

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Question Taken on Notice

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Date: 10 June 2025

From: J Davis

To: Hon Lia Finocchiaro

Portfolio: Minister for Police

Agency: NT Police Force

Subject: Recommendations from Inquest into the death of David Gurrulpa

QUESTION

Have the recommendations from the inquest into David Gurrulpa's death in 2009 been implemented?

Specifically 195 - relating to operational police being trained and retrained using reality-based training techniques to a sufficient degree to ensure a proper understanding of the dangers of sudden cardiac arrest and positional restraint asphyxia?

Also 196 - that the Northern Territory Police should ensure that all members are trained and retrained in strategies to deal with mentally ill persons both in custody and generally in the course of their duties?

Can you provide details of the NT Police training that addresses the prone hold and how to deal with mentally ill individuals or individuals with an intellectual impairment

ANSWER

The Northern Territory Police Force (NTPF) have acted on Recommendations 195 and 196 from the 2009 coronial inquest. These recommendations are integrated throughout various components of recruit and in-service Operational Safety and Tactics training programs. Further details with regards to NTPF training is provided below:

- Positional Asphyxia (PA) and Prone Restraint

The risks of positional asphyxia are addressed comprehensively in both theory and practical instruction. Training includes case study material to demonstrate the speed and seriousness of PA.

- Acute Behavioural Disturbance (ABD) and Medical Response

Recruits receive instruction on identifying and managing Acute Behavioural Disturbance, which is linked to higher-risk restraint scenarios. ABD is clearly framed as a medical crisis requiring early recognition and expedited medical intervention. The relationship between ABD, restraint practices, and PA is emphasized in both theoretical modules and scenario-based exercises.

- Scenario-Based and Practical Reinforcement

The training approach is immersive, with scenario-based sessions and physical drills forming a core component. During these exercises—such as handcuffing, cell extractions, and use-of-force scenarios— instructors provide verbal reinforcement and real-time feedback that underscore the urgency of PA risk management. Updates to the Defensive Tactics curriculum in 2025 further support this, adding new scenarios and reinforcing oxygen-depletion concepts in high-stress confrontations.

- Annual Requalification and Verbal Reinforcement

While much of the theory is delivered during initial training, the practical components are refreshed annually. These sessions ensure officers continue to apply safe restraint principles and can recognize danger signs. Instructor-led guidance during live training is an essential part of the program delivery.

- Mental Health Response and De-escalation Strategies

Addressing Recommendation 196, training for engaging with mentally ill individuals is part of both theory and reality-based instruction. Since 2021–22, updated Reality Based Training includes stress-tested scenarios where officers respond to individuals with mental health conditions or intellectual impairments. Emphasis is placed on de-escalation, communication, and decision-making under pressure, simulating real-world conditions officers are likely to face.