

## Intermediate A, Semi Final

**TOPIC: *that general duties police officers should not carry lethal weapons***

*(InfoSlide: general duties police officers are police officers on foot patrol or routine callouts, e.g. domestic disturbances, petty violence or property crime)*

### 1. Type of Topic

This is a normative debate. This means that the affirmative should propose a 'model' (a policy on how this idea would be implemented). This model should be clearly described to outline what changes the affirmative team will make to the status quo, and how these changes will be enacted.

The negative team can either support the status quo or propose a counter-model. This counter-model must be different from the status quo, but also different from the model the affirmative team is suggesting. The negative team should ensure they clearly identify whether they are supporting the status quo or proposing a counter-model.

### 2. Background / Context

A general duties police officer can be thought of as the first responder to general crimes and public needs reported on a daily basis. This means, as in the InfoSlide, that they are either patrolling or on standby for callouts when needed on more minor claims of domestic disturbances, petty violence, or property crime.

General duties police officers do not have the expertise in particular areas to work heavily on crime scenes like detectives, in high-stakes hostage situations, or as a bomb-squad expert. However, the role of any police officer still presents high-pressure situations which can be dangerous and escalate quickly.

Stemming from a lot of backlash against police brutality in the United States, there have been inquiries into whether carrying lethal weapons is actually necessary for general duties police officers.

On the one hand, the job is still very unpredictable, and a lethal weapon may be necessary in absolutely extreme circumstances. Its existence also can be helpful as a deterrent against criminals from continuing their anti-social behaviour.

On the other, 26 people were shot by Australian police in 2022-23, and some say that many of these instances could have been avoided if the police officers were forced to de-escalate the situation by not having access to a lethal weapon. Accidental deaths caused by police are a real threat to the public's trust in them.

### 3. Questions for Consideration

- What does a general duties police officer do?
  - Do any of these duties inherently require a lethal weapon?
- Is it ever justifiable to fire a lethal weapon at a dangerous person?
  - If yes, in what circumstances? Does it depend on who has the weapon, who it is being fired at, or the overall situation?
- How are general duties police officers currently protected?
  - Consider other defensive mechanisms police officers may have that are not lethal weapons. Are these effective? Are they sufficient?
- How are police officers perceived?
- Would this perception change if general duties police officers were not carrying lethal weapons? How?
  - Would people be more inclined to trust the police?
  - Or would they feel less protected?
- What are the rights of the alleged criminal in a high-stakes situation?

© The South Australian Debating Association, Inc. 2024 This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the South Australian Debating Association, Inc. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be directed to the President, The South Australian Debating Association, Inc., GPO Box 906, Adelaide, SA 5001.