

Outlook

RE: Sovereign Citizen Ideology Assessment

From O'Connor, Louise <[REDACTED]>
Date Mon 1/19/2026 1:53 PM
To Shepherd, Kerry <[REDACTED]>

OFFICIAL

Hi Kerry,

There is a training package that is being developed that will assist your work area to undertake these assessments – it has gone out for feedback; I took a look yesterday and it will provide some useful guides.

In essence, we are no better placed than your staff to make the assessment on [REDACTED]. The

[REDACTED]

Ball is in your court – either a formal request to QPOL for all intelligence holdings (RFI through Atlas required) – or you go on what you have access to.

Probably not much help!

Louise

Louise O'Connor
Detective Inspector
State Intelligence Services

[REDACTED]

*Department of Police, Fire and Emergency
Management*

OFFICIAL

From: Shepherd, Kerry <§36(1) Exemption Applied >
Sent: 19 January 2026 11:08
To: O'Connor, Louise <§36(1) Exemption Applied >
Subject: Sovereign Citizen Ideology Assessment

Hi Louise
I hope your year has started well.

Commander Burk and I are attempting to introduce a new process in relation to assessing firearms licences from people that may have exhibited Sovereign Citizen Ideology.

§35(1) Exemption Applied

Let me know if you folks want to catch up and discuss this process because I feel like these will become very regular requests.

Regards

Kerry Shepherd | Manager
Firearms Services | Tasmania Police | Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management
GPO Box 308, Hobart TAS 7001 | Phone: (03) 6173 2720 | Ex: §36(1) Exemption Applied
Email: §36(1) Exemption Applied | Email: firearms.services@police.tas.gov.au

Reduce Firearm Related Risk - Your Firearm Is Your Responsibility

Be familiar with the legal requirements for safe storage and firearms ownership
fas.police.tas.gov.au | police.tas.gov.au | [Reducing Firearms Related Risk](#)

From: Burk, Stephen <§36(1) Exemption Applied >
Sent: Monday, 19 January 2026 10:33 AM
To: Shepherd, Kerry <§36(1) Exemption Applied >
Subject: RE: Sovereign Citizen Ideology

I would suggest that §35(1) Exemption Applied
§35(1) Exemption Applied

Stephen Burk APM
Commander
Statewide Services

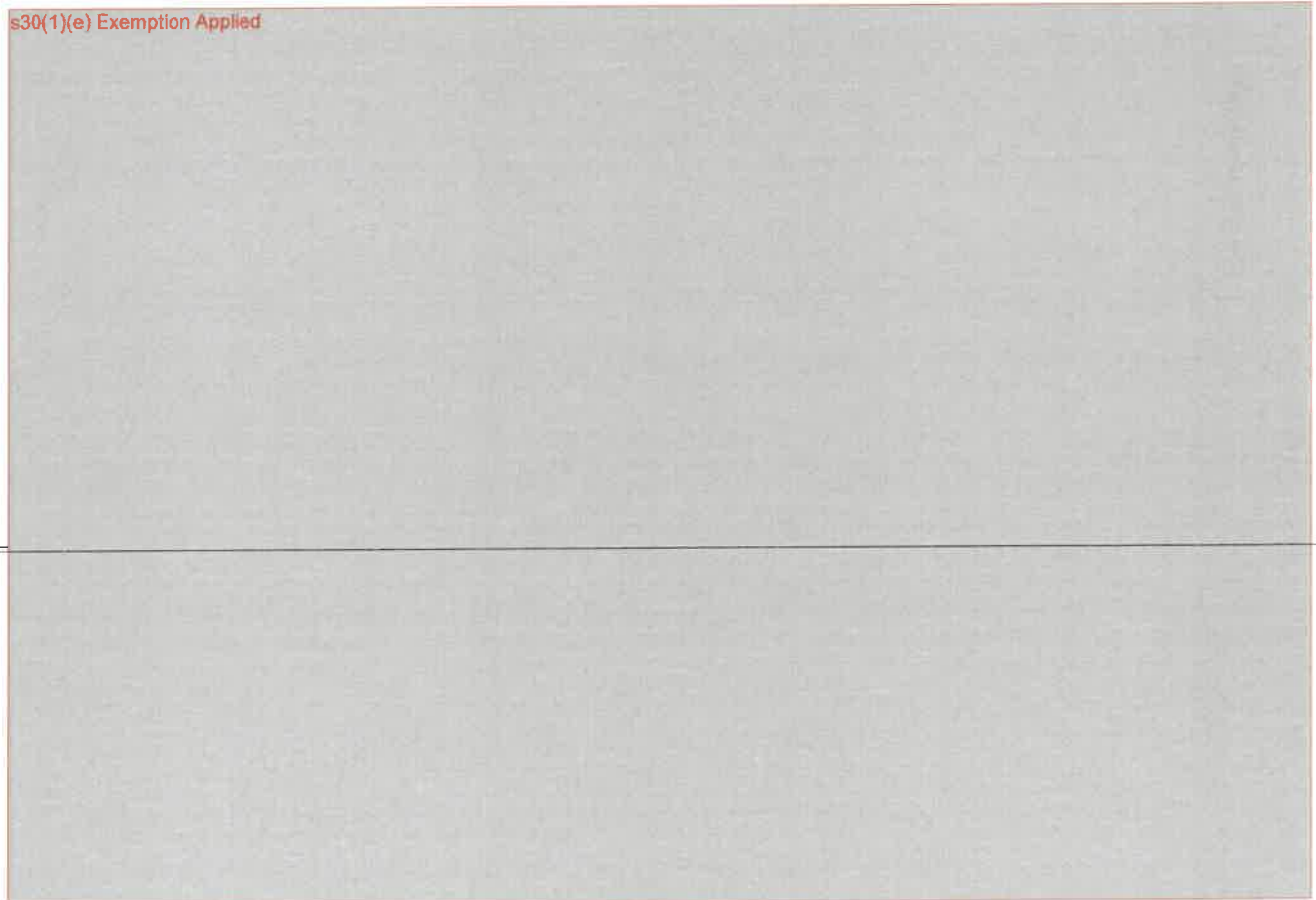
s36(1) Exemption Applied
Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

