

**Question on Notice
No. 426
Asked on Tuesday 13 March 2007**

MRS PRATT asked the Minister for Police and Corrective Services (MS SPENCE)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the one-size-fits-all central front opening vests issued to prison officers, which are deemed insufficient protection and require a second 'over vest' to increase ballistic stopping capabilities, and recognising that the history of armed assaults on prison perimeters indicates high powered rifles are used and that the current level 111A vests do not offer appropriate ballistic protection—

- (1) Why were suitable vests not bought initially?
- (2) What is the cost of furnishing two vests for each officer instead of one vest which meets appropriate safety guidelines?
- (3) When will appropriate vests be issued to ensure officers' movement will not be compromised?
- (4) Do the vests currently used by prison officers patrolling the perimeters comply with workplace health and safety guidelines?

ANSWER:

I'm advised the member's claim that people are using two vests at a time is not accurate.

Queensland Corrective Services officers are supplied with ballistic vests that are rated level 3A. These vests provide the highest level of protection available in concealable body armour, and provide protection against all handguns and some rifles such as high velocity 9 mm; 44 Magnum ammunition; 9 mm Full Metal Jacketed Round Nose bullets, and 44 Magnum Semi Jacketed Hollow Point bullets. The current vests are also stab proof.

These are same category rated vests used by the Queensland Police Service for general operational purposes and the Australian Defence Force in Iraq.

Perimeter security by staff at correctional centres is done by officers from within a bullet-proof, heavily reinforced armour-plated Protective Response Vehicle. Officers do not conduct perimeter patrols on foot. The Protective Response Vehicles work in conjunction with the perimeter fence upgrades, security devices such as alarms, cameras and dog squads.

Queensland Corrective Services officers wear ballistic vests while driving in Protective Response Vehicles in accordance with procedure. They are also available to members of the dog squad. They are to be drawn on commencement of duty each day and carried in the Dog Squad Vehicle for use in any high risk situation. Wearing vests with heavy plating would be difficult for officers sitting in vehicles, driving and drawing weapons. It would also be impossible for a dog squad officer to pursue a suspect.

To ensure that standardised best practice and consistency continues across the government sector, Corrective Services continues to liaise with the Queensland Police Service. Most recently, Corrective Services has participated in a process with Queensland Police to review the currently available ballistic vests.