



Personal Safety and Security on the Metropolitan Train System



VICTORIA

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Auditor-General

Personal Safety and Security on the Metropolitan Train System

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The Hon. Robert Smith MLC
President
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Melbourne

The Hon. Jenny Lindell MP
Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Melbourne

Dear Presiding Officers

Under the provisions of section 16AB of the *Audit Act 1994*, I transmit my report on *Personal Safety and Security on the Metropolitan Train System*.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Frost', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

DR PETER FROST
Acting Auditor-General

9 June 2010

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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

Audit Act 1994 section 16— submissions and comments

Introduction

In accordance with section 16(3) of the *Audit Act 1994* a copy of this report, or relevant extracts from the report, was provided to Victoria Police and the Department of Transport with a request for comments or submissions.

The comments and submissions provided are not subject to audit nor the evidentiary standards required to reach an audit conclusion. Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of those comments rests solely with the agency head.

Submissions and comments received

RESPONSE provided by the Deputy Commissioner (Crime), Victoria Police

The following is an extract of the response provided by the Deputy Commissioner (Crime), Victoria Police. The full response is provided in Appendix A of this report.

Response: *I have reviewed the report and agree with the recommendations outlined therein that relate to Victoria Police.*

RESPONSE provided by the Secretary, Department of Transport

The following is an extract of the response provided by the Secretary, Department of Transport. The full response is provided in Appendix A of this report.

Response: *I accept your recommendations relevant to the Department both individually and jointly to improve passengers' perceptions of safety on the train system.*

I understand the Department, Victoria Police and the operators are already moving in this direction.

1 Background

1.1 Introduction

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 in station car parks. They account for about 75 per cent of all recorded offences on public transport across Victoria.

Of all criminal offences on the metropolitan train system:

- 17 per cent were crimes against the person, such as assault or robbery
- 62 per cent were crimes against property, such as theft from a motor vehicle, or property damage
- 5 per cent were drug-related crimes, including possession, use and trafficking
- 16 per cent were other crimes, such as possession of an illegal weapon, or inappropriate public behaviour.

Passenger satisfaction with personal safety is much lower on Melbourne’s trains than on Melbourne’s buses and trams. For the 2009 October to December quarter the overall score for personal security for train passengers was 60 on a satisfaction scale of zero to 100, with 100 meaning those interviewed were extremely satisfied. This was 16 points lower than the scores for passengers travelling on buses and ten points lower than the corresponding score for tram passengers.

One of the aims under *Growing Victoria Together* is to improve people’s safety by reducing crime and making people feel safe as they go about their business. 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.

1.2 Roles and responsibilities

Victoria Police (VicPol) and the Department of Transport (the department) are the agencies responsible for improving personal safety on the metropolitan train system.

1.2.1 Victoria Police

VicPol is responsible for enforcing the law and preventing crime. For the public transport system, it aims to:

- reduce the incidence of crime and quickly solve crimes when they occur
- improve perceptions of safety.

Its Transit Safety Division polices the public transport system and until April 2010 deployed 200 officers to prevent and investigate crimes and provide a visible presence. VicPol has now increased full-time transit police personnel to 246. Figure 1A describes the six VicPol units responsible for public transport.

Figure 1A
VicPol transit safety division units

Unit	Role
Uniform operations	Provide policing functions on public transport
Crime Investigation Unit	Investigate all crimes against the person on public transport
Division Intelligence Unit	Identify and analyse public transport crime trends
Divisional Response Unit	Investigate property crimes and illicit drug activity on public transport
Proactive Unit	Engage with the community and improve perceptions of safety on public transport
Operations Response Unit	Provide a highly visible and mobile workforce, targeting public order, crime and road policing.*

Note: * New police unit set up 1 March 2010.

Source: Victorian Auditor-General's Office, based on information from VicPol.

In mid-2006 VicPol started applying the Victoria Police Intelligence Model to manage crime on the public transport system. This supports evidence-based decisions about resource allocation.

VicPol's strategic plan, *The Way Ahead 2008–13*, has a 12 per cent state-wide crime reduction target over five years and this translates into an annual crime reduction target of 3.8 per cent for 2009–10.

1.2.2 Department of Transport

Part of the department's mission is to provide public transport where travellers feel safe and free from crime. This involves managing major programs to improve personal safety, such as the installation of closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras and supervision of the franchisees that deliver public transport services.

The franchisee's obligations for managing personal safety on the metropolitan train system include:

- keeping records of personal safety incidents and trends
- maintaining and operating CCTV cameras on trains and at stations
- repairing vandalism and removing graffiti on rolling stock and at stations
- employing 350 specially trained authorised officers to prevent fare evasion and improve passenger safety
- providing a staff presence at 77 premium stations from the first train to the last train and at 26 host stations during morning peak hours.

Authorised officers are empowered to arrest and detain offenders on the public transport system. They are also meant to provide a visible and reassuring presence on Melbourne's train system.