From: Shepherd, Kerry <s36(1) Exemption Applied >
Sent: 19 January 2026 10:23
To: Burk, Stephen <s36(1) Exemption Applied >
Subject: Sovereign Citizen Ideology

Hi Commander
I am working towards implementing a policy for Firearms Services for assessing Sovereign Citizen Ideology as per our conversation last week.

Below is an example to illustrate that these matters are frequently difficult to assess under the Firearms Act:

s30(1)(e) Exemption Applied



I am seeking your guidance as to your expectations in relation to matters such as this (I will roll this into our new policy).

I could write to Legal Services seeking their view as to whether grounds exist to refuse the application, I expect their advice is that there is not sufficient grounds.

But that might be useful in them considering where the line in the sand may be.

Regards

Kerry Shepherd | Manager

Firearms Services | Tasmania Police | Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

GPO Box 308, Hobart TAS 7001 | Phone: (03) 6173 2720 | Ex: §36(1) Exemption

Email: §36(1) Exemption Applied | Email: firearms.services@police.tas.gov.au

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Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Departmental Briefing Note



Trim reference number: This document – A26/58350
 Attachment 1 – A25/179002 – Legal Services Advice s36(1) May 2025.
 Attachment 2 – Click or tap here to enter text.

To: Assistant Commissioner, Capability

FIREARMS LICENCE REVIEWS DUE TO ALLEGED SOVEREIGN CITIZEN IDEOLOGY

Critical date: 25 February 2026

Purpose

- To respond to a review undertaken by the Assistant Commissioner, Capability into the recent management of matters by Firearms Services (FAS) where police intelligence indicated that a person may hold Sovereign Citizen Ideology (SCI) and that person is an applicant or has previously held a firearms licence.
- One of the purposes is to assess if performance development action is needed for members of Firearms Services as the letter sent to SCI individuals was not in line with previous advice provided to FAS.

Background

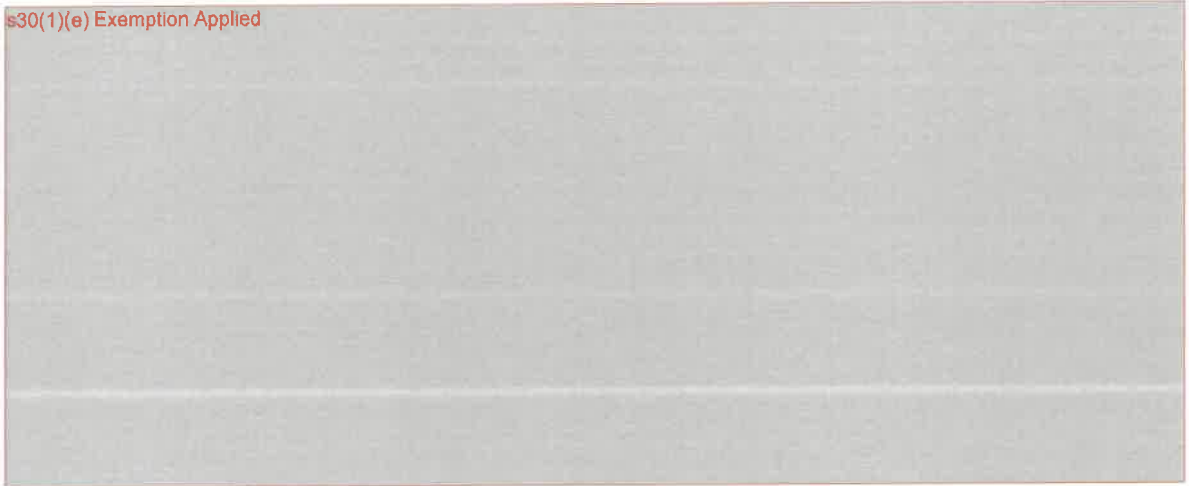
- On 17 February 2026, the Assistant Commissioner Capability requested the Manager, Firearms Services to prepare a Briefing Note, '*...outlining what has occurred within Firearms Services relative to the 'Sovereign Citizen' letters*'. For a full details see Annexure A.
- Firearms Services have been involved in two bodies of work in relation to SCI. One being a targeted review and the other a firearms license review triggered by matters recorded on ATLAS. These are routinely referred to FAS or identified by FAS while completing daily checks of police systems. Those reviews identify ATLAS matters that affect firearms licence holders. The letters sent out were as a result of two work streams – the review undertaken by the Acting Manager, FAS and the daily referrals to FAS.

