



Speech by

Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

Hansard Tuesday, 16 June 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Police Service, Tasers; *Reader's Digest* Most Trusted Profession Poll

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.00 am): As members may be aware, a serious incident occurred at Brandon, near Townsville, in the early hours of Friday morning involving police and the use of a taser device. This incident is currently being investigated by the Queensland Police Service's Ethical Standards Command for the State Coroner, with CMC oversight. It is important that these investigations are allowed to run their course so that all the details of this incident are fully examined.

However, issues raised during the Brandon investigation have prompted the government, in conjunction with the Police Commissioner, to commission a review of taser training and operational policies. The review will be undertaken by the Crime and Misconduct Commission in partnership with the Queensland Police Service. The current rollout of and training for taser devices will also be put on hold for a period of four weeks, pending the outcome of the review. Currently issued tasers will continue to be used by police officers in accordance with existing policies and procedures.

There is no doubt in my mind that the addition of tasers to the range of use-of-force options available to our police officers has been beneficial. Since the general rollout began in January, tasers have been deployed 264 times. In 201 of those occasions, the mere presentation of the device defused the situation and allowed police to take control of the situation. In fact, one of the untold stories of tasers in Queensland has been that the device has prevented 30 people from self-harming or committing suicide.

There is no doubt that the incident in Brandon was tragic for the family and friends of the deceased man as well as for the police officers involved. The review we are announcing will run parallel to the Ethical Standards Command investigation and will examine current policies and training practices. If during the review any matters are identified that warrant immediate change to policy and training then that will occur.

On a separate matter, I take the opportunity to advise the House that the latest 2009 *Reader's Digest* poll shows that paramedics have been voted Australia's most trusted profession for the sixth year running and that firefighters have taken a close second place. I congratulate them on well-deserved recognition.