



STUART GRIMLEY MP

Member for Western Victoria
State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party



MEDIA RELEASE

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Police Memorial Including Officers Who Suicide: One Wall For All

In Parliament this evening, Stuart Grimley MP has called on Victoria's Police Minister to alter the Victorian Police Honour Roll inclusion criteria to include the names of Officers who have died by suicide as a result of mental health illnesses stemming from their Policing duties. Mr Grimley called for those officers to have their names added to the Victoria Police Memorial at Kings Domain Gardens in Melbourne as a 'One Wall for All'.

The request follows in the footsteps of New South Wales, who have changed their own criteria to include Officers who have died by suicide resulting from duty or a related psychological injury.

In his speech to Parliament this evening, Mr Grimley has recognised the service and sacrifice of New South Wales Police Force Detective Sergeant Ashley Bryant, who made a harrowing telephone call to NSW Emergency 000 line before he took his own life in 2013:

"Unfortunately, the circumstances of Ashley Bryant's death are far too common and Police Officers dealing with post-traumatic stress is far more common that you might first think..."

Mr Grimley, with permission from Mr Bryant's wife Deborah, read a portion of the transcript from Mr Bryant's 000 call to the Legislative Council:

"I'm about to take my life. I suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I can no longer live with the trauma of it... I want this to go to the Coroner. There needs to be more things put in place for the partners of those that suffer..."

Mrs Bryant, along with a number of other NSW and Victoria Police widows, have rallied for 'One Wall for All'. In speaking with them, it reinforced Mr Grimley's view that a similar change in the Victoria Police Honour Roll Inclusion Criteria will demonstrate our respect for the Officers lost, as well as their families.

Mr Grimley argues that given the inscription at the Victorian Memorial reads: "This Memorial Recognises The Ultimate Sacrifice Paid By Members Of The Victoria Police Force In Maintaining Law & Order In Victoria", that those who suicide as a result of their duties have an "absolute right" to have their names alongside the other officers.

A police officer of ten years' service, Mr Grimley knows of the horror and confrontation that 'comes with the job'. According to Government figures, 32% of Victoria Police employees have experienced a diagnosed mental health condition at some point.

Last month, three officers (two Australian Federal Police and one Victoria Police officers) took their own lives.

Quotes Attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

"We need one wall for all in Victoria to recognise the mental toll of being a frontline police officer and to show the families of deceased officers that their deaths are recognised as being a result of their duties.



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There has been some great recent investment through this years' Budget for police mental health going forward but I'd like for us - as a State - to pay tribute to those who gave their life in this significant way.

I was proud to fight for presumptive compensation for emergency services workers earlier this year in the State Budget. This will make it easier for frontline officers to access compensation for injuries including PTSI and mental health issues."

Please see below for a statement from Wendy McNish, Victoria Police widow advocating for One Wall For All and entire adjournment speech

If you or anyone you know needs help, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14, Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 or BeyondBlue on 1300 224 636.

Statement from Wendy McNeish, Victoria Police widow advocating for One Wall For All (with permission):

"I speak as a widow of a proud police officer who sadly took his life in February 2016.

I firmly believe that all officers who suicide as a result of mental health issues bought about by the job they do should be included On The Wall of Remembrance.

The stigma attached to mental health and associated trauma also plays a part in additional stresses which only compounds the problem and delays officers in early intervention to get that assistance they need.

They are sadly a product of a culture within that needs to change for outcomes to improve.

With the current 12 week program with Victoria Police which states that an officer with mental health issues is recognised of their injury just as an officer with a physical injury, then why isn't that a natural progression also for our One Wall for All."

Media Contact:

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Adjournment Speech

My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, The Hon. Lisa Neville, and it relates to recognising the lives and service given by those police officers who have taken their own lives.

I speak of the immeasurable service that police officers dedicate to our communities on a daily basis. Their commitment to maintaining the safety of all Victorians is something that I will always be proud to have been part of.

In 2013, former New South Wales police officer Ashley Bryant made a harrowing call to 000 and stated the following:

"I'm about to take my life. I suffer post-traumatic stress disorder, I can no longer live with the trauma of it.

"I want this to go to the coroner. There needs to be more things put in place for the partners of those that suffer..."

A 2018 study conducted by Beyond Blue found that rates of post-traumatic stress related injuries were alarmingly high within the Australian police force. Unfortunately, the circumstances of Ashley Bryant's death are far too common and Police Officers dealing with PTSD is far more common than you may think. More needs to be done to recognise the service and sacrifice these police officers have given to our communities over their careers.

Recently, I read of the inclusion of Ashley Bryant's name, among other officers who have taken their own lives after long struggles with PTSD, on the New South Wales Police Wall of Remembrance.

This recognition of the mental health struggles endured by officers is a step in the right direction. I hope that the New South Wales police force's example of recognition is not overlooked by other states.

The acknowledgment of their service and the difficult times they have faced as a result of their duties should never go unrecognised in this state.

The current memorial wall in Kings Domain recognises police officers that have died in the line of duty. As the plaque on the wall states – "This memorial recognises the ultimate sacrifice paid by members of the Victorian Police Force in maintaining law and order in Victoria."

The action that I seek from the Minister is to consider the inclusion of those officers on the Wall of Remembrance who have taken their own lives due to mental health issues sustained as a result of their duties performed within the police force.

After all, the memorial is a tribute to police who have had their lives brought to a tragic and abrupt end and is a reminder of the sacrifice each officer has made to provide a safe and secure community.

Irrespective of the way in which our Police Officers die, ultimately it is the job that takes their lives. Let's have One Wall for All.