Targeted Review

- Acting Manager, Claudia Taylor, commenced a review following the August 2025 shooting of two police officers in Victoria by Mr Dezi Freeman, a person believed to hold SCI which heightened risk concerns regarding SCI individuals with access to firearms both from a public safety and police safety perspective.
- s30(1)(e) individuals were identified with an 'Issue Motivated Group (IMG)' flag who also carried a firearms application (FAA) flag. Those individuals are listed in Annexure B.

- The list was provided to Crime and Intelligence Command who forwarded it to the Emergency Management and Special Response Command (EMSR) A response was reflected in the running sheet on FAWDS for each affected license holder. Some SCI licence holder's had already had their licence suspended and EMSR were not in possession of intelligence requiring action to be taken with other SCI.
- The suspended license holders are:

s30(1)(e) Exemption Applied

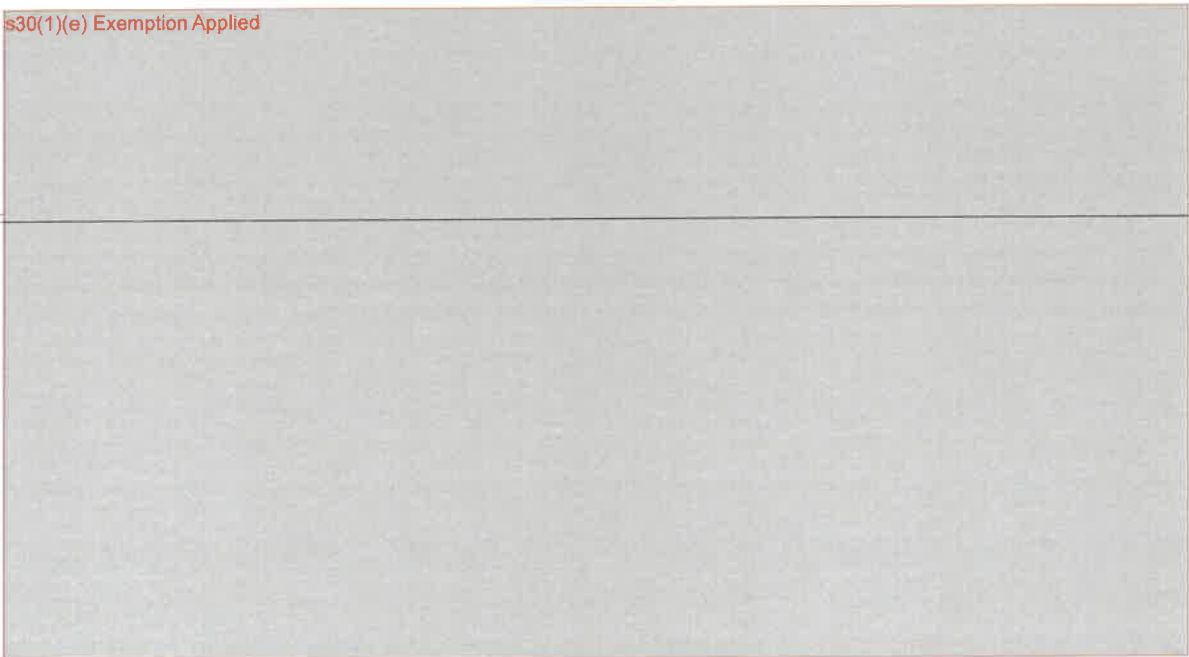


- The issue was raised at the Community Safety Firearms Review Committee (CSFRC) Meeting on 8 October 2025 seeking direction from the CSFRC as to how to manage SCI matters.

