

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA,  
AT THE POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE  
FRIDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2012.**

Police Remembrance Day - now an International Day of Remembrance - is an occasion for communities to remember and pay tribute to those police officers who have been killed on duty or died as a result of doing their duty and to give support to their families and loved ones. The National Police Memorial, established in Canberra in 2001, pays tribute to those Australian Police Officers and recognises the unique nature of police service and the dangers that police face in their daily pursuits.

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."<sup>1</sup> 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. In common with the men and women of the Defence Forces, every day members of the police force have to be prepared to face violence. Like the members of the Defence Forces violence may come with surprise or ambush; it may be made by guns or other weapons or even by fists, but in the case of the Defence Forces the violence comes from an enemy. For the police officers violence comes from members

---

<sup>1</sup> Police Service Act 2003 Schedule 1

of their own community and so when keeping the peace as their oath requires them to do and when preventing offences against the person and against property as they are required to do police officers, unlike the members of the Defence Force, are required to use force to combat force or threat of force, only as a last resort. The community expectation is that a police officer will first use his or her negotiating skills, or perhaps in the first instance retreat - and certainly the expectation is that the police will only use violence themselves as a last resort. In colloquial language that is a big ask. It calls for courage, and calm thought and action, even in situations that would render most people incapable of either.

The job that a police officer has sworn to do is made more difficult by the fact that the general public are often critical of the police and certainly have high expectations of them. It is just expected that officers will attend appalling traffic accidents and put up with the emotional trauma of dealing with badly injured men, women and children. It is just expected that the police will attend drunken fights and brawls that all too often erupt on the public streets. It is just expected that the police will go to the scene of domestic violence, disarm and arrest an offender, usually a male, and usually under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and take him away. I don't think that the general public really appreciate that every time an officer performs his or her duty in those kinds of situations, that officer puts his or her life on the line. As a community we ask a lot of

---

the police officers who are duty-bound to provide us with safety and security.

In this State we are relatively fortunate that over a decade has passed since a police officer died in the course of his duty and even more decades since an officer was deliberately killed while doing his duty, but as the assaults six years ago involving Sergeant Cooper on the Midlands Highway and the assault on Constable Dillon on the Brooker Highway two years ago serve to remind us, every day, every police officer who goes about his or her duty in accordance with his or her oath potentially faces a fatal attack.

The last name entered on the Honour Roll at the National Police Memorial is that of Detective Senior Constable Leeding. The year is 2010. Detective Senior Constable Leeding was shot and killed when he and his partner went to investigate an armed robbery in progress in a tavern on the Gold Coast in Queensland. Detective Leeding's wife, Sonya, is also a police officer. During a television interview she spoke about her decision to continue her work as a police officer. She said:

“The job we do is unique, and this last week I've just seen everybody stand up and be counted and still get up and go to work and put their firearms on and know that they're going to perhaps encounter something similar. But at the end of the day we are, and I've always maintained this, ...

it is our job. Everybody has their own job. We were both very proud to be part of the job ... . And even now everyone says, "oh, you don't have to come back, you can do whatever you want". ..., But I can't. This is what I do. It's who I am, and it's who all of us are.<sup>2</sup>

That is why it is important that on this day in September we gather together at a dignified and sensitive service of remembrance to honour the courage and ultimate sacrifice of Police Officers

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://sixtyminutes.ninemsn.com.au/stories/8262372/a-special-breed>. Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> August 2012.