

Officer struck by rare illness

by Peta-Ann Wood, QPS Media and Public Relations Branch

The Pierce family, Senior Constable Melissa Pierce and Detective Senior Constable Jason Pierce holding Callum (right) and Brayden (left) spirits are soaring despite the illness that has struck Melissa and left the mother of two paralysed.

Photo supplied by the Pierce Family, courtesy of The Courier-Mail

Members of the Queensland Police Service (QPS) have joined together with prominent Gold Coast business identities to raise funds for the financial burdens faced by a young police officer struck down by a rare illness.

Senior Constable Melissa Pierce, 32 and mother of two young children, was stationed in Longreach last August when what started as a simple cold left her fighting for her life.

Only 48-hours after being diagnosed with what was thought to be an ear infection, Melissa's condition deteriorated drastically, and she was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit of the Royal Brisbane Hospital.

Since that time Senior Constable Pierce has remained critically ill as a result of a suspected viral bacterial infection to her brain stem. The illness has taken some sinister turns and Melissa has been left paralysed with doctors diagnosing her as a tetraplegic (no movement or feeling from her neck down) for the foreseeable future. Currently she can move her lips but cannot speak and has lost sight in one eye.

As a result of the illness suffered by Senior Constable Pierce, her doctors have indicated

that she will be bedridden for a significant period into the future, and that her recovery will be long-term and fraught with numerous obstacles and challenges.

In an effort to diminish the financial burdens these tragic circumstances have placed on the entire Pierce family, Assistant Commissioner Ron Vincent, Crime and Misconduct Commission, Lester Hughes of Hughes Holdings and other prominent Gold Coast business identities are organising a lunch and auction to raise funds to modify a vehicle to transport Melissa.

"Currently a number of Gold Coast business identities will be in attendance at the fundraising lunch and auction along with the Commissioner of Police, Bob Atkinson and Minister for Police, Judy Spence.

"We have also invited a few high profile sporting people to join us at this important fundraising event.

"Police officers give a great deal to the community and it is heartwarming to have business people step forward and offer to work together in raising vital funds for the ongoing care of this young police officer.

"Everyone who heard Melissa's story wanted to give something and the goodness of people continues to surprise me," Assistant Commissioner Vincent said.

Senior Constable Pierce's husband, Detective Senior Constable Jason Pierce and their children Callum 3, and Brayden 2, have moved to Brisbane to be closer to her in hospital.

She is currently still in intensive care, but hopes to go home in November.

Melissa Pierce Fundraising Lunch and Auction

When: Friday, October 29, 2004
Where: Southport Australian Football Club, corner Musgrave Street and Olsen Avenue, Southport, Gold Coast.
Cost: \$80 all inclusive

All are welcome to attend. Tickets are available from Assistant Commissioner Ron Vincent, Crime and Misconduct Commission by contacting Katrina Welk on 3360 6218.