



Police Federation of Australia

The National Voice of Policing

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The Hon Bill Shorten MP
Leader of the Opposition
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Shorten

I write in reference to comments attributed to Senator Leyonhjelm at a rally about bikie legislation in Queensland in late 2013 where he said he would be happy to let police "...lie on the side of the road and bleed to death". I am sure like all police and their families, you are appalled by such comments.

Of all people, Senator Leyonhjelm should be aware that politicians make laws and that the role of the police is to enforce the law with impartiality, professionalism and effectiveness. And he should also know, unlike him, police are highly accountable for their actions.

I am advised that there is no power for the Parliament to censure Senator Leyonhjelm for such comments, however a strong statement of support from the leaders of both major political parties would help to heal some of the hurt that his comments have caused to current and former police officers and their families.

Like me, you attended the Police Remembrance Day Service at the National Police Memorial in Canberra on 29 September, and like me, you witnessed family members laying wreaths for police officers who had paid the ultimate sacrifice for their community. That memorial contains the name of 764 police officers who have done far more for this country than Senator Leyonhjelm will ever do.

In the Prime Minister's speech he said, "Our personal safety, the security of our homes and our businesses, our democracy itself - depend on the rule of law. And it is you, our police, who uphold the rule of law." I know that you agree with such sentiments.

You also heard Australian Federal Police Commissioner Andrew Colvin when he said, "The Wall of Remembrance is a stark reminder that the job our colleagues do is dangerous and stressful, and that there are no guarantees of safety in policing. Policing will never be an ordinary career; it requires people with extraordinary ability, commitment and a belief in what they do."

Both the Prime Ministers and the Commissioners' comments show Senator Leyonhjelm is out of touch with mainstream Australia.

This is not the first time the Senator has demeaned police. In 2015 he said, "The police are not our masters. They are our servants and I think they should remember that." Further, in a parliamentary inquiry that year he is quoted as saying, "All Cops are bastards". It is clear the Senator has no respect for police and as such we question his ability to be impartial in his role in the Australian Senate.

As Leader of the Opposition, I remind you that it was the preferences of Labor and the Coalition that saw Senator Leyonhjelm reelected to the Senate this year. On behalf of all Australian police officers and the wider Australian community who support their police, I call upon both parties to ensure that any Senate ticket that contains Senator Leyonhjelm, not be preferenced in any future senate elections.

The Police Federation of Australia national executive are as one in their condemnation of Senator Leyonhjelm and they would be pleased to meet with you to discuss the above.

Sincerely yours

Handwritten signature of Mark Burgess in black ink.

Mark Burgess APM
Chief Executive Officer

25/10/16