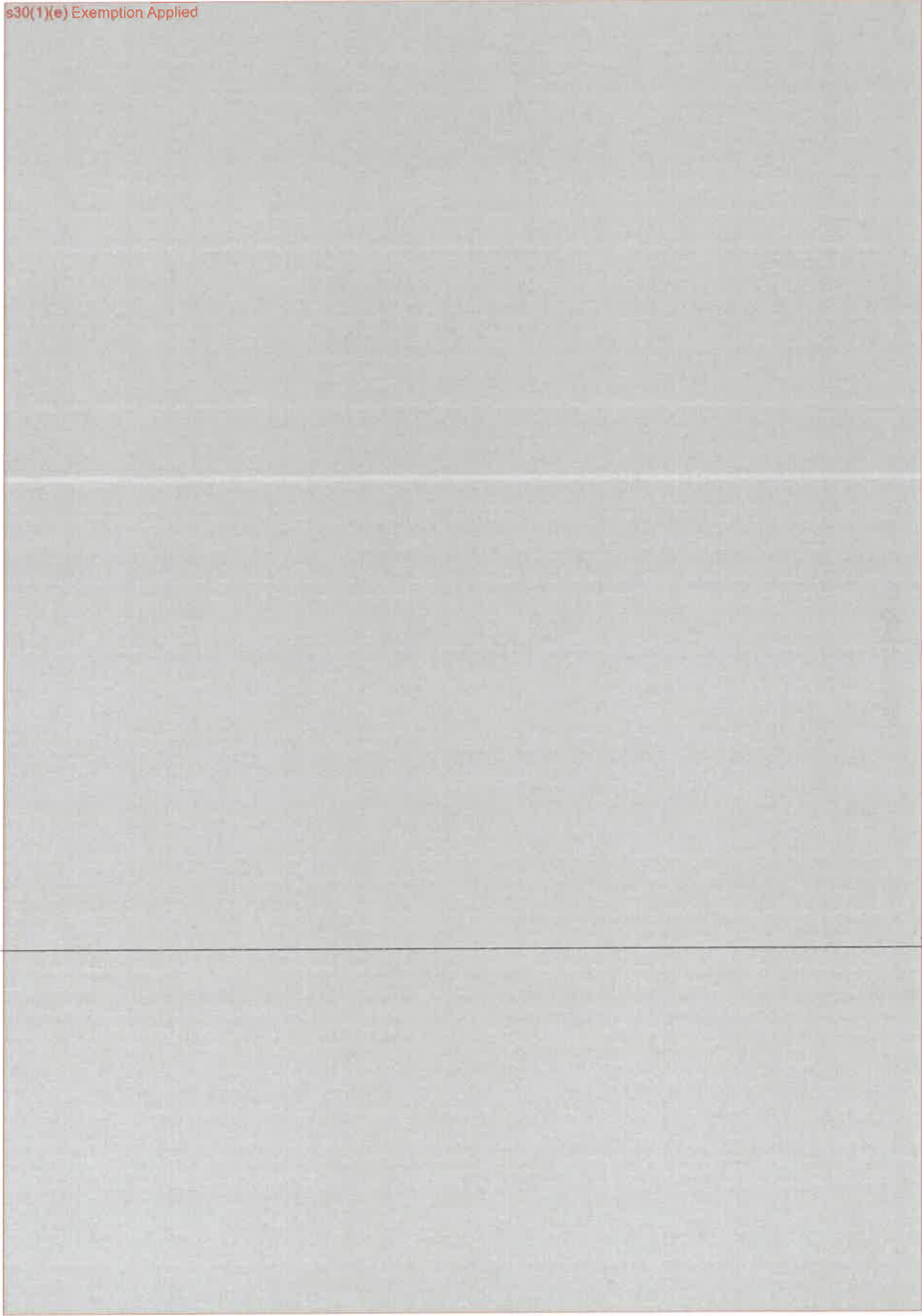
ATLAS triggered licence reviews

- The following licenses were reviewed through usual processes after identification of alleged SCI through ATLAS:

