

OFFICE OF HON **Jim Anderton**

Minister of Agriculture, Minister for Biosecurity, Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Forestry,
Associate Minister of Health, Associate Minister for Tertiary Education, Minister responsible for Public Trust

Mr Tony O'Brien
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Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your further email of 31 August 2006 regarding the trial of Taser stun guns and the New Zealand College of Mental Health Nurses concern that Tasers would possibly be used on mental health patients.

I asked for further information from the Ministry of Health on this topic. I understand the use of Tasers on mental health patients was discussed at meetings between Directors of Area Mental Health Services and District Inspectors of Mental Health. Like you, the Ministry of Health is anxious to ensure that the health and rights of people with mental illnesses are not damaged or undermined by the introduction of the Traser.

The Director of Mental Health has collaborated with Area Mental Health Services in the regions where the Taser trial is being conducted to develop a form pursuant to Section 122B of the Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992, for the use of force involving a Taser. All such incidents will be reported to the Director of Mental Health.

While I acknowledge that as yet there is no overseas research into the effects of a Taser on people with mental illness or on medication, it may also be true that the Taser offers another alternative to subdue a dangerous person with possibly less severe outcomes than traditional means such as police dogs or firearms. Therefore I will be monitoring the trial of Tasers closely to determine if the benefits outweigh the costs of introducing this new device.

Yours sincerely



Hon Jim Anderton
Associate Minister of Health
MP for Wigram and Leader of the Progressive Party

