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MEDIA RELEASE

AFPA ASSERTS SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONALISM OF MEMBERS

Following a recent incident involving Senator Lydia Thorpe and AFP members at a protest in Canberra, the Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) reiterates that Australians have the right to peaceful assembly and can exercise this right safely without fear of reprisal.

AFPA President Alex Caruana confirmed that “individuals and groups have the right to gather and meet in public spaces to exchange ideas and information and are free to express their views within the constraints of Australian law.

“Australian Federal Police attend all public protests in the National Capital and are there to ensure the safety of the community and to ensure anyone taking part in any public gathering conducts their activity in the right way.

“AFPA members are professional and will do the job they are employed to do and apply the law, regardless of who you are. It is irrelevant to them if you are a Senator, Member of Parliament or John Citizen.

“My members and all AFP officers are there to uphold the law, and they do this every day in an unbiased and fair manner”. Mr Caruana stated. “The rally organisers were complying with protest guidelines; whether you agree or disagree with the message being delivered, they had the right to speak.

“Let’s be clear- it’s also possible that if police had not stepped in to assist Senator Thorpe to leave the podium area, then a breach of the peace may have occurred, or a physical assault or injury aimed at her may have resulted.

“During any protest activity, if police officers believe that a breach of the peace or criminal offence has or may occur, then they can move the relevant parties on.

“My understanding is that is what police were doing. Senator Thorpe had been ushered away from the podium by the organiser’s security personnel, and police stepped in to move the Senator on. She seems to have then lost her footing.

“There is an AFP Professional Standards investigation underway, and it will run its course- but I repeat - in my opinion, the Senator was not “assaulted” and I am confident that a review of all the evidence will show these police members have done nothing outside of their appropriate role in ensuring the safety of all participants.

“At any protest, rally, or public gathering, Australian Federal Police are doing their job – they are not there to leverage or support any ideologies”.

“I have confidence in the conduct and professionalism of AFPA members, and I am also confident that the evidence will show that, in this case, Australian Federal Police members have carried out their role appropriately”. Mr Caruana said.

For comments:

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