In early 2008, the then franchisee began using an evidence-based model for deploying authorised officers, which was developed in conjunction with VicPol. This model mirrored VicPol's approach and was designed to provide a more effective way of targeting resources to reduce fare evasion and crime.

The current franchisee assumed responsibility for the metropolitan train system in November 2009 and has retained the same evidence-based approach to personal safety and security.

The department commissions regular passenger satisfaction surveys about Victoria's public transport services. These surveys include measures of how safe passengers feel when using Melbourne's trains, stations and car parks.

Departmental projects to improve personal safety

The department is responsible for some capital works programs that affect personal safety, including CCTV and lighting upgrades at stations.

The department also has a program to upgrade the more popular stations to premium status. There are currently 77 premium stations in Melbourne that are staffed from first to last train, have a ticket and information office and mostly include facilities such as indoor waiting areas and toilets. There are also 26 host stations that are staffed during morning peak hours.

The department is also piloting a project to involve local communities and local government in transforming two metropolitan stations and one regional station into safe and inviting community spaces.

Safe Travel Taskforce

The Safe Travel Taskforce is a multi-agency committee that advises the Minister for Public Transport about personal safety on public transport. The department chairs the taskforce, which also has members from VicPol, the transport operators, the Department of Justice, Metlink, and the Rail, Tram and Bus Union.

1.3 Audit scope and objectives

The audit examined the progress in improving personal safety by assessing whether the department and VicPol had:

- designed programs using sound evidence and worked together to reduce crime and make passengers feel safe when using Melbourne's trains
- monitored and evaluated programs to understand their effectiveness
- achieved the standards and targets set for personal safety and security.

The audit was conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards. The audit assessed the management of personal safety and security on Melbourne's train system for the period from 2005.

The cost of the audit was \$280 000.

1.4 Structure of report

Part 2 examines how personal safety and security is managed.

Part 3 determines whether:

- travel by train has become safer
- passengers feel safer when using trains.



2 Managing personal safety and security

At a glance

Background

Effectively managing personal safety and security requires agencies to apply sound, evidence-based approaches and to monitor and evaluate the success of their actions.

Conclusion

The strategies to reduce crime are sound and have reduced crime on Melbourne's train system since 2007–08. Perceptions of safety have not improved and a more rigorous evidence-based approach is warranted.

The Department of Transport's (the department's) directly funded projects affecting personal safety were effectively prioritised, but not adequately evaluated for their impact.

Victoria Police (VicPol), the department and the franchisee work effectively to share intelligence and deploy their resources to address agreed priorities. However, this cooperation can be strengthened by reinstating regular, high-level meetings.

Recommendations

Victoria Police and the Department of Transport should:

- apply the evidence-based approach used to manage crime for managing perceptions of safety.
- reinstate regular high-level meetings to better assure information sharing and the coordination of personal safety initiatives.

The Department of Transport should:

- improve the way it evaluates projects by clearly defining the benefits expected and how they will be measured as part of project development.
- work with the train franchisee to act on the research recommendations to increase the effectiveness of authorised officers in improving passengers' perceptions of safety.

2.1 Introduction

Effective management of safety and security requires that agencies:

- base their actions on sound evidence and work cooperatively to achieve the government's goals of reducing crime and improving perceptions of safety
- monitor and evaluate their actions and use this information to improve their effectiveness.

This part examines how well Victoria Police (VicPol) and the Department of Transport (the department) have managed crime and passengers' perceptions about personal safety and security.

2.2 Conclusion

The strategies to reduce crime are sound and have been successful in reducing crime on Melbourne's train system. Perceptions of safety, however, have not improved and a more rigorous evidence-based approach is warranted.

The department's directly-funded projects that affect personal safety, while effectively prioritised, were not adequately evaluated for their impact.

VicPol, the department and the franchisee work effectively to share intelligence and deploy their resources to address agreed priorities. However, they can strengthen cooperation by reinstating regular, high-level meetings.

2.3 Reducing crime on the metropolitan train system

We expected to find that VicPol and the train franchisee had applied an evidence-based approach that:

- analysed information to understand the risks to passengers and their property
- used this intelligence to set priorities and deploy resources consistent with each organisation's objectives
- evaluated activities to monitor and improve performance.

We found that this was generally the case but identified two areas for further improvement:

- One area is the evaluation of the projects the department directly funds to improve personal safety. There was insufficient evidence to understand whether these have achieved their intended outcomes.
- We also found examples where better coordination between VicPol and the department would have helped overall effectiveness. A regular high-level forum would provide greater assurance of more effective cooperation.

2.3.1 VicPol's approach to reducing crime

Developing an evidence-based approach

VicPol, in mid-2006, started applying the Victoria Police Intelligence Model as its approach for reducing crime on Melbourne's train system.

This model formed a sound basis for addressing well-defined priorities and for evaluating the success of these actions.

