

VICTORIA

Victorian
Auditor-General

Audit summary
of
Personal Safety and
Security on the
Metropolitan Train
System

Tabled in Parliament
09 June 2010

Audit summary

Background

The audit examined how successful Victoria Police (VicPol) and the Department of Transport (the department) had been from mid-2005 in reducing crime on Melbourne's train system and making passengers feel safe when travelling.

During 2008–09 there were more than 7 000 criminal offences reported on Melbourne's train system and this equates to 33 offences per million passenger boardings. These offences happened on trains, at stations and station car parks. These account for about 75 per cent of all recorded offences on public transport in Victoria.

Perceptions of safety are important because they influence how people behave, and they do not solely depend on levels of crime. For these reasons it is important that crime and perceptions of safety are managed as two connected but separate objectives.

Conclusion

VicPol and the department have been successful in reducing crime on Melbourne's train system since 2007–08.

In contrast, the approach to improve passengers' perceptions of safety has not been effective and requires focussed attention.

Findings

Managing crime

VicPol and the department, through its supervision of the train franchisee, developed effective frameworks in 2006 and 2008 respectively for managing crime on the metropolitan train system that:

- analysed the risks to passengers and their property
- set priorities and deployed resources based on this information
- evaluated activities to monitor and improve performance.

After crime increased in 2006–07 and 2007–08, the strategies employed since have been effective in reducing crime and provide the basis to extend these gains in the future.

One area for improvement is the evaluation of the projects the department directly funds to improve personal safety. There was insufficient evidence to demonstrate whether these projects have achieved their intended outcomes.

While VicPol and the department worked effectively to coordinate their day-to-day operations, reinstatement of high-level meetings such as the Safe Travel Taskforce would improve the effectiveness of both agencies. At a public transport safety forum held on 22 March 2010, VicPol and the department committed to do this and now need to follow through on this commitment.

Managing passengers' perceptions of safety

Approaches for managing perceptions of safety were less effective, relying mostly on reducing crime to improve how safe passengers feel.

This has not improved passengers' perceptions of safety. A more rigorous and evidence-based approach needs to be developed and applied.

Recommendations

Number	Recommendation	Page
	Victoria Police and the Department of Transport should:	
1.	Apply the evidence-based approach used to manage crime for managing perceptions of safety.	14
2.	Reinstate regular high-level meetings to better assure information sharing and the coordination of personal safety initiatives.	14
	The Department of Transport should:	
3.	Improve the way it evaluates projects by clearly defining the benefits expected and how they will be measured as part of project development.	14
4.	Work with the train franchisee to act on the research recommendations to increase the effectiveness of authorised officers in improving passengers' perceptions of safety.	14
5.	Victoria Police should set targets for reducing crime based on the evidence about crime trends and the likely effectiveness of its strategies to address these trends.	23
6.	Victoria Police and the Department of Transport should set targets for improving perceptions of safety based on the evidence about trends in perceptions and the likely effectiveness of their strategies to address these trends.	23