

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2016

NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:01): I rise to support the motion by the member for Morialta, that this house:

(a) recognises today is National Police Remembrance Day;

(b) values the unique work that the South Australia Police perform on behalf of our community; and

(c) expresses its sadness for and deep gratitude to the families of those officers who have lost their lives while doing their duty.

As has been expressed today, it is with much sadness that 61 police officers have lost their lives in South Australia since 1838 going out to do their job. Their families and their partners expect them to come home at night, and they are suddenly thrust into a horrible situation where their loved one has paid the ultimate sacrifice in their line of work.

Our local police do magnificent work at all levels. I have certainly had a fantastic working relationship with all of the police superintendents who have come into my area. Superintendent James Blandford is the current superintendent and it is great that, as with the former police superintendents in Murray Bridge, I have his mobile number in my phone and can ring him at any time. I try not to do that at 3 o'clock in the morning because I am rarely up at that time, but if I needed to I know that I could have his ear to talk about an incident or something that was happening on the road.

A couple of years ago, when Paul Yeomans was in the job, I was on the Princess Highway just outside Murray Bridge and I could hear on the citizens' band radio that a small truck was in the wrong lane and driving in the opposite direction. I instantly rang Paul and said, 'Look, you better get someone out here. There is someone near the Swanport Bridge about to head over onto the freeway that will need chasing up.' I do not know what the result was, but it was great to have that instant contact.

As I said, with Superintendent James Blandford, it is fantastic. There can sometimes be very extenuating circumstances when you ring the local police superintendent. It is not just day-to-day policing; it involves issues that need to be brought to his attention and resolved pretty quickly. He is very grateful and I am very grateful that we have that relationship.

Paul Featherstone, an old school friend from Urrbrae, is working at Murray Bridge. He is running the CIB down there and has had a very busy time recently. We had a murder at Mannum; we had Khandalyce, the little girl in the case, at Wynarka; we had some other cases he was heading up the inquiries on, apart from other inquiries; and we had Salt Creek with the issue of the overseas backpackers that I understand is still ongoing in the courts.

Those are some of the bigger events that have happened in the area, but you have to understand, as everyone knows in this place, that there are always underlying issues that need to be dealt with, whether it is traffic management, people management, drink driving, people not obeying road rules, drug busts or people looting or just breaking the law in general. The police do great work and, although I have only named a couple of people, there is quite a team right throughout the electorate.

I know that in recent years the numbers have been boosted down in Goolwa so that there are more police on the job. There are more unmarked cars so that people can be picked up without their thinking that the police are about. It is good to see that that police presence was extended, because it was causing some angst at Goolwa. I went to a public meeting and people were very forthright, and so they should have been, about the fact that we needed to get better police activity down there. I commend them for all their work, and I certainly commend them for their work on issues like the Pinery fire, which was a little while ago now.

That was such a terrible day. As I have said here before, it was very sad to lose two people, but when I look at some of the YouTube video of that day I always wonder why we did not lose more. There were people driving the wrong way towards the smoke and sometimes they did not even realise it. It was a huge fire. Even as a pretty seasoned CFS member, it was terrible. When you look at the aftermath and where that fire jumped the Sturt Highway and headed into Gawler, as bad as it was it could have been a lot worse, so I commend the work that the police have to deal with. I guess it was a natural event to a degree, but events like that really consume their services and consume a lot of time and energy.

With the power outage we experienced yesterday, at least 23 major transmission towers collapsed about 250 kilometres north of Adelaide and cut the power to the 1.7 million people of this state. The police had to be activated right across the state, and I commend them for the work they did. It has already been said, by people driving back from here to their places of abode in Adelaide or to their homes, how interesting it was. I stayed here fairly late because there was not much point going back as there were no lights. I think the kids were having a bad game of Snap or something. The biggest issue for my eldest son was that the wi-fi had gone out, so it was great to have some emergency power at work at Parliament House.

It was interesting to note, and it has already been stated, the police who were on the intersections on the way out of the city, and Glen Osmond Road was shrouded in darkness. I know one wag said, and they might have been genuine, that at one intersection, where the lights had gone out, the police were making a lot more sense than the lights ever did. That is a good sign because it was basically gridlock out on the streets at around 5 or 6 o'clock. From what I understand, it would take about an hour or even longer to get about three-quarters of the way across the city centre of Adelaide, so there was not really much point in going anywhere. The police were out there monitoring traffic and helping people through and, from what I understand, in the main there were only some minor accidents at intersections.

It was pretty spooky, as you did not even have flashing lights. There were no lights. Basically, it was a case of looking at all four corners of the intersection and thinking, 'Trust me, trust the other bloke/lady on the other side who is driving.' It was good to see that the police message had got out, and that there did not seem to be an excess of traffic, because they did not want people out on the roads who should not have been out. The police were certainly out there, and I saw them at the intersection of Glen Osmond Road with Cross Road and the freeway. They were still there at about 20 past 10 making sure that people got through safely. They do exemplary work.

I would just like to salute a police officer, Stan Lowcock, who was at Coonalpyn for a long time—I have not checked how many years, but it was well over a decade. In fact, Stan was so well known, and he has only recently gone to Yorke Peninsula, that when the truckies went through Coonalpyn they would say, 'Stan's out.' They knew it was Stan, as he obviously had had a few meetings with them and might have had to warn or maybe even book one or two. They knew he was the local police officer, and that is what happens in country communities.

Even the interstate truck drivers who were coming out of Melbourne and Adelaide knew that around Coonalpyn Stan was the police officer. It was not just a case of getting on the radio and saying, 'The police are out.' It was always a case of, 'Yep, Stan's out. Watch out, he's got the camera,' or whatever. He has moved on, but he did great community work. As with many police, if they are not playing football in your community, they are umpiring. Many of them umpire, as Stan did. It is an exemplary job they do. In closing, I would like to praise all the police officers in this state for what they do, and I certainly salute the 61 officers who paid the ultimate sacrifice.