VicPol's model is structured around the following intelligence reports:

- **a strategic assessment** produced every one to two years that analyses past trends and forecasts of criminal activity to set crime reduction priorities consistent with VicPol's objectives and targets
- **a monthly tactical assessment** that monitors progress against the strategic assessment, responds to trends or localised problems and deploys resources to address emerging risks
- **problem and target profiles** that inform the tactical assessment by providing intelligence on emerging problems or specific persons suspected of causing crime on the train system.

VicPol uses the tactical assessments at monthly meetings of senior staff to monitor performance, refine its priorities and deploy resources in the following month. These meetings are complemented by fortnightly meetings of operational staff to communicate recent performance and emerging priorities.

Aside from its regular patrols, VicPol addressed its priorities through operations focused on particular types of crime at specific locations.

Applying an evidence-based approach

The strategic assessment for 2008–09 used information on crime trends to identify the following critical priorities:

- **crimes against the person** because of the number and seriousness of these offences
- **theft of and from motor vehicles** which, while decreasing, still accounted for a large number of offences with the potential for improved performance through education and targeted operations
- **public order and property damage** because these offences were thought to influence passengers' perceptions of safety.

The strategic assessment also identified weapons and drug offences as second-tier priorities where current action would prevent these areas becoming major threats.

VicPol's reports and observed actions showed that it has acted effectively in line with its priorities.

Figure 2A describes VicPol's operations targeted at people carrying weapons on Melbourne's train system. This, and other operations that targeted station car park thefts, public order crime and drug offences, had clear objectives, were well planned and were evaluated to determine their success and lessons for future operations.

Figure 2A

Case study—'Operation Omni' to discourage people from carrying weapons

Under amendments to the *Control of Weapons Act 1990* in 2009, VicPol has increased powers to search people for weapons at random, without a warrant. 'Operation Omni' draws on these increased powers to search for weapons at targeted train stations.

VicPol ran 'Operation Omni' at North Melbourne, Footscray and Flinders Street stations. It selected these stations based on an analysis of the number and characteristics of criminal offences involving weapons at metropolitan stations.

VicPol consulted community groups and effectively briefed and prepared the police members involved in each operation.

Each operation was followed by a debriefing and evaluation. Lessons learnt from the first two operations at North Melbourne and Footscray stations informed the planning of the third operation at Flinders Street.

Source: Victoria Auditor-General's Office, based on information from VicPol.

2.3.2 The department's approach to reducing crime

Developing an evidence-based approach

In February 2008 the department supported the then train franchisee's move to an evidence-based approach for deploying authorised officers to tackle fare evasion, crime and antisocial behaviour. The franchisee based this approach on VicPol's model.

This change better targeted resources to the areas of greatest need and provided valuable information on the success of this deployment. The current franchisee decided to retain this model when it assumed responsibility for Melbourne's train system in November 2009.

Before moving to this model the department required the franchisee to deploy at least two authorised officers on all train services after 9 pm for at least 80 per cent of their journeys. This requirement was designed to address crime on evening services where passengers felt unsafe, and was reflected in the franchise agreement.

This approach was not effective because:

- fare evasion and crimes peaked in the late afternoon
- even late at night most incidents happened at stations rather than on the trains where the authorised officers had been deployed
- incidents of crime were more concentrated on some lines and at specific locations and a general deployment of resources did not match this pattern.

The previous franchisee argued for and achieved a change to a more targeted, evidence-based approach. It supported this argument with evidence about the ineffectiveness of the previous approach in addressing fare evasion and crime.

Applying an evidence-based approach

In a similar way to VicPol, the franchisee's new approach uses regular assessments to deploy resources and assess their effectiveness in addressing fare evasion and crime. These form the basis for regular meetings to direct resources to locations and times where the risks of fare evasion and crime were greatest.

The franchisee also set up specialist units to target graffiti and vandalism and to educate school and community groups about how to use public transport safely.

This approach proved more effective in targeting and preventing fare evasion, crime and antisocial behaviour. When the previous franchisee evaluated the new approach after a year it found that incidents of unruly behaviour and vandalism had halved.

The department's personal safety projects

The department directly funded actions intended to improve personal safety by upgrading:

- the more popular stations to 'premium' status and so having staff present from the first to last train and providing a ticket office and other facilities, such as indoor seating and toilets
- to white lighting at stations across the train system, to improve visibility.

It also upgraded closed circuit television (CCTV) equipment at stations from analog to digital technology. The focus of this initiative was national security, but it also included an objective about increasing public confidence in transport security and their safety.

Separate to these investments, the department is also piloting a project to involve local communities and local government in transforming two metropolitan stations and one regional station into safe and inviting community spaces.

For the upgrade projects, the department had effectively prioritised the works but had not adequately evaluated their effectiveness. It had not collected baseline information to allow the evaluation of the impact of premium station or CCTV upgrades on crime or passengers' perceptions of safety.

The department had completed a survey of passenger perceptions at locations after lighting had been upgraded. However, the evaluation approach was not sufficient to understand whether there had been a real change in passengers' perceptions of safety because of the upgrade.

The sites selected for the station improvement pilot were appropