

NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY 2018
SPEECH BY
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Each year at this time police to pause to honour officers who have died while in the performance of their duty. This is also a day for police officers to remember colleagues who have lost their lives through other circumstances.

It is also a day of significance to the entire community, here in Tasmania and elsewhere, in which we are able to salute you for your frontline role in our society, as keepers of the peace and for your engagement with the community on so many levels.

Today our thoughts particularly are with young Constable Pete McAulay, from Goodna police station, who has undergone surgery after suffering serious head injuries west of Brisbane on Thursday morning, after being hit while laying stingers to stop a suspected stolen car. Our thoughts are with his family and friends and his colleagues.

National Police Remembrance Day was first held on the 29th of September 1989, arising out of the previous year's Australasia and South West Pacific Region Commissioner's Conference. So it is that this day holds a special significance for police throughout Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands.

The significance of the date itself is that it is the feast day of Saint Michael the Archangel, Patron Saint of Police. St Michael is recognised as an archangel by the Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths.

In 2006 the National Police Memorial was officially opened in Kings Park, Canberra. The memorial pays tribute to Australian police officers who have been killed on duty or have died as a result of their duties since the advent of policing in Australia, whether on service within Australia or overseas.

Currently the names of over 760 police officers are inscribed on the Memorial, dating back to 1803.

The commemorative intent of the memorial is that it should capture a range of policing elements, including: courage; duty and integrity; the perpetual need to serve the community; the unpredictable nature of policing; and the strength, unity and common purpose of police; and local, national and international aspects.ⁱ

And I am sure that on this day we pause to think also of your international colleagues who in the line of duty are faced with terrible dangers arising particularly out of terrorist incidents in cities like London, with which we have such a strong historical and enduring affinity.

The Memorial in Canberra is a stark and powerful testament to reality of the dangers, stresses and other challenges that so many of you face in your daily duties.

A police officer's job is unlike any other. No other job requires you to "cause the peace to be kept and preserved and [to] prevent all offences against persons and properties in Tasmania, and that to the best of [his or her] ability, skill and knowledge [to] discharge all the duties of a police officer according to law."ⁱⁱ But those are the words of the oath or affirmation that every Tasmanian police officer is required to make before he or she starts out as a fully-fledged officer.

And this adds significant complexity to your work. I quote from part of the National Police Code of Ethics, which Tasmania Police endorses and subscribes:

"Police officers should carry out their duties with integrity and honesty and should at all times make every effort to respect the rights of all people in the community regardless of colour, social status or religion, enforcing the law justly without fear, favour, malice or ill-will."ⁱⁱⁱ

And:

"By their conduct and performance police officers should give high priority to enhancing the reputation of their profession. Police officers should practise self-discipline and restraint and should strive to improve their knowledge of the law and contemporary police practice applicable to their community.

In the pursuit of their responsibilities, police will resort to the use of force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required for the performance of their duty.”

I think that all too often the public are simply not aware of these necessary complexities that have to be built into your work. The training, restraint and courage that it takes to use only reasonable and proportionate force in the face of an angry confrontation, dangerous situation or siege.

Having said that, we also know that Tasmania Police are held in high regard by the overwhelming majority of Tasmanians – and for good reason.

Your collective approach to policing and protecting the Tasmanian community is outstanding.

I will conclude with the simple observation that today we wear the traditional blue and white chequerboard ribbon, officially recognised as the symbol of National Police Remembrance Day.

It is being worn across Tasmania and the mainland and countries of the south-west Pacific by serving and retired police officers and by civilians old and young. And that, I think, is most gratifying.

We will remember.^{iv}

ⁱ <http://npm.org.au/criteria/>, accessed 26 September 2018.

ⁱⁱ Police Service Act 2003 Schedule 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.police.tas.gov.au/about-us/abacus/1-objectives-principles/>, accessed 26 September.

^{iv} Penultimate line of the Police Ode and often quoted.