



Speech by

Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

Hansard Wednesday, 16 September 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tasers

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (9.58 am): Following the death of a man in Brandon in North Queensland, the Commissioner for Police and I announced a joint CMC-Police Service review on taser policy and a freeze on the further rollout of tasers pending the outcome of that review. On 4 September the new taser policy was announced, and I take the opportunity today to update the House on its key elements.

The continued rollout of tasers will be further delayed until the revised policies are implemented across the service. This is expected to occur early next year. In the meantime, all officers already trained in the use of tasers are required to familiarise themselves with the revised, strengthened policy before signing out a taser.

The review confirmed that tasers are an effective use-of-force option and continue to have a role in operational policing. However, it also identified and recommended a range of policy and training improvements. Key changes include: the need for training and policy to more clearly articulate that multiple or prolonged use of a taser creates a higher risk; the use of tasers has been associated with or linked to some deaths; and tasers should only be used where there is a risk of serious injury.

One of the key issues considered during the review was whether a limit should be placed on the number of times a taser could be activated during an incident. The review did not recommend setting an upper limit on the basis that this may condone more use of force than required. The Queensland Police Service's use-of-force model is based on continually assessing a situation and using the minimum amount of force necessary. Additionally, more than one application of a taser may be justified in some circumstances and be preferable to the use of a firearm. However, the policy also ensures that multiple use, which is defined as more than one application, will be subject to increased scrutiny.

The CMC has identified a number of issues which will require further consideration including: whether the taser should include an inbuilt limiter which restricts the number of times a taser can be activated; limiting each exposure to a maximum of five seconds; and the weapon having the capacity to record each trigger pull. These matters will be subject to further consideration. The new policy will be subject to further review by the CMC and the Queensland Police Service in 12 months.