

## COMMISSIONER'S BRIEFING PAPER

**SUBJECT:** Current situation of SAPOL's Firearms Training Capability

### BACKGROUND:

The Weapons Training Building (WTB) at the SAPOL Academy is currently unusable. Cadet and police security officer (PSO) firearms training has all been transferred to the Echunga Training Reserve (ETR) resulting in ORQ being cancelled for the remainder of 2023.

A working group has been established including representatives from People, Culture and Wellbeing (PCW); Academy and Learning (A&L); and Physical Assets Services Branch (PSAB).

The working group is examining contingencies to ensure firearms training can continue in SAPOL, particularly critical to enable cadets and PSOs to pass their training courses and become operational as soon as possible.

A number of external consultants have examined both ETR and the Academy WTB relative to the condition and viability of continuing to use these facilities for firearms training.

### RELEVANT POINTS:

- On Tuesday 10 October 2023, firearms training at the Academy WTB ceased due to significant damage. The range has been subject to assessment by interstate consultants BOUW.
- The consultants made a number of recommendations; including the range was unsafe with serious consideration given to building a new facility. This could cost anywhere between \$5M and \$20M. This is based upon online global searches. This is a very niche market; and PASB confirm, there are very few businesses who undertake this type of work in Australia.
- What also became apparent is there are no Australian national standards on both outdoor and indoor firearms ranges, which is an anomaly currently being examined by AC OSS. SAPOL must rely on the advice from those Australian based consultants.
- It is important to also note that cadets and PSOs in the main are first time users of firearms which require a higher level of safety to all participants and SAPOL range officers.

- BOUW operate primarily in the outdoor firearms range genre and not necessarily for indoor ranges. However, SAPOL accepted the advice from BOUW in closing the Academy WTB. The obvious structural damage was far too prominent and unsafe to not close the range.
- BOUW also undertook a further assessment of the outdoor pistol range at the Echunga Training Reserve (ETR) and determined that only static training could be safely undertaken from a standing position underneath the current baffling system. There can be no moving down the range as per normal training. This range would require upgrade work to install additional baffling required to return to the full firearms training program.
- ETR currently has four firearms ranges:
  - Main pistol range (**ETR range 1**); covered but subject to weather conditions, currently solely being used as primary training venue for cadets/ PSOs (ORQ has been cancelled for remainder of 2023 and unless other options determined likely to be postponed for most of 2024)
  - There is a second range (**ETR range 2**) immediately adjacent to the above range. It is not covered, has a concrete floor and of similar dimensions. Unfortunately it is unsafe to use both ranges at one time due to a lack of audio baffling between the two. This is only being used periodically for regional members who must undertake shotgun training.
  - Sniper range used solely by STAR/SAS and only when other training is not being conducted – which at this time is rare
  - STAR/SAS has an uncovered outdoor range separate from the main range (**ETR range 3**). Is subject to weather conditions and not currently used by any other areas of SAPOL
- Only eight members can safely use ETR range 1. It is also restricted to day time shooting and is subject to inclement weather. There have been attempts to conduct concurrent training on ETR range 2; however this has been deemed unsafe due to the close proximity of the areas and the poor and confusing audio quality around firearms instructor's directions.
- As a result of the BOUW advice, members of the working group made a number of additional inquiries to determine if any other 'private' firearms ranges might be an option. It was determined no other private indoor or outdoor firearms ranges were suitable for current cadet and PSO training <sup>7(1)(c)</sup> [REDACTED]  
<sup>7(1)(c)</sup> [REDACTED]
- There are no 'private' indoor firearms ranges in South Australia. One of the more viable options with modern facilities was the outdoor facility at the Adelaide Pistol Club, Mallala Road, Korunye. This was inspected by representatives of BOUW.



