

A Queensland Police Officer in uniform is shown from the chest up, holding a taser. The officer is wearing a light blue shirt with a Queensland Police Service (QPS) patch on the shoulder. The taser is yellow and black, and is held in the officer's right hand. The background is a plain, light color.

Leading the way with research and innovation

A team of hard-working research and evaluation officers is integral to a number of major projects initiated by the Queensland Police Service (QPS).

Evaluations are made of all significant projects and the findings can make or break a project.

The Review and Evaluation Unit operates as a part of the Inspectorate and Evaluation Branch, Ethical Standards Command (ESC), which is managed by Superintendent Bob Gee.

The unit's principle functions are research coordination and undertaking reviews or evaluations of the Service's strategic objectives, programs, priority issues and new initiatives that have Service-wide implications.

Ongoing and past projects include evaluations of the taser trial, the Roadside Drug Testing Unit and the implementation of safety hoods in watchhouses, which are placed on prisoners in transit who continually spit on officers.

Before new technological equipment or new strategic approaches are implemented statewide these initiatives are often tested as trials in a limited area and their effectiveness is evaluated before they are rolled out on a larger scale.

Review and Evaluation Unit Manager Kim Adams said their evaluations were evidence-based and aided senior executives' decision making processes about the status of a project.

"R&E operates independently from the regions and commands so we can provide reports which are an objective assessment of QPS operational programs and procedures," Ms Adams said.

"The QPS senior executive uses the reports as an information source for strategic planning and development of evidence-based policy."

Ms Adams said the unit often worked in partnership with branches within the QPS to provide independent assessment of projects.

"We have been working in conjunction with the State Traffic Support Branch's research officer to evaluate the implementation of the Roadside Drug Testing Unit.

"We have conducted a number of interviews with front-line officers to determine their reactions to the unit, such as their views on the legislation and the technology used.

"We collect and analyse the data collated on how many positive tests were returned, what type of drugs were detected, and how effective the technology was in detecting drugs."

The Review and Evaluation Unit assesses the decisions made by officers when they are evaluating 'use of force' projects such as the taser rollout.

"Our unit will broadly analyse if appropriate decisions were made, if there was justification for using force, and if the action met with QPS policy and procedure," Ms Adams said.

"When an officer uses a taser they need to fill out a taser usage form outlining the context of their decision making process. The form will become part of our evaluation of the project."

The Review and Evaluation Unit also examines the ethical implications of external research, such as university-based research projects which require provision of data or other resources from the QPS.

"Researchers and the QPS operate in a dynamic environment where there will always be considerable opportunity for research to be conducted," Ms Adams said.

"We will be publishing a QPS Research Priorities 2009 list on the QPS website which outlines the contemporary and emerging issues that shape planning for the delivery of policing services in the future."

The Review and Evaluation Unit provides many resources to QPS officers and university researchers and Ms Adams said she encouraged anyone interested to contact the unit for advice and guidance on 3364 6398.

*By Michelle Fleming,
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