



NEW SOUTH WALES

**Minister for Police
Leader of the House**

Sr. Margaret Hinchey, RSM
Social Justice Committee
Conference of Leaders of Religious
Institutes in New South Wales
PO Box 259
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- 5 MAY 2006

Dear Mrs Hinchey,

I refer to your letter to the Hon M Iemma MP, Premier, Minister for State Development, and Minister for Citizenship, regarding law and order in New South Wales. The Minister for Police, the Hon Carl Scully, MP, has asked me to reply on his behalf.

I note the views expressed by the Committee in relation to various NSW Police law enforcement initiatives.

Following the Macquarie Fields riots in early 2005, a report containing 15 key recommendations was prepared for the information of the Deputy Commissioner (Operations). These recommendations, built upon intelligence gained and the lessons learnt from the police action at both Redfern and Macquarie Fields riots, have led to the establishment of a 50 member Public Order and Riot Squad.

Of the key recommendations of the report, eleven have been completed and four are in progress, the latter of which all pertain to the additional training of NSW Police officers which is scheduled to be completed in 2006.

I understand that trained members of the Public Order and Riot Squad will conduct operational trials of the taser gun which has been used successfully abroad and, to a limited extent, already in New South Wales by specialist officers of the Tactical Operations Unit, State Protection Support Group, in accordance with specific guidelines.

The use of the taser guns has been largely restricted to high-risk incidents such as the resolution of a siege and hostage situations involving armed offenders. The operational guidelines will be reviewed following the trial in order to specify the situations in which the tasers may be deployed by the Public Order and Riot Squad.

I also understand that the NSW Police Standing Firearms Committee will oversee the six-month trial in which a dozen tasers will be issued to the Public Order and Riot Squad.

The Committee may be assured that the use of the taser gun by the Public Order and Riot Squad during this trial will be restricted to the circumstances in which the Squad operates.

Following the Cronulla riot in December 2005, both the Commissioner of Police and the Commander of the new Public Order and Riot Squad recommended the acquisition of a water cannon by NSW Police.

I understand that the Commissioner recognises the deployment of a water cannon to be an extreme measure. Nevertheless, in certain situations and in the hands of competently trained specialist police officers, the water cannon is considered to be an effective means for preserving of life and property.

With respect to the placement of police officers in schools, the Committee may be interested to know that NSW Police will deploy 40 specialist School Liaison Officers at high schools across the State as part of a crime prevention plan which aims to help prevent students from becoming involved with crime either as victims or offenders.

The plan will:

- See School Liaison Officers maintain a regular presence at all New South Wales high schools with regular visits to classrooms and assemblies;
- Remove barriers between the school community and police;
- Identify and target school students who are at risk of committing crimes to ensure they are involved in crime prevention workshops;
- Further encouraging a positive rapport with students and creating an understanding of what police do;
- Closer co-ordination of anti-truancy programs run by NSW Police and Department of Education and Training officers;

NSW Police intelligence indicates that many repeat offenders begin their criminal careers at an early age with minor offences. A closer rapport between high schools and police will help more readily identify students who are at risk from becoming involved with crime allowing police and schools to intervene and identify children at risk and help divert them from a possible life of crime.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



TONY STEWART MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Police