
MEDIA RELEASE

John Robertson MLC

Minister for Corrective Services
Minister for Public Sector Reform
Special Minister of State



Tuesday, May 26, 2009

Prison inmate to take officer hostage in emergency scenario

The armed Hostage Response Group at the Department of Corrective Services will today conduct a full scale training scenario at Parramatta Correctional Centre – with an officer to be taken hostage by an ‘inmate’.

Minister for Corrective Service John Robertson said these exercises were critical to maintaining the safety and security of NSW prisons.

“Today’s training scenario will simulate a correctional officer being taken hostage by an inmate in a cell using an improvised weapon,” said Mr Robertson. “Simulated hostage scenarios test the capabilities, cohesion and judgement of the Hostage Response team under stress.”

“They also put correctional officers through their paces and ensure emergency operating procedures are up to scratch.

“Emergency training exercises are conducted around three to four times a year and form part of the ongoing training requirements for Hostage Response Group officers.

“Hostage situations occur without warning – they can happen anywhere, at any time and that’s why we must remain vigilant. Complacency is the number one enemy of prison safety.”

Chief Superintendent Security Mark Wilson who will oversee today’s training scenario said that whilst the exercise is controlled, the simulations are extremely life like.

“As soon as the hostage situation commences the area will be shut down, hostage negotiators brought in, command posts activated and the tactical team put on standby,” said Chief Superintendent Wilson.

“If necessary we will use force to secure the safety of the officer and prevent the ‘inmate’ from harming himself or his hostage.

“It is essential that officers are trained in a real time environment and get hands on experience through these emergency drills.

“The Hostage Response Group is made up of a number of specialist units including a command team, professional negotiators, an intelligence unit and tactical response officers – it will be all hands on deck for this exercise at Parramatta.”

Minister Robertson said Hostage Response Group officers are stationed in prisons across NSW so they are on the spot to provide immediate specialist assistance during a crisis.

“In addition there is always a core group of Hostage Response Group officers on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

Pool vision of the hostage exercise will be available through Channel 7

PRESS CONFERENCE

Minister for Corrective Services John Robertson
Chief Superintendent Security Mark Wilson

12:30pm (immediately following exercise completion), Tuesday 26 May
Parramatta Correctional Centre (entry via O’Connell Street, Parramatta)

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