




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MIRANI

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2023

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

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (12.05 pm): I rise in support of the motion before the House and to offer my reflections on this tragic event. The day 12 December 2022 marks one of the deadliest days in Queensland's police history, a day when we lost three wonderful Queenslanders: Constable Rachel McCrow, Constable Matthew Arnold and Mr Alan Dare. The actions of all three on that devastating day embodied the qualities of courage, compassion and commitment, qualities that we should all strive to emulate in our own lives.

Like the rest of Queensland, I was deeply shocked by this horrific shooting. As the Prime Minister said at the time, it was a deadly ambush that has stolen lives, broken hearts, devastated a community and shocked the nation. The outpouring of shock and grief across Queensland which we saw in the wake of this shooting is testament to a rarity of such events in this state. Four bright police officers set off that afternoon to carry out what they believed was a routine call. Two of the constables were from the Tara Police Station and two from Chinchilla Police Station. All four officers were only in their 20s—just kids in many respects—with every right to expect a long and fulfilling life ahead of them. The four constables arrived at the Wieambilla property at 4.30 pm but they were almost immediately cut down in a hail of bullets. Miraculously, two of the four somehow managed to make a retreat and survived. Sadly, two of them, Constable Rachel McCrow and Constable Matthew Arnold, would not return home again that day. Both were murdered in a savage act of violence that defies comprehension.

Constable Rachel McCrow, the first to be gunned down, had only been sworn in as a police officer in June 2021. She was described by friends as a selfless and dedicated person who genuinely cared about others, someone who always went above and beyond and who took enormous pride in her job. Constable Matthew Arnold was just 26 years old and he, too, was relatively new to the force, having only been sworn in during March 2020. He served as a Queensland police officer for just two years and nine months. Matthew was a triplet and a very talented athlete. According to his former school principal, he will always be remembered as a man of service, integrity and compassion. Both of these young officers paid a terrible price that day, one that no-one should have to pay for the simple act of doing their job.

Tragically, neighbour Alan Dare was also shot and killed that day. Alan was due to celebrate his 26th wedding anniversary that week, which must have made his loss doubly painful for his loving family. My condolences go to them. Alan has been described by friends as an extremely kind man who looked after disadvantaged teenagers and was always ready to offer a helping hand. He, too, was a hero.

Like so many others who live and work in the regions, Alan saw smoke at a neighbour's property and immediately went to offer assistance, a simple act of neighbourly concern and kindness for which he, too, was savagely gunned down. Alan displayed the same courage and selflessness as the two young officers who died alongside him that day.

I would also like to pay tribute to the two young police officers who suffered injuries that will probably stay with them for the rest of their lives: Constable Randall Kirk, who was shot and wounded, and Constable Keely Brough, who also thought she was going to die but still managed to get word to her police colleagues and to call for help. That help was not long in coming, either. The extreme bravery of the officers who responded to this call for help also needs to be acknowledged and commended. Despite knowing that they were going to a scene where an active shooting was taking place, each of these officers put their own personal safety to one side and rushed to the aid of their colleagues. In doing so, they showed extraordinary courage and loyalty in the face of extreme danger.

We are indebted to all members of our policing community. Emergency services personnel often put their own lives at risk in the service of others. Today's motion provides this House with the opportunity to pause and honour all of our police officers, who serve and protect our community. These officers know the dangers they may face on joining the force. Despite this, these officers continue to get up each day, don their uniform and go out to do a job which may one day cost them their lives. This is true courage and true dedication. I pay tribute to each and every one. It is because of these officers that the rest of us get to sleep soundly in our beds every night—officers like constables McCrow, Arnold, Kirk and Brough.

Finally, I acknowledge the work that our forensic officers and others did in carrying out their investigation in the aftermath of this horrific shooting. It would have been a far from pleasant job, and I am sure many would have been deeply scarred by the experience.

Attacks like this one strike at the very heart of who we are as a state and as a nation. It was the savagery of this violent act which struck the hardest. It is vital that we ensure everything possible is done to get to the bottom of what happened that day and why—to ensure it will never happen again. To the heartbroken families of all three victims, I say: please know that this House and all Queenslanders mourn with you today. Your loved ones were all extraordinary human beings and their loss has left a gaping hole in our community—a hole that no amount of time or distance can fill. These officers served Queensland with courage, dedication and distinction. May they rest in peace.