

Body Cameras

Victorian Paramedics for Body Cameras

Victorian paramedics are now wearing body cameras in a trial program designed to better protect ambulance workers, as thousands of cases of violence and aggression towards them are reported each year.

Up to 150 paramedics in Melbourne's metro west region, including the CBD, will take part in the trial which follows a successful pilot by Victoria Police on Dec 7, 2016.

Ambulance Services Minister Jill Hennessy said violence committed against paramedics was a real problem, with about 13 incidents reported each day.

"We've had more than 5,000 emergency cases where paramedics were exposed to violence and aggression last year," she said.

"It's about time that we started upping our arsenal in order to hold people accountable for that."

Ms Hennessy said the cameras would better identify perpetrators and help prosecute those responsible for the attacks.

"We do take attacks on paramedics very seriously," she said.

"An assault is an assault, irrespective of whether or not it's on a paramedic or a general member of the public."

"Often we've found that we haven't been in the position to have the evidence to be able to pursue people that have been aggressive and have attacked people."

Ms Hennessy said paramedics often faced difficult situations when treating patients, and were working more with Victoria Police for call-outs where there had been past violence.

"The focus of our paramedics has always been the healthcare of the people at the scene, it hasn't necessarily been their own safety and wellbeing."

"The health and wellbeing of our paramedics should not come at the expense of people that require healthcare if they are attacking our hardworking emergency services."

Ms Hennessy said in 57 criminal law cases, assaulting a paramedic had been taken into account as an aggravating factor.

Violence shows 'lack of respect' for emergency workers.

Shelly Brown, who has been a paramedic for nine years, said drugs, alcohol and a "lack of respect" from the public are key issues.

She said she was assaulted by a patient inside an ambulance.

“I was assisting a patient who was alcohol affected and I was surrounded by police and out of the blue she just attacked me and punched me in the face,” Ms Brown said.

“It was really disappointing after all this time trying to help people and serve the community and wanting to go home safely to my family.”

The woman was arrested and charged.

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<http://www.abc.net.au>

RSPCA Victoria for Body Cameras

“No incident in the Society’s history conveys more starkly either the unique position occupied by the RSPCA among Victoria’s charitable organisations or the intensity of feeling that surrounds animal welfare issues.

The dark shade of malevolence has hovered at the threshold of all RSPCA opinions and activities since its inception”.

(References to the murder of RSPCA Inspector Stuart Fairlie at Mortlake on 1 May 1989 in ‘For All Creatures’, A History of RSPCA Victoria by Barbara Pertz, 2006)

On 25 May 2016, RSPCA Victoria announced that it had engaged Neil Comrie AO APM, former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police (the Senior Reviewer), to undertake an independent review of the Inspectorate of the RSPCA.

In the associated media statement that attracted broad media coverage, the community was invited to make submissions that would help the Senior Reviewer answer three key questions one of which is: What resourcing and approaches need to be put in place to ensure animal cruelty is being adequately investigated and prosecuted and community expectations are being met?

On the advice of the Senior Reviewer, the RSPCA then engaged Brian Hine, former Deputy Emergency Services Commissioner and Peter Marczuk to assist with the conduct of the review. This team formed the Independent Review of RSPCA Victoria Inspectorate (IRRVI).

In consultation with the RSPCA, the Review team identified a list of stakeholders. The Senior Reviewer wrote to each of these stakeholders to advise them of the review, to seek submissions and provide them with an opportunity to meet with the Review team. A total of 101 written submissions were received and the Review team undertook personal interviews with 48 stakeholders including those in government (State and local), the racing industry, animal welfare organisations and RSPCA staff, including the Inspectorate. These submissions and consultations revealed a significant number of issues for further examination by the Review. Of particular interest was the fact that there was a high degree of commonality in these issues which allowed the Review team to adopt a thematic approach to the conduct of the Review.

Research was undertaken by the Review to examine relevant legislation, authority and powers, operational policies and procedures utilised by animal welfare organisations in other jurisdictions including the UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand and all other Australian States and Territories.

Given the nature of the work undertaken by Inspectors and the often remote locations in which they operate, the issue of availability of equipment was raised with the Review.

The safety culture within the Inspectorate can be improved through the implementation of the recommendations set out in this report. One of the most important issues to be addressed is the communications technology available to Inspectors to allow them to be in regular radio, telephone and on-line contact with their supervisors. In terms of equipment, staff were generally satisfied, although there was a suggestion that body cameras should be worn. This would be helpful in terms of evidence collection, safety and for training purposes. Access to body cameras (now widely utilised by law enforcement agencies) for all Inspectors would also be valuable in enhancing personal safety and in providing evidence for court purposes.

Recommendation 14: That the RSPCA undertake an equipment needs analysis to ensure that the equipment issued to Inspectors enables them to undertake their duties more safely and efficiently.

Published September 1, 2016

<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au>

RSPCA inspectors will wear the same digital bodycams currently being trialled by paramedics in a bid to improve the safety of frontline staff at the organisation.

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<https://www.heraldsun.com.au>

Victorian Police for Body Cameras

Victorian Police has started trialling body cameras to see if they can play an effective role in a Victorian policing environment.

The small video cameras worn on the uniform of police officers can capture video and audio evidence, and are expected to improve community safety and justice outcomes.

Victoria Police will take what they learn from the pilot and evaluate this information to guide the further use and deployment of the cameras.

In March 2016 the Royal Commission into Family Violence recommended that Victoria Police conduct a trial of the use of body cameras to collect statements and other evidence from family violence crime scenes. It is anticipated that capturing family violence related crime scenes and the immediacy of victim statements will improve the judicial process. Enabling victims to make video statements at the time of first police attendance could reduce the impact of the justice process. Victoria Police is working towards acquitting this key recommendation.

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<http://www.police.vic.gov.au>

The above theme surfaces in any business where people need someone in the vicinity to swing by and fix, install, relocate or clean something.

As of July 2, 2018 all Pocka Dola technicians will wear body cameras to record any violence from the people they are trying to help.

What is a body camera?

A body camera is a small camera worn on the uniform of authorized technicians. It is used to gather video and audio evidence.

All recordings are securely stored and managed in a restricted digital management system.

Why do we need body cameras?

Body cameras are expected to improve the process of evidence collection and increase transparency in interactions between the technician and the public.

A range of benefits to using body cameras have been reported, including:

- improved capture of video and audio evidence
- increased early guilty pleas and successful prosecutions
- better outcomes for victims and witnesses
- improved community and technician safety
- support for technician accountability and professionalism.

How will technicians use body cameras?

The overriding principle for activating a camera is to improve the safety of the community and the technician, collect evidence and increase transparency.

Footage from body cameras will primarily be used as evidence in court, and for investigative purposes.

Body cameras and your privacy

Body camera footage is defined as 'Protected Information' under the Surveillance Devices Act. Only authorized technicians will have access to the footage and access will be monitored and tracked.

Pocka Dola values the positive relationship we have with the community. We understand that some people may have concerns about technicians recording incidents using body cameras. We want to assure the public that the footage is protected and we take very seriously the responsibility to securely store and manage it.