

More tasers on ACT Policing frontline

ACT Policing recently announced the rollout of an additional 15 tasers to its frontline sergeants around the capital following a review into their use.

In November 2010, a review into expanding the use of tasers in the ACT recommended that 15 additional units be rolled out to 43 substantive frontline sergeants – a move endorsed by the AFP's Operational Safety Committee and approved by AFP Commissioner Tony Negus.

The rollout – which commenced on 22 August this year – means that three additional tasers are now available for each police station in the ACT.

ACT Policing's Specialist Response and Security team has used tasers since 2004, and statistics show that since July 2009 they have been used on 23 occasions, mainly 'drawing and aiming', with no discharge.

Predominantly driven by ACT Policing Superintendent Mick Calatzis and Deputy Chief Police Officer Bruce Hill, the review into their use examined the need for tasers in Canberra's city precinct, more known for alcohol-related crime and violence at night than other areas of the capital.

At a media conference to announce their deployment, Chief Police Officer for the ACT Roman Quaadvlieg said that tasers had become a legitimate use-of-force option for police to de-escalate violent situations, and could be vital in ensuring that ACT Police officers are safe while conducting their frontline duties.

"There are clear operational benefits, which include a high-

deterrent factor against violence, immediate incapacitation in threatening situations, the ability to deploy a taser at a safe distance, and the safety of our officers as well as the public," Chief Police Officer Quaadvlieg said.

"A number of factors were taken into consideration as part of this review, including risks associated with the use of tasers, recent incidents involving use-of-force, public safety and the operational safety of officers – particularly those working on the frontline."

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With this latest announcement, ACT Policing has become the sixth Australian State or Territory police service to equip its frontline officers with tasers, although tactical police in every Australian jurisdiction now carry them.

Chief Police Officer Quaedvlieg said that the review also looked at ACT statistics on assaults against police and involved dialogue with New South Wales Police to ensure that recommendations were comprehensive and based on solid information.

Analysis by larger Australian police services has shown that in 56 per cent of cases, tasers are operationally deployed in private residences, while 29 per cent of cases occur in outdoor or public places. Other figures reveal that there are five main associated factors with taser deployment: alcohol (36 per cent), domestic

violence (18 per cent), mental illness (18 per cent), and drugs (6 per cent).

Recent official figures show that in 2009-10, 56 assault incidents against policed were recorded in the ACT, while in the following 12 months there were 48.

“What we are seeing is the severity of assaults rising. Police are dealing with some people who are more violent, more drug affected, and prone to spitting,” Chief Police Officer Quaedvlieg said.

“The environment in which police are now operating has changed and is more challenging for our members. Offenders affected by drugs such as crystal methamphetamine (ICE) have a much higher propensity for aggression, irrational acts of violence and resisting arrest,” Chief Police Officer Quaedvlieg said.

All substantive patrol sergeants have now undertaken international-standard taser training, with all members also receiving familiarisation training to ensure that they can provide appropriate support in the event of taser deployment.

The implementation of the 15 new tasers will be monitored and reviewed by the AFP’s Operational Safety Committee.

01: ACT Policing Sergeant Mark Usback describes one of the tasers to ACT Minister for Police and Emergency Services Simon Corbell and Chief Police Officer for the ACT Roman Quaedvlieg.
02: Chief Police Officer for the ACT Roman Quaedvlieg and ACT Minister for Police and Emergency Services Simon Corbell at a media conference to announce the deployment of the 15 additional tasers.



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