS R

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (11.53 am): I rise to contribute to and support this condolence motion. When I signed up to run for the seat of Callide, I had no idea and certainly no inclination of the atrocity that could and would happen. Not only could you think this simply would not happen anywhere, but for it to occur in my own backyard was, and is, beyond comprehension.

Constable Rachel McCrow, Constable Matthew Arnold and civilian Alan Dare lost their lives in a vile, horrific, callous and cold-blooded attack. This was not just an attack on the police, but an attack on my community, on the people of Wieambilla, of Tara, of Chinchilla and not only the Western Downs but also all of Queensland and all our great nation. It was a terror attack from three of the most evil of beings.

In the aftermath of that event, on 12 December 2022, I saw my community more broken than I could ever imagine. There was not a soul in my region who did not feel pain and grief that week. The huge floral tributes at local police stations placed by people who came from all across the state show how widely this was felt. There were people who I never thought I would see shed a tear who were crying alongside thousands. Even the most seasoned of police officers were shaken to their core. This event again highlighted what our men and women in blue put on the line for every Queenslanders every single day when they put on that uniform.

Alan Dare was a good citizen and a good neighbour who would always go above and beyond to help anyone he could. Alan lost his life in doing what he did best; he lost it being a good neighbour. I just hope that every other good neighbour across Queensland does not cede to the fear that this event has instilled.

When a singular event inflicts so much pain, it is easy to go looking for answers that may not exist. I still certainly have many questions as to how this could have happened, especially in my own backyard, but I understand such a complex investigation will take time, and I ask everyone to be patient until all questions can be answered.

Constables Randall Kirk and Keely Brough are the two other officers that attended that fateful afternoon and managed to make it out alive. One cannot fathom the fear they faced. The way in which Constable Brough conducted herself as she lay in the grass while the evil attackers tried to flush her out by lighting fires shows how much of a fine officer she already was only weeks out from graduating from the Police Academy. What we do know is that no-one was meant to make it out of that property alive. It is a thought that very much haunts other officers that could have been the ones on that job.

Constable Brough was fortunate to have a weak phone signal from a nearby gas plant. Through this, her only working means of communication, she was able to provide vital information and communicate with the Queensland Police. Because of this vital information she was able to provide, Sergeant Vern Crous of the Miles Police Station was able to lead a team of 15 brave local police officers with very limited equipment in an extraction effort under heavy gunfire. Their efforts ultimately saved the life of Constable Brough and recovered Constable McCrow and Constable Arnold.

I do hope that both Keely and Randall are able to continue their policing careers, move on and cope with the trauma of this horrible attack. The state of Queensland, the Police Service and my community are all better off with them in uniform. Move on and cope will be about all my community will be able to do, for we will never get over it and we will certainly never forget. The week that followed was the hardest week I have ever faced. I hope I never have to experience anything like it again.

To the families of Alan, Rachel and Matthew, while words cannot remove the pain you feel, we stand with you. We lost two fine young officers and a great citizen, while you lost someone close to your hearts. We are forever sorry. Please know you are always welcome back to our community and, of course, we are here for any support you may want or need.

To the men and women of the Queensland Police Service, on behalf of the people of the Western Downs and the electorate of Callide, I thank you for your service. Know you have my support in what you do for us every single day.

To echo the words of the member for Maranoa, it is all but impossible to become a local in a small country town. To Alan Dare, Matthew Arnold and Rachel McCrow, you are all locals now. With honour they served. Rest in peace.