MEDIA STATEMENT

10am Thursday 4 April 2019

Police officer fires two shots at stolen Police car in Murupara

The Independent Police Conduct Authority has found that a Police officer was not justified in shooting at a stolen Police car in Murupara on 17 October 2017.

The Police officer, working alone in Murupara, was transporting two young children home when he stopped to arrest a man believed to have been involved in a recent armed robbery. The officer placed the man in the front seat of the Police car, handcuffed with his hands in front of his body, and drove to a residential address to drop the children off.

The officer exited the vehicle with the children and left the keys in the ignition with the engine running. The arrested man then moved into the driver's seat, locked the doors, and reversed out of the driveway. The officer was carrying his Glock pistol. He shouted for the man to stop and fired two shots at the Police car's tyres.

Nonetheless, the man escaped in the Police car. The vehicle was found abandoned later the same evening, with the officer's M4 rifle and ammunition still secured in the boot's gun safe. The man was located three weeks later and charged. He was sentenced to terms of imprisonment for offending directly related to this incident and also earlier unrelated offending.

"This situation need never had occurred had the officer appropriately assessed the situation and mitigated any potential risk posed by the man. However, he failed to remove the car keys, enabling him to escape in the Police car. The Authority has determined that, at the time the shots were fired, the man did not pose an immediate risk of serious harm or death. The officer therefore did not have justification for firing at the vehicle" said Authority Chair, Judge Colin Doherty.

The Authority also found that supervision of the officer was lacking. Police failed to recognise and address his poor decision-making and inappropriate use of force.

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