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Our Ref: *DOC19/1948197*

Your Ref:

3 February 2020

Dr Sean Turner
Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Dr Turner

I refer to your letter of 7 November 2019 inviting submissions in respect of the *Inquiry into an Australian Standard for the training and use of privately contracted security and detection dogs*. The terms of reference applicable to this inquiry have been noted.

The Queensland Police currently has an established detection dog capability which is used in the discharge of its enforcement and public safety responsibilities. Notwithstanding the development of any Australian Standard which may regulate their use, the Queensland Police Service would have concerns regarding drug or explosive detection dogs being used in a private capacity.

The detection dog capability within the Queensland Police Service is invariably supported during deployments by suitably trained and equipped officers to enable an immediate and appropriate response. Such support would not accompany the deployment of detection dogs in a private capacity. Any detection indicated by a privately contracted dog would result in a consequent call for police services. In a drug scenario, the inability for an immediate response to such a detection could result in outcomes including the loss of evidence prior to police arrival or, potentially, the motivation of a holder of illicit items to ingest them. Similarly, negative outcomes may arise from a privately-handled dog indicating the possession of explosives by an individual.

In all cases of detection by privately contracted dogs, a diversion of police resources to respond to the detection would be required. Such resources may be considerable in the case of explosives detections. False detections would inevitably impact upon police service delivery and, consequently, public safety. Conversely, considerable risks may arise should there be a reliance upon privately-contracted animals to provide clearances in respect of explosives.

The establishment of an effective Australian standard would require specific legislation to ensure community confidence. Strict regulations would need to address a myriad of concerns such as licensing and registers of competent people and identified dogs performing a specific function. Training and maintenance of skills are a daily and ongoing issue for police dogs; such skills maintenance would be required in the private sphere. Drug and explosive dogs require specific training with actual illicit drugs and explosive residue. This would require changes in other legislation to allow for the storage of illicit drugs and explosives under strict conditions to ensure security of same. This would require strict management and monitoring by a government-based authority.

It is unclear as to how an Australian Standard would be structured to address these issues. It is considered that any such standard would necessarily address factors in the development of an effective dog detection capability which include:

- Appropriate dog selection;
- Appropriate training techniques;
- Ensuring the competence of a dog's odour recognition with the use of controls; and
- Ensuring the competence of dog handlers in relation to control of the dog during systematic searches and in accurately interpreting changes in a dog's behaviour associated with odour identification.
- Licensing of handlers and registration of dogs.
- Secure storage of illicit drugs.
- Workplace health and safety compliance.
- Authority to handle illicit drugs.

Confidence in such a capability could only be achieved with significant oversight to ensure the appropriate levels of expertise, experience and ethical conduct of contractors. It is suggested that oversight at the required level would involve a substantial devotion of resources for this purpose.

In light of the issues raised above, the establishment of an Australian standard for privately contracted security and detection dogs is not supported. I thank you for the opportunity for the Queensland Police Service to contribute to the inquiry in this instance.

Yours sincerely

KATARINA CARROLL APM
COMMISSIONER