s30(1)(e) Exemption Applied



§30(1)(e) Exemption Applied

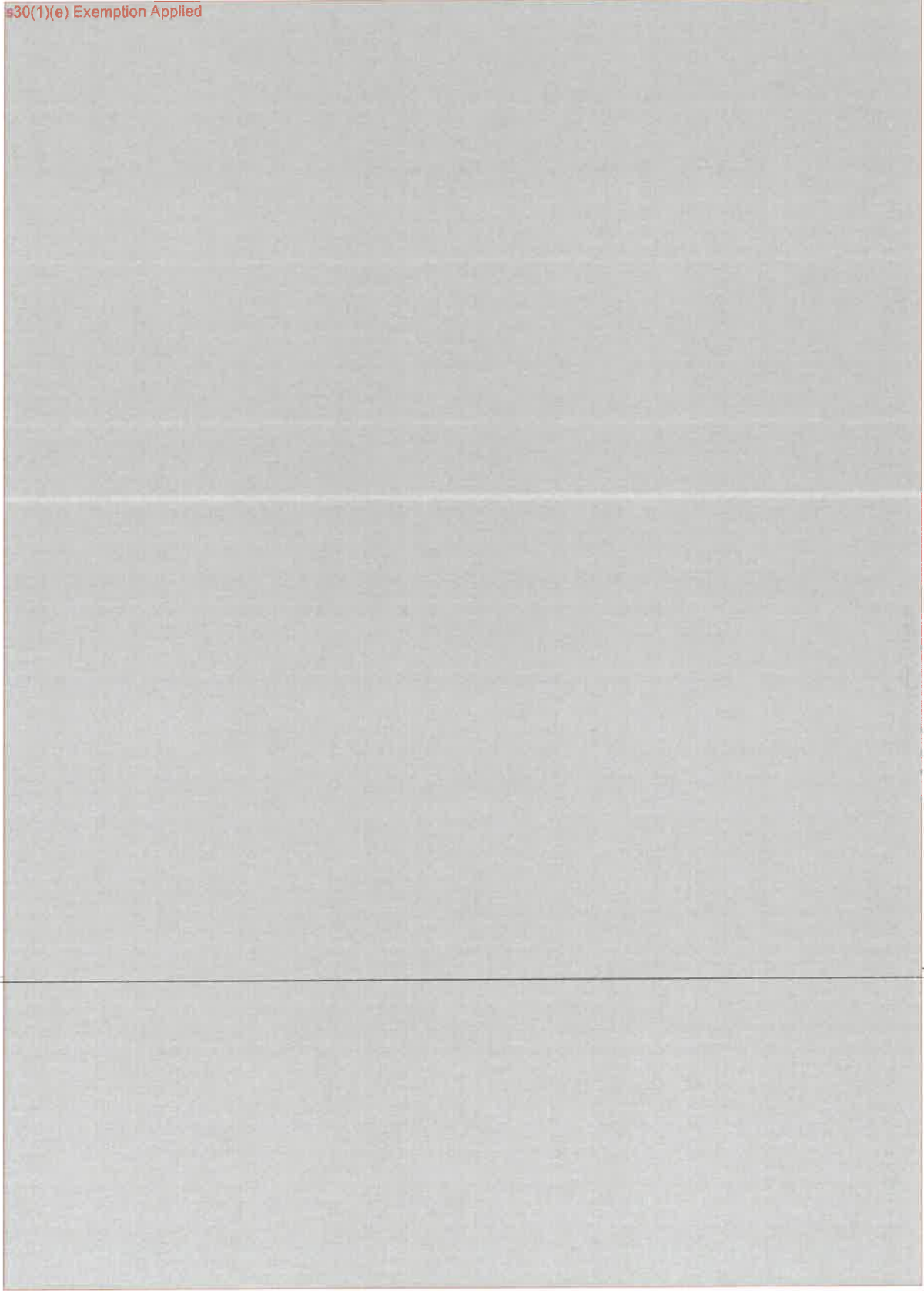


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§30(1)(e) Exemption Applied



• §30(1)(e) Exemption Applied



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- Due to resourcing constraints at FAS a delay occurred in adding detail to ATLAS (as per the new agency policy).

Current situation

- The processes followed that led to the ACC’s review have recently changed due to:
 - Advice from the Commander, Statewide Services providing directions to improve the associated processes. See Annexure C.
 - The Department releasing a draft training package in relation to Sovereign Citizen management, all FAS staff have been informed they are required to complete it.
- On 16 January 2025, the Manager, FAS wrote to Team Leaders providing the instruction, outlined in Annexure C, to ensure information be recorded on ATLAS.
- Subsequently the matter has been discussed at the weekly staff meeting resulting in a better understanding of SCI..
- I acknowledge that in February 2025 in response to an email exchange with Assistant Commissioner Oosterloo about license holder s36(1) Exemption Applied that direction was given on how best to deal with that particular matter as follows:
- At that time of the matter involving s36(1), the suggested process was followed. In relation to the matters dealt with recently (outlined above from late 2025) a different approach was taken, which is the subject of this review. I have been asked to explain why it was that I did not follow the same process as was completed for s36(1).
- There are three main reasons for that:
 - s36(1) Exemption Applied
 - There has been no formal instruction to implement a policy or procedure based on the informal email outline for s36(1) to guide future decision making but acknowledge I should have recalled the previous guidance.
 - There has been subsequent legal advice (May 2025 – s36(1) Exemption Applied – See A25/179002) to add further clarity to decisions in relation to fit and proper persons assessments of this nature. This Legal Advice supported the Commissioner of Police suspending the firearms license of s36(1) Exemption. That advice asserts that s36(1) Exemption Applied

Conclusion

- s35(1) Exemption Applied
- FAS staff have requested a procedure for managing such matters that is currently under development by the Manager, FAS. This will reflect any guidance provided following this

investigation and learnings from the recently managed matters and the department's training package.

- Any further clarification or direction from the Commissioner of Police (through the Assistant Commissioner) how the delegation of powers under the *Firearms Act* should be exercised in these circumstances in future can also be reflected in that procedure.
- From a continuous learning perspective, the following recommendations are suggested:

- s35(1) Exemption Applied
-

- If there is to be sustainable improvement in how license review matters are managed the functional resourcing, policy platform and workload pressures on the FAS Manager and review staff will need to be supported to ensure there is a platform for healthy and high quality license review management.

Financial considerations

- Nil

Stakeholder and communications considerations

- s38(1) Exemption Applied
-

Work, health and safety considerations

- Nil

Next steps

- Assistant Commissioner, Capability to consider the response in relation to the review.

Clearance table

	Name	Position	Date
Prepared by	K Shepherd	Manager of Firearms Services	24/02/2026
Through	S Burk	Commander, Statewide Services	

Approved	D Oosterloo	Assistant Commissioner	
Return to	K Shepherd	Manager of Firearms Services	

ANNEXURE A – Request for Briefing Note

From: Oosterloo, Douglas

Sent: 17 February 2026 18:16

To: Burk, Stephen <§36(1) Exemption Applied >

Cc: Assistant Commissioner Capability <§30(1) Exemption Applied >

Subject: RE: Sovereign Citizen

Hi Burky

As discussed today, could you please have Kerry prepare a briefing note to me through you, outlining what has occurred within Firearms Services relative to these 'Sovereign Citizen' letters.

I note Kerry has already provided some detail in the below email chain, however that detail is limited and it is difficult to interpret what has occurred chronologically, noting there is some approximation/estimation in relation to actions, timeframes and people impacted.