- 7(1)(c) [REDACTED]
- Other similar outdoor facilities were considered such as the Southern Vales Practical Shooting League SA at McLaren Vale and the Hellenic Shooting Sports SA at Rockleigh 7(1)(c) [REDACTED]. They all posed a further issue of being a significant distance and time from the CBD/ and or the Academy. This would also have created travel and fatigue issues for participants dependent on where they resided.
- Considering BOUW had given initial advice on how to upgrade ETR range 1 ensuring safety to those using that range; it is highly recommended that SAPOL now replicate what is on ETR range 1 onto ETR range 2. To do so would result in the need to extend the ballistic wall between the two ranges to as near as possible to the rear dirt bullet trap.
- If some ballistic baffling between the two areas is also installed, then this could act as a genuine mid-term contingency for a second firearms range enabling ORQ to recommence once upgrades were completed and subject to weather as ETR range 2 is uncovered at this time. Additional to this, lighting and fans can be added to both ETR ranges 1 and 2 which would permit firing on both day and afternoon shifts; and during hotter weather.
- The estimated cost for the upgrade to both ETR range 1 and 2 is **\$800K** (GST exclusive) including lights and fans to both. A speculative breakdown is attached as appendix A.
- Academy Weapons Training Building (WTB)
  - In October 2023, the Academy WTB was found to be unusable for a number of reason and BOUW (Primarily outdoor range experts) stated that the range was unfixable
  - In December 2023, SAPOL identified an indoor range expert from Security Consultation Group (SCG) who attended and made a subsequent independent inspection of Academy WTB.
  - SCG strongly believed the range could be remediated without building an entirely new range. Further to this SCG would be able to provide the independent accreditation to reuse the range after their recommended upgrades
  - SCG also recommended an interim option of obtaining a second hand Gran (rubber granular) bullet trap from VICPOL who are upgrading their range. The cost of dismantling and then rebuilding the Gran bullet trap to the Academy could cost approximately \$370,390.00 excluding GST.

- VICPOL was contacted; and for their current range upgrade only, is costing approximately \$1.2M. This is not a new range but upgrades only making the relocation cost reasonable
- The Academy WTB could be retrofitted and fully operational again within 12 months with a metal bullet trap similar to VICPOL
- It has been confirmed by PASB that SCG is one of very few businesses in Australia who provide specialised indoor firearms range advice. They have successfully completed indoor firearms range remediation works for six other law enforcement agencies across Australia. Most recently a similar project to that of the SAPOL Academy was undertaken by SCG for VICPOL.
- What came out of that inspection by SCG is the viability of obtaining a 'Gran Range' bullet trap second hand from VICPOL who are changing to a full metal bullet trap.
- The Gran bullet trap (appendix B) is still of high quality and usable which can be dismantled and shipped to South Australia and refitted to the Academy WTB at a total cost of \$370,390.00 (GST excluded). This is only a temporary solution pending a review to have a full metal bullet trap installed once the ETR ranges are upgraded.
- Additional works and maintenance to the current air conditioning and electrical systems could cost around \$30K (GST excluded). These works include those highlighted by BOUW such as rear electrical works on the facility which have been consistently damaged by penetrating bullets.
- The total cost for this move is approximately **\$400K** (GST excluded). A complete new range could cost between \$5M and \$20M.
- The Gran bullet trap basically consists of a rubber compound which absorbs the bullets. It is a very safe bullet trap to use however requires some maintenance each week where rubber pellets need to be reapplied at the end of a week to the trap.
- There is no envisaged cost to do this as it is purely a low level manual process of replacing fallen rubber granules. This is one of the main reasons VICPOL are changing to a more permanent metal bullet trap. However, as a short to mid-term option this is SAPOL's best option to maintain firearms training.
- PASB personnel have discussed this option with Dan Knight from Zeroed group who are currently working with VICPOL to upgrade their current firearms range. Zeroed is a South Australian based business. At this time, it is believed this Gran bullet trap could be installed into the SAPOL Academy by the end of February 2024 as a very safe and viable temporary solution to recommence shooting by 1 March 2024 in this facility.



