# Episode 12 - Family Support\_V1.mp3

**John Pratt:** [00:00:04] Hello and welcome to Tasmania Police's brand new podcast, This is Tas Police. I'm Inspector John Pratt and I'll be your host as we chat to a wide range of Tasmanian police officers about why they joined the job and why others should too.

**John Pratt:** [00:00:22] We're coming to you today from Lutruwita, Tasmania, and before we start our conversation, I'd like to respectfully acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the land upon which we work and pay our respect to elders past and present. We recognise the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the continuing custodians of the rich cultural heritage of Lutruwita, Tasmania.

**John Pratt:** [00:00:48] Welcome back to a new episode of This is Tas Police, our first for 2023. I hope you were able to have an enjoyable Christmas and a great break over the holidays. Today, we're changing things up a little. For the first time in this series, I won't be speaking with a police officer. Instead, we're going to hear from Caroline, whose husband, Ben, works as a constable in Hobart. We'll be talking about what it's like to be the family member of a police officer and how the job fits in and around normal life. We'll also discuss how close friends and family can support someone as they go through the recruit training process. And we'll find out how it feels to see a loved one in blue for the very first time.

**John Pratt:** [00:01:23] Thanks for joining us today, Caroline. I'm really looking forward to hearing your story. I know you're now husband, Ben was inducted into the police academy in August 2021. Can you tell us how that came about?

**Caroline:** [00:01:33] Ben, from the moment I knew him it was always his dream to be a police officer. Circumstances being a single parent, I think, had made it hard for him to kind of take that leap before we got together. So I think hopefully getting together kind of I gave him a gentle nudge to apply. And initially he actually didn't get through to the pool the first year, which was disappointing for him. But we then decided to start our family together. We kind of had children from previous relationships, so then we decided to have a baby in that time and then kind of the 12 months lapsed and he decided to reapply for the academy and it was quite whirlwind after that. So it was definitely not planned to be pregnant when he was applying, but it kind of just fell into his lap. He got suddenly was asked to have his interview, and then he was having assessments and then he was offered a position in the course. So I think the day that he came to the academy, we were about seven months pregnant. So definitely not something planned, but it was never in doubt. I was 100% behind him from the get go. It was something that he'd spent the best part of the last decade kind of looking forward to and aspiring to be an officer. So he had my full support from day one.

**John Pratt:** [00:02:50] So would you say it was good timing, the way it worked out or it was just something that you had to deal with because of the way the situation evolved?

**Caroline:** [00:02:57] Yeah, I think we just made it work. I don't think it was good or bad timing. I don't think and I've learnt over the years I've never goes to plan. So you never really plan these sorts of things. So yeah, it wasn't ideal timing, but we made it work and like I think it was a credit to kind of the teamwork that we have together. So we made it work.

**John Pratt:** [00:03:16] So can you explain to us how yourself and Ben made it work? Like how did you balance things out with you being pregnant and him being in training?

**Caroline:** [00:03:23] So we knew that we had a little bit of time when he entered the academy. Like I think a couple of months before our now one year old Lachy was due. So we kind of made a little bit of an agreement when he first went in that he would throw himself in when he first went in. So he was renting a room here. So he spent most of his nights here and really kind of immersing himself in academy life, getting to know his peers, getting to know the trainers, instructors. Really building that camaraderie, which I think was really important as trainees. But he had that ability to do that early on. And then knowing that a couple of months into the course that we were due to have Lauchy and then that kind of gave him the freedom to at that point kind of pull back a little bit and come home some nights a week. Once Lachy was born, we kind of looked to each week, have a couple of nights that he would dedicate to being down here of an evening. So that's when he would study. He'd have dinner with his peers, he'd stay up late doing his assignments and all of that. And then that kind of gave him time to focus on his family when he could come home the other nights. So for us, that kind of worked really well to kind of dedicate those two nights a week that he could really stay down here and focus on the on the course. Yeah.

**John Pratt:** [00:04:41] It's no secret that Tasmania Police recruit training is quite intense. As the partner of someone going through it, as there anything you were able to do to support Ben?

**Caroline:** [00:04:49] Yeah. So I think the only way I felt like I physically maybe supported him was I've done about five years collectively of uni over my time, so I know what UTAS is all about. I kind of have that experience in the academic side of things, which Ben struggled with most through the course. So I found that that was my way of kind of physically supporting him through the course. I remember there was some nights I think Lachy was like one month old and Ben was here at the academy and emailing me assignments to proofread at like midnight, and I had one eye open on the computer, so I felt like that was my way, that I could give that and help with him. But everything else, like he was amazing. Like I had no idea most of what he experienced, what he was learning went way over my head. But I think just listening was really important because he'd come home and he would have learnt so much. Experience so much in just a day and he'd just chew my ear off all night about it. But I think just having that person to come home and debrief with that was maybe away from the course was really important for him.

**John Pratt:** [00:06:00] So certainly Ben's life wasn't put on hold because he was doing his recruit training. You were looking after young Lachy. I understand you also got married in all that as well.

**Caroline:** [00:06:09] Yeah. Yeah. And that just kind of just fell into place. We didn't head into the course thinking that that was going to happen two weeks before graduation. I wasn't there planning a wedding with all the bells and whistles. It was quite a small ceremony. I thought it was more about what it meant to us and uniting our families. It ended up falling on the weekend that they had just finished their exams, which was really nice. He was able to actually throw himself into the weekend and actually really enjoy it. I think all his course mates took him out the night before or the couple of nights before to celebrate, which was really nice because he wasn't able to have that normal build up to a wedding, I guess.