Can the briefing note please include the following information:

1. How many firearms licence holders have been identified as 'sovereign citizens' (eg is it confirmed to be §30 as referenced in the below email?)
 - o Please include names and details of the §30 people, for reference purposes.
2. On what basis were they identified as 'sovereign citizens'?
 - o Did FAS initiate a broader review, or was FAS responding to specific /recent referrals from operational police?
 - o How was the review conducted, what systems were used and who was involved?
 - o Please include relevant dates, eg: "A review of ATLAS was undertaken during October 2025 by D Southwood, letters were prepared and sent to §30(1) people on 18 November 2025...etc etc"
3. What action has been taken in respect to each of the identified 'sovereign citizens'?
 - o For each of the §30(1) 'sovereign citizens', please include whether letters have been sent, whether responses received, and what further action has been taken since correspondence.
 - o Please include relevant dates of letters and actions.
4. Where the action has included suspension of a firearms licence (Noting that §30(1)(e) suspensions referenced in the emails):
 - o What advice was provided to the police tasked with attending the relevant address/es and/or seizing firearms?
 - o Were risk and safety considerations made and communicated as part of the tasking of police?
5. What is the specific legislative authority for suspending a firearms licence on the basis of the person being considered a 'sovereign citizen'?
 - o For the §30(1) licences that have been suspended, please include details of the specific reasons given to them (as required by s.53(1)(a) of the Act).

- Please include sufficient detail to satisfy that the relevant legislative elements have been properly considered and addressed.
 - Please also make comment as to what action is intended prior to the expiry of these suspensions (ie within 6 months per s.53(2)(b) of the Act).
6. Did FAS consult or seek advice on issues relating to 'sovereign citizens' before taking action? If so, who was consulted and what was the advice?
- Please specifically include whether advice was sought from ACC, Commander, CSFRC, Legal Services, SIS or SOCD/CIC.
7. What is the current status of each matter, where a letter was sent to someone identified as a 'sovereign citizen'?
- Are there any current matters in progress where police attendance/intervention has not yet occurred?
 - Has the potential risk associated with each of them been addressed and if so – how and has this been documented?
 - (Noting where a firearms licence holder has been told their licence is under review due to their 'sovereign citizen' status – any subsequent police attendance at the address may be perceived to be an action to take their firearms and therefore increases risk to police officers).
8. Please include a Conclusion/Summary at the end which includes a reflection as to whether in hindsight, has this process been done in error, and are there any learnings since the issue has been highlighted?
- I could not see any concession or reflection in the emails below.
 - I would appreciate some honest reflection/contrition if it is conceded there were errors made.
 - A reflection on what was done in error and what action is now being taken will assist in assessing whether further direction or remedial action is needed.

I would appreciate a briefing note that addresses the above points (and any other relevant matter) to be received at my office **by COB Tuesday 24 February 2026 (7 days)**.

Please let me know of any issues.

Doug Oosterloo

Assistant Commissioner

Capability



s36(1) Exemption Applied

Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Accountability Integrity Respect Support

ANNEXURE B

s30(1)(e) Exemption Applied



ANNEXURE C

When I met with the Commander earlier in the week, he asked for some changes to how we manage information that suggests a person has Sovereign Citizen Ideology.

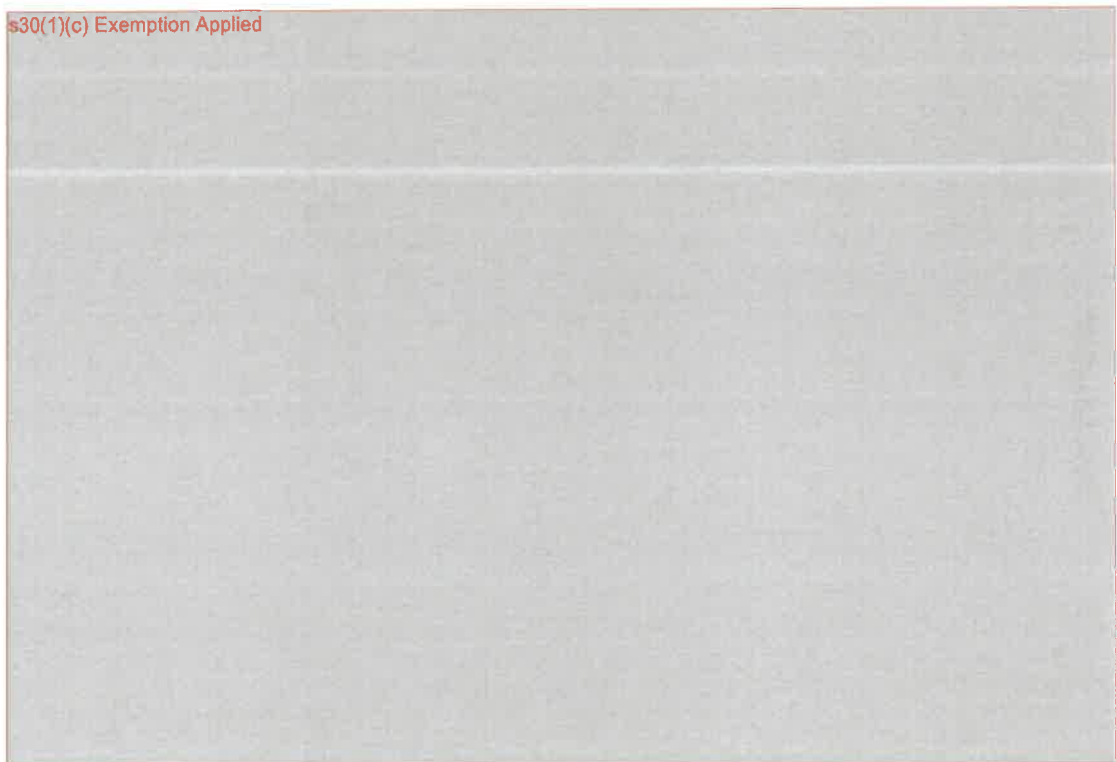
This process will impact each team differently.

