



COMMITTEE SUPPORT

Select Committee on the Inquiry into the
Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023

ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Ed Cocks MLA on 29 January 2024: Troy Roberts took on notice the following question(s):

Reference: Hansard [uncorrected] proof transcript 29 January 2024 page 7

In relation to: the mental health impact of suicides on police officers

MR COCKS: Thank you. And can I ask, a lot of that is going to continue for those suicides that are not redefined as assisted dying. For those that do not, are there things that can happen to reduce those mental health impacts and emotional impacts that are outside, or in addition to, this legislation?

Mr Roberts: That is probably something that I would have to consider. I would probably—a bit of time to consider that. So if I may, Chair, I might take that one on notice and come back with a better answer than right now.

Australian Federal Police Association: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

The AFPA thanks Mr Cocks for the question.

Police attending the scene of where a death occurred is a necessary, but often traumatic experience for the officers involved.

Officers already undergo training to build resilience, but training can't easily replace or prepare for a real-life experience. Having to pass a death message, or telling a parent their child has passed away, or notifying a family member of a deceased person is emotionally a very challenging job, and while you can train for that, you won't know how you'll respond in a real-life situation until you've experienced it.

Another aspect that is difficult to judge is the accumulation of cumulative PTSD. After how many exposures to a traumatic incident will someone suffer a mental health injury? That is a question that will never be answered as cumulative PTSD is an ongoing injury that make take years to develop and diagnose.

The AFP/ACT Policing does have policies in place to assist preventing cumulative PTSD, such as ensuring people are psychologically reviewed while in high-risk jobs such as child exploitation and having a time tenure to high-risk positions. AFP SHIELD has also been established to support members with psychological injuries.

ACT Policing Welfare will also engage with members who attend deaths and/or traumatic incidents, and debriefings are provided to the members, with ongoing support provided if required.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on the Inquiry into the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023

Signature:



Date:

7/2/24

By the Australian Federal Police Association, Troy Roberts