- The pressure for this arises as Zeroed have asked for approval for this purchase by COB Thursday 21 December 2023. SCG and Knight; are both indoor range specialists with SCG having successfully completed works for six out of seven Australian policing agencies. This would be the first for SCG and SAPOL making this now all Australian agencies they have dealt with.
- Both have stated they can sign off on the temporary use of the Gran bullet trap for SAPOL once installed. BOUW do not have the same level of indoor experience with policing agencies as SCG.
- What this does is enables SAPOL a very genuine option to continue firearms training at the Academy whilst upgrade works are undertaken at the ETR ranges 1 and 2. However, planning for a full retrofit of the Academy WTB needs to start immediately as many parts for the retrofit need to come from overseas. Those details and costs are not included in this paper and yet to be determined.
- Costs for the full metal replacement are not known at this stage and would be the subject of a separate budget request.
- The upgrade works to ETR ranges 1 and 2 will take about six months commencing once the Gran bullet trap has been installed. The use of the temporary Gran bullet trap enables this to happen without any delay in shooting for cadets and PSOs.
- The impact of not undertaking these upgrade works immediately:
  - If these works are not undertaken immediately SAPOL will only have ETR range 1 to train all SAPOL employees. It means cadets and PSOs may not be able to graduate on time reducing the numbers being able to be operational
  - This will place Government, Commissioner, ELT and SAPOL subject to significant media, government opposition, PASA and community criticism
  - PSO course numbers would need to be reviewed as the current use of ETR range 1 restricts training to 16 participants per day. It may require weekend training to get all participants through successfully
  - Given the number of recruit courses planned for 2024; for both domestic and international recruits, SAPOL cannot wait for medium and long term options, although this can still be planned for – it is not the critical priority
  - Corporate ORQ training will be impacted no matter what action is taken. If there is a delay to ORQ for six months whilst upgrade work is being undertaken, it is impossible to roll out ORQ for all of SAPOL in the remaining six month time frame between June and December 2024
  - There are only two viable options. Cancel ORQ 2024 for all; or do ORQ for those 1100 members who were cancelled in 2023, once the upgrades have been made. This is the most realistic option at this time

➤ If immediate upgrades are not made permitting ORQ training, <sup>9(1)(a) and 9(1)(b)</sup>

<sup>9(1)(a) and 9(1)(b)</sup>

- As this project is still in its formative stages timeframes for upgrade work is still speculative. It is a real possibility limited firearms training will not be interrupted for cadets and PSOs if these works can be approved and actioned immediately.
- Chief Inspector Col Cunningham has reviewed the current modified cadet and PSO firearms training program with the OC OSTT. Cunningham is satisfied; that even though training is being conducted from a static position only, the participants are subject to the same qualification shoot as normal albeit not experiencing the full program as has been previously undertaken. E.g. the targets are moved back to the required distances but the participants are static.
- It is requested ED PCW and ED Business Services provide support in principle and brief the acting Commissioner so that these works can progress. This is a complex corporate project where intermediate works must occur concurrently even though some actions will require a procurement process as the project progresses.
- No budget has yet been established; however it is estimated that the interim works would cost approximately \$1.2M (GST excluded) but would need a built in contingency up to **\$1.5M (GST excluded), representing \$400K for the immediate Gran related works at the Academy WTB (in 2023-24) and \$800K for works at the ETR (2023-24 and 2024-25).**
- Manager of Procurement and Contract Management has been consulted and advises if all of these works are to be undertaken by Zeroed at approximate cost of \$370,390 then this will fall in to a Tier 2 (\$55K to \$550K) category procurement, which requires a minimum of 3 quotes.
- However; if justification can be provided that this is the best solution and Zeroed are the only supplier that can facilitate these works – which is the case, then a single source approach can be approved by the Commissioner. Justification has been outlined in this report regarding the urgency and impacts for delays and that the costs are the minimal for this option.
- If approval in principle is obtained by the acting Commissioner that all works can be undertaken by Zeroed for the Gran bullet trap, then a separate acquisition plan and report will proceed to final approval.



**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. ED PCW notes the contents of this paper

**Noted**

2. ED BS notes the contents of this paper

**Noted**

3. ED BS; recommends in principle, the costs and upgrades to the Academy WTB and ETR ranges as described in this report

**Recommended/Not recommended**

4. Acting Commissioner; approves in principle, the cost and action to install the Gran bullet range from Victoria into the SAPOL Academy WTB

**Approved/Not approved**

5. Acting Commissioner; approves in principle, the overall allocation of \$1.5M to make the upgrades to the Academy WTB and ETR ranges as described in this report

**Approved/Not approved**

Supported:

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Executive Director PCW

Recommended:

.....  
Stephen Johninke  
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Approved:

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PCO: 2023/2956

Date: 20 December 2023