Please review the proposed process below and provide you feedback.

Review Team

When information comes to our attention that indicates a person may hold Sovereign Citizen Ideology and we are commencing licence review due to concerns that the person may not comply with the provisions of the Firearms Act 1996 or may pose wider community safety implications please manage as follows:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.



Licensing Team

When information comes to our attention that indicates a person may hold Sovereign Citizen Ideology and we are undertaking an assessment of a firearms licence and we are concerned that the person may not comply with the provisions of the Firearms Act 1996 or may pose wider community safety implications please manage as follows:

- 1.
- 2.



s30(1)(c) Exemption Applied

3.

4.

5.

6.

Dealers Team

When information comes to our attention that indicates a person may hold Sovereign Citizen Ideology and we are undertaking an assessment of a firearms licence and we are concerned that the person may not comply with the provisions of the Firearms Act 1996 or may pose wider community safety implications please manage as follows:

1.

s30(1)(c) Exemption Applied

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.



FW: §36(1) Exemption review of actions

From Burk, Stephen <§36(1) Exemption Applied>
Date Thu 2/26/2026 3:56 PM
To Shepherd, Kerry <§36(1) Exemption Applied>

Hi Kerry

Cass and I have both reviewed and tracked changes to your BN that Doug asked for.

§35(1) Exemption Applied

Have a look at the tracked changes we've suggested and include some detail concerning the thread below and let me know when you are happy with it.

Cheers, Steve.

Stephen Burk APM
Commander
Statewide Services

§36(1) Exemption Applied
Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

From: Oosterloo, Douglas <§36(1) Exemption Applied>
Sent: 17 February 2026 18:36
To: Burk, Stephen <§36(1) Exemption Applied>
Subject: FW: §36(1) Exemption review of actions

SB – as discussed today, please see below for my Feb 2025 advice to Kerry about how he should deal with a suspected sovereign citizen by the name of §36(1).

§35(1) Exemption Applied

s35(1) Exemption Applied

Doug Oosterloo
Assistant Commissioner
Capability

s36(1) Exemption Applied

Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

From: Oosterloo, Douglas
Sent: 11 February 2025 16:00
To: Shepherd, Kerry <s36(1) Exemption Applied >
Subject: RE: s36(1) Exemption review of actions

Hi Kerry,

Please see my answers to your queries in green below...

Doug Oosterloo
Commander
Statewide Services

s36(1) Exemption Applied

Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

From: Shepherd, Kerry <s36(1) Exemption Applied >
Sent: 11 February 2025 12:24
To: Oosterloo, Douglas <s36(1) Exemption Applied >
Subject: s36(1) Exemption review of actions

Hi Commander

I have now had time to contemplate responding to the review of decisions associated with the firearms licence of s36(1) Exemption .

s36(1) Exemption Applied

s35(1) Exemption Applied

s35(1) Exemption Applied

On a normal day I would action between 25 and 35 licence files (this equates to over 150 files each month).

I have always been aware of the possible impact any decision has on the safety of police members as well as the broader community.

s35(1) Exemption Applied

I use as examples, two files currently allocated to me for determination:

s30(1)(e) Exemption Applied
s35(1) Exemption Applied

s35(1) Exemption Applied

I am seeking your advice on how these matters should be handled.

Regards

Kerry Shepherd | Manager

Firearms Services | Tasmania Police | Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

GPO Box 308, Hobart TAS 7001 | Phone: (03) 6173 2720 | Ex: s36(1) Exemption

Email: s36(1) Exemption Applied | Email: firearms.services@police.tas.gov.au

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Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Departmental Minute



Trim reference number: This document – A25/441343
Attachment 1 – A25/441343/1 – ACO to All Commands Letter

To: **Assistant Commissioner - Operations**

ENGAGING WITH SOVEREIGN CITIZENS - MANDATORY TRAINING

Recommendation

That you:

Note the '*Engaging with Sovereign Citizens*' online training module is now ready to go live on the DPFEM Online Learning platform and this will occur once approved by you..

Sign the attached letter advising all Commands that the training module is mandatory for all sworn members of Tasmania Police (A25/441343/1).

Background

In response to the fatal incident in Porepunkah, Victoria in late August 2025, and noting a small but noticeable increase in reports involving sovereign citizen activity in Tasmania, the Commissioner's Office requested the development of an online training resource for Tasmania Police members.

