



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**MOTIONS**

**National Police Remembrance Day**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 10 October 2016**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 10 October 2016  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Chesters, Lisa, MP

**Source** House  
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**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Ms CHESTERS** (Bendigo) (12:21): Firstly I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the member for bringing forward this very important motion. These days we do have lots of remembrance days throughout our calendar, and it is one of the roles of being an elected representative to attend these services on behalf of our community. Police National Remembrance Day is important. In reflecting on the remarks made by the previous speaker, I too wish to highlight in this speech mental health and how mental health should be at front of mind for all police officers.

I acknowledge the work that our police services are doing around the country—and the AFP—to start having the conversation. The conversation around mental health and suicide is difficult in any workplace, but even more so in the police. and I will outline that in a few moments.

At the Bendigo service we actually had the former superintendent for Bendigo, Peter Bull, as the guest speaker. He had recently completed some work on this issue for the Victoria Police. He spoke about what is happening and what his study actually found. In his speech he highlighted to the room and to the people who had attended the service that police officers were four times more likely to die as a result of their own actions than all other causes combined.

It is an alarming and heartbreaking statistic and I congratulate Peter Bull for talking about this tough topic. As he said, today of all days we must remember these individuals; we must do better as a community and as a force to support all men and women of Victoria Police—in fact all police forces around the country—to make sure that we have proper debriefing, to make sure that we are reaching out and checking in on each other, so that that statistic can come down.

In Victoria we acknowledged 22 serving Victorian police officers who had lost their lives in the last 12 months. Whilst none of those were from my electorate, there were many families who attended on that day who were still mourning the loss of their loved ones. This day allows families who have lost loved ones who have served as police a chance to respect and to remember. I spoke to one mother who still speaks about the pain of losing her son. She speaks about how much he loved his job. He did it to serve his community. Days like today allowed her to talk about his role and about his work and helped her with the grieving process.

When community and social cohesion start to fracture, it is our emergency services who are at the front line. Whether they be police, whether they be ambulance officers, whether they be our firefighters or our social workers, they are at the front line. And we know that we are experiencing increased rates of social community and family cohesion breakdown which is resulting in increased crime, and our police are at the front line of that.

In my part of the world, in Bendigo in central Victoria, we are seeing spikes of family violence. It is our police that are at the front line of that. We are seeing an increase in aggravated assault and burglary. Our police and emergency services are at the front line of that. So on remembrance day, whilst we stop to remember respect and reflect on those who have lost their lives, we also took a moment to stop and reflect on those who are still working and still serving and the challenges that they face today and every day.

It is important that we reach out and ensure that men and women working in the police force know that they do have services and support to turn to. It is important that this place acknowledge their hard work and the increasing dangers that they place themselves in. There is more that we can do in this place, not just to remember, through motions like this, but to ensure that they are adequately funded and resourced, that they have the programs when people reach out for support. I support the motion and commend it to the House.