**John Pratt:** [00:06:46] So what was it like on graduation day, seeing Ben march out and taking the police oath?

**Caroline:** [00:06:50] Like I'm a pretty emotional person at the best of times, throw having a five month old into the mix. And yeah, I was certainly, emotions were high that day. They all were amazing. All the course trainees. I was just so proud of Ben. Like I just knowing how much he had done behind the scenes with us and with helping me parent the children and kind of get through that really tricky first six months after having a baby, but then still being able to excel in his chosen career was really amazing. And like, I was so proud and it was really nice to be able to celebrate with his family and the kids all came and watched him. And I've got my little girl, Frankie, here. You watched Ben go out and march on the day, didn't you? Yeah. I think all the kids are really proud of him, so it was a really special day.

**John Pratt:** [00:07:37] So Ben's been stationed at Hobart since March this year. How are you finding that? He's now working shift work and you're also juggling the young family. How's it working out for you?

**Caroline:** [00:07:47] Yes, I've always done shift work, so I'm kind of no stranger to what the demands of shift work are, so I knew what he was in for. So it's worked out like I ended up going back to work as planned. Just before Lachy turned one. I focused on my career for the last 12-13 years. So I'm kind of at that stage where I'm taking a bit of a step back. I'm going back to day work and kind of really involving myself in the family and kind of mum life at the moment, which is something that I actually am really enjoying. So it's really nice to be able to do that and give Ben that opportunity to manage shift work in pursuing his career. Definitely not lates or elbows or whatever they call them here.

**Caroline:** [00:08:31] Definitely much trickier, but I think when Ben entered the station back in March, they shortly changed to the four on four off roster, which is so much more family friendly. So it's actually we're able to plan life a little bit better, which is much more easier, especially when we're co-parenting children as well. So we have a bit of a routine actually, and it's it works well for us at the moment. I'm sure it might change over the years, but at the moment he's loving it and we're making it work.

**John Pratt:** [00:09:00] So as a young family, the four on for off roster has made a big difference to how you can live with it?

**Caroline:** [00:09:05] Yeah, just the predictability, I guess being able to plan ahead. And I think definitely because we do have children that we share with other parents, we're able to plan with them much more easily than the less predictable roster. So yeah, they're longer shifts and they are, it is hard work when he is on shift because they are long days or long evenings. But we reap the rewards when he's with us for four days and can pick up some of the slack and help out. So yeah, definitely more family-friendly.

**John Pratt:** [00:09:36] So being the mother of young children and having a husband as a police officer, is shift work the greatest challenge that you've got to deal with or are there other things that the police has presented as challenges for you?

**Caroline:** [00:09:47] Good question. Probably just the unpredictability of the job maybe can be a little bit more challenging than maybe other jobs, just having a young family. And I think maybe that plays on Ben's mind a bit. I take my hat off to all police officers. I definitely couldn't do the job going out there and putting, you know, your safety at risk. And I think it's you know, these officers are amazing. So I think compartmentalising and going out to work and doing your job and then not having that weigh too heavily on your mind is probably important.

**John Pratt:** [00:10:18] Before we finish our conversation today, Caroline, I'd like to know if you have any advice for friends and family, if they're supporting someone who wants to become a police officer, is there anything you know that you wish you had known before you began on this journey?

**Caroline:** [00:10:30] Probably nothing that I wish I knew. I do remember the induction day with the loved ones coming and that very first day. And I remember the course Sergeant Kim Norton saying that they will enter this seven month bubble. And it is really important for them to be able to remove themselves. And it's up to us to kind of help that along. And I remember taking that advice that day and I feel like it was a bit easier probably for Ben because he had family and children at home, like he had to come back and be with us. But I think that was really important. Even just bringing him home for a weekend or an evening just to kind of remove himself, recharge and then kind of get ready for the following week. So I think that was a really good piece of advice that I would recommend other loved ones and support people take on.

**Caroline:** [00:11:16] And probably just the other piece of advice is that like just reassurance that it's a really intense seven months and like it feels like two years is packed into seven months and it's a really intense time. And that intense feeling at times is quite overwhelming and it feels like this is never going to end. Like he's you know, he's living and breathing, he's talking, he's thinking about academy life. And the intensity is quite overwhelming. So I think just that reassurance, that feeling does end. And once they enter the workforce, you know, life does go back to a bit more normality and they have a better work life balance and it is worth it. Ben's 1000 times happier and more content in his job than I've ever known him, so it was 100% worth it. But it is a really intense seven months.

**John Pratt:** [00:12:06] So where to from here? Has Ben thought about somewhere where he'd like to go. Maybe go as a family, say a country police station or anything like that?

**Caroline:** [00:12:13] He's got some plans up his sleeve. Time will tell. He's got some goals, so he's working hard at achieving them at the moment. And hopefully next year there'll be some changes in his career and he will be progressing. So he's very motivated. Yeah, so super proud of him and hopefully he continues on and keeps achieving things because he's yeah, he's an amazing man and a very talented guy, so I think he'll go far.

**John Pratt:** [00:12:40] Well, Caroline, it sounds like you've both done a great job through this journey, graduating as a police officer for Ben, both of you bringing on a new child and getting married. Congratulations on that. I hope it all works out for you. And thanks very much for talking to us.

**John Pratt:** [00:12:58] That's it for today's episode. I hope you've enjoyed it. So far on This is Tas Police. We've chatted to our Commissioner, Donna Adams, our recruitment services team, some new recruits and we've experienced a day in the life of a constable on the beat in Launceston. We've also heard from an investigator of a long term missing persons case and we've jumped aboard one of our police vessels and heard what it's like to work for marine and rescue services. There have been some interesting and inspiring conversations from people who have experienced everything that has police has to offer.

**John Pratt:** [00:13:26] Come back next week when we'll be talking to Detective Inspector Troy Morrisby about his role in investigating a long term missing persons case.