The training resource was designed to raise awareness of sovereign citizen rhetoric, behaviours and typical presentation, and to enhance operational safety by outlining and reinforcing effective engagement techniques before, during and after potential encounters.

Tasmania has individuals who identify as sovereign citizens who may pose a nuisance to police and the courts, and while many remain largely peaceful, sovereign-citizen adherents present an enduring safety risk to attending members - particularly during callouts to isolated or remote properties.

The nature of sovereign-citizen ideology and the potential risks associated with adherents are relevant across a wide cross-section of policing functions. Accordingly, the training is intended to be mandatory for all sworn Tasmania Police officers, with optional access for unsworn staff.

Current situation

The *'Engaging with Sovereign Citizens'* training module will be live on the DPFEM Online Learning platform when approved.

The module was developed by the Counter Terrorism Security Preparedness (CTSP) Division, in consultation with Tasmania Police State Intelligence Services and ASIO.

It is currently the organisations only comprehensive information resource available to members on sovereign citizen ideology, behaviours and associated risks.

It is recommended that all sworn members complete the training by **1 May 2026** to support operational safety. A letter has been prepared (contained within) to notify Commands of the training requirement and its importance.

Stakeholder and communications considerations

Staff will be advised of the availability of the training module and the required completion date through the letter issued to Commands, supported by a notice published on Conexus.

Consultation

Consultation occurred via written correspondence to all commands, the Police Association of Tasmania and the HSR network via Work, Health and Safety. The following concerns and mitigations were implemented:

- The PAT said the footage displayed was confronting but necessary and were highly supportive of the entire package.
- Western District expressed concerned showing a dead police officer and impact on members. A disclaimer was provided as well as outlining that viewing the footage was not a requirement to pass the training.
- A link has also been provided to the 12 fatal errors.
- Minor grammatical errors were corrected.
- There was a question around State Service members completing the training. The training is not mandatory for State Service members; however advisable, particularly for those employees who perform public related duties who may encounter a sovereign citizen attending stations.
- The amount of informal positive feedback was noted from a number of individual members.

Financial considerations

Nil.

Work, health and safety considerations

The training module is specifically designed to enhance the operational safety of Tasmania Police members.

Next steps

Once this Minute is noted and the letter is signed, all Commands will be formally notified of the mandatory training module and the required completion date of 1 May 2026.

The training module will be reviewed annually, or earlier if required, to ensure the content remains accurate and contemporary.

Clearance table

	Name	Position	Date
Prepared by	Kate Mitchell	CVE - Projects Manager	16/12/2025
Through	Rachel Hodge	Sergeant - CTSP	16/12/2005
Through	Luke Walker	Inspector - CTSP	04/02/2026
Approved	Peter Harriss	Commander EMSR	05/02/2026
Approved	Adrian Bodnar	Assistant Commissioner Operations	
Return to	Peter Harriss	Commander, EMSR	

Tasmania Police

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER (OPERATIONS)

GPO Box 308 HOBART TAS 7001

Phone 1800 765 827

Email s36(1) Exemption Applied



Trim reference number: A25/441343/1

10 February 2026

Commander, Western District
 Commander, Northern District
 Commander, Southern District
 Commander, Statewide Services
 Commander, Education and Training
 Commander, Professional Standards
 Commander, Community Engagement
 Commander, Crime and Intelligence Command
 Commander, Family and Sexual Violence Command
 Commander, Emergency Management and Special Response
 Director, Strategy and Support
 A/Deputy Secretary, Business & Executive Services

ENGAGING WITH SOVEREIGN CITIZENS – MANDATORY ONLINE TRAINING

In response to the fatal incident in Porepunkah, Victoria in late August 2025, as well as a small but noticeable increase in reports of sovereign citizen activity in Tasmania, a new online training resource has been developed for Tasmania Police members.

In developing the training package consultation occurred with the Commands and Health & Safety Representatives and the PAT. Feedback received was considered and amendments made where appropriate.

The '*Engaging with Sovereign Citizens*' training package is designed to raise member awareness of sovereign citizen rhetoric, behavioural cues and typical presentation. It also aims to enhance operational safety by outlining and reinforcing effective engagement techniques for use before, during and after potential encounters.

Tasmania has individuals who identify as sovereign citizens, who can pose a persistent nuisance to police and the courts. Sovereign citizen beliefs are not inherently indicative of a violent extremist ideology, and many sovereign citizens do not advocate or support violence to further these beliefs. Importantly, sovereign citizens adherents continue to present an

enduring safety risk to police - particularly when members are attending callouts at isolated or remote properties across the state.

The nature of sovereign citizen ideology and the potential risks associated with adherents are relevant across a wide range of policing functions. Accordingly, the training is mandatory for all sworn Tasmania Police officers, with optional access provided to unsworn staff. The package includes interactive content and is designed to be completed in approximately 20 minutes.

Please ensure all personnel within your command complete the training by 1 May 2026. Supervisors and managers should actively monitor compliance and provide support where needed.

This training is a critical step to increase the operational safety of Tasmania Police members. Your support in ensuring its completion by all members is much appreciated.

For any queries or assistance, please contact s36(1) Exemption Applied

Yours sincerely



A P Bodnar APM

Assistant Commissioner Operations

cc. Work Health and Safety Manager