

Media release

for immediate release

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CLA warns New Year revellers to beware stun guns

Canberra's revellers should beware of police with stun guns on New Year's Eve, CLA president Dr Kristine Klugman warned today.

"Stun guns, which can deliver 50,000 volts of electricity, are being specially trialed by ACT Police over New Year's Eve," the president of Civil Liberties Australia (ACT) said.

"In September, Police Minister John Hargreaves specially asked the police to extend a trial of Taser stun guns so that the six ACT weapons could be tested on New Year's Eve."

Dr Klugman said CLA had previously warned the Police Minister that stun guns had been involved in dozens of deaths in the USA and Canada.

"We urged Mr Hargreaves to stop the ACT trial until the results of a two-year US Department of Justice trial in the USA were available, in late 2006."

However, Mr Hargreaves ignored the plea, and instead extended the ACT trial to include this New Year's Eve, she said.

Appearing before the Legislative Assembly's Standing Legal Affairs Committee, (SLAC) on September 23, 2005, Mr Hargreaves said: "The biggest event in the ACT with respect to alcohol-fuelled partying is the evening of New Year's Eve. I am asking the Chief Police Officer to consider extending the (stun gun) review for a week or so, so that we can actually have it evaluated over the New Year partying regime."

Dr Klugman said that, following this statement of Mr Hargreaves, young people should be particularly careful on Saturday night.

"There is strong evidence to suggest that stun guns can kill people who are affected by alcohol, are taking drugs or who are affected by a heart irregularity nobody knows about.

"CLA urges young people – and the police officers carrying stun guns – to be specially cautious this New Year's Eve," Dr Klugman said.

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