

Question on Notice
No. 1257
Asked on 19 September 2018

MS S BOLTON ASKED MINISTER FOR POLICE AND MINISTER FOR CORRECTIVE SERVICES (HON M RYAN)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what investigations are underway into the use of emerging technologies to resolve persistent issues and 'hotspots' including the use of drones to view areas with limited accessibility or provide mobile monitoring?

ANSWER:

I am advised by the Queensland Police Service (QPS) that both POLAIR helicopters are used extensively in search and rescue operations as they are fitted with state of the art night-vision and infra-red technology, making them the most capable rotary-wing search assets in Queensland.

Using this technology, the POLAIR helicopters, during the 2017-18 financial year, located 103 missing persons, responded to more than 3,100 tasks and were responsible for locating 802 offenders in areas other policing resources could not facilitate, for offences including murder and attempted murder, rape, armed robbery, kidnapping, stalking, domestic violence offenders, property offenders, and serious traffic offenders.

The POLAIR encrypted live downlinking of footage to forward commanders and communications centres and the use of the Forward Looking Infra-Red Camera are technologies that enable the resolution of critical incidents in locations outside of normal policing capabilities, such as live-footage of damage and rescue operations from the helicopter to the State Disaster Coordination Centre, during the Rockhampton floods.

I am further advised by QPS that that in January 2018 the QPS established a Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) unit under POLAIR Queensland and headed by a Chief Pilot.

The QPS have informed that the RPAS Unit provides rapid situational awareness to support operational forward commanders at major/critical incidents. The QPS have developed the ability to livestream footage direct from the RPAS to the forward commander in real time. This provides situational awareness and enhances both officer and community safety in an area or incident where access or visibility is limited.

The RPAS Unit works with the:

- Forensic Services Group to detect cadavers in rural and bush settings, using its thermal imaging capability.
- Forensic Crash Unit to map major crash scenes and improve the efficiencies of previous traditional survey methods.
- Water Police and Dive Squad to provide safety overwatch when diving in areas inhabited by crocodiles and other dangerous marine life. Water Police and Dive Squad are also considering using RPAS in Search and Rescue applications and marine incidents.

The RPAS unit has recently been in discussion with the Public Safety Response Team to use RPAS as a mobile aerial asset in first response situations or any place of mass gathering. This will include a trial to determine the viability of RPAS with respect to a rapid mobile policing response. The information collected by the RPAS will be used to quickly assess situations, particularly those involving high risk offenders.