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About Victoria Police

Police set to move to semi-automatic weapons

Release date: Fri 6 June 2008

Last updated: Wed 16 July 2008

Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon has today announced that Victoria Police has made the decision to move towards the implementation of semi automatic weapons across the organisation.

The announcement follows the conclusion of an investigation by an independent panel into their potential use and viability within Victoria Police.

Ms Nixon said the decision is not one that was made lightly and took into account a range of opinions and other factors.

"The number one concern I had regarding the implementation of semi automatic weapons is the safety of Victoria Police officers and the community," Ms Nixon said.

"I do understand that some of my concerns about semi automatics have been addressed by newer technology and I am aware that additional safety features to prevent incidents such as accidental discharge have been introduced.

"I also understand that today's weapons are more efficient and not prone to the mechanical faults that previously caused concern.

"We also considered a number of other issues including the need for additional ammunition as well as the justification for the move away from a very reliable, solid-performing weapon.

"I also listened to feedback from our own members who presented strong arguments both for and against the change.

"As an organisation we have a significant duty of care and Victoria Police needed to make a decision that was not simply an emotional or reactive one, but one underpinned by strong evidence."

One of the most compelling arguments for the change to semi automatic weapons from the current .38 Smith and Wesson Revolver related to the manufacturer's requirements for the servicing of the current police firearm.

As the technology was developed many years ago, there is an issue with the availability of specifically accredited armourers to service the large number of weapons Victoria Police currently uses, with many now choosing to specialise in semi automatics.

"I will always have the view that the .38 Smith and Wesson is an extremely solid firearm and while we can and do buy new guns and equipment to furnish them, Victoria Police cannot overlook the issue of servicing," Ms Nixon said.

Victoria Police will now continue to develop its business case around a range of issues including costs, weapon selection, training requirements and the potential for a phased roll out.

"We will need to design an intensive training course for every member to ensure they are fully equipped to deal with the new weapon," Ms Nixon said.

"The safety of police officers and the community is our number one priority.

"It is also due to these safety concerns that we have made a decision not to proceed with Conducted Energy Devices (such as Tasers) at this stage.

"We have undertaken serious assessment of these devices and are not satisfied that we need them on a larger scale in Victoria Police.

"There continues to be considerable debate around their use and our decision now does not stop us from considering them in the future – we will continue to look at what the market produces and watch closely the experience of other states that have introduced them."

Ms Nixon said that today's announcement meant Victoria Police could now move forward confidently on the issue of weapons.

"It is a decision that has not been made lightly and I do understand the level of public interest and opinion surrounding it.

"This change is not an overnight process, it will take time and I believe our members and the community expects us to do this in an appropriate and measured way."

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