



AUCKLAND DISTRICT LAW SOCIETY

Chancery Chambers, 2-8 Chancery Street, Auckland, 1010.
PO Box 58, Auckland, 1140. DX CP24001
Telephone: (09) 303 5270 Facsimile: (09) 309 3726 www.adls.org.nz

PUBLIC ISSUES COMMITTEE

THINK TWICE ABOUT TASERS

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Public Issues Committee

Spokespersons:

Anthony Trenwith
Barrister, Auckland
Phone: 09 378 9732 / 021 132 5924

E-mail: ajtrenwith@ihug.co.nz

Professor Noel Cox
Chair of Law
Auckland University of Technology
Phone : 09 921 9999 Ext 5209 / 027 636 4499
E-mail: noel.cox@aut.ac.nz

**Public Issues Committee
Auckland District Law Society
Article**

THINK TWICE ABOUT TASERS – OVERVIEW

Overview

The Auckland District Law Society's Public Issues Committee is urging police not to rush the Taser into frontline policing following the conclusion of the weapon's trial.

The Committee members say that Tasers need to be seen as a weapon of next-to-last resort, falling just short of deadly force, rather than just another option. "Information arising out of the recent trial shows that this was often not the case" says Professor Noel Cox, the Committee's convenor, noting that it was important to remember that the weapon is intended to incapacitate and the full extent of its effects were not completely known.

Think Twice About Tasers

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"Overseas experience and recent events covered in the media show that there is a tendency for police to develop a casual attitude towards these weapons and the trial shows the potential for similar attitudes to develop amongst New Zealand police."

He said that the committee were not totally opposed to the use of the Taser which could be very beneficial provided it was used appropriately. "

Nevertheless, there still remained a number of concerns which had yet to be publicly addressed by police bosses including strict guidelines on the use of the weapon.

"As the Committee noted in its paper on Tasers, the final decision as to their implementation should be made by an independent body with the public allowed an opportunity for submissions. The ends must not be allowed to justify the means and this is why, if Tasers are to be introduced, strict guidelines surrounding their use are a necessity."

"As the United Nations Committee Against Torture noted recently, Tasers can sometimes be used as instruments of torture. This designation simply serves to underline the caution and restraint that needs to be adopted towards the weapons."

"If the police don't enforce these guidelines then it is likely that public opinion will quickly turn against Tasers. Certainly no one wants to see similar incidents to the ones in Florida and Canada happening in New Zealand."

"The Police themselves, especially those on the frontlines, obviously stand to lose the most if Tasers are not introduced. This is why it's really in their own best interests to make sure that restrictive guidelines are introduced and that they comply with them so that Tasers are only used as a next-to-last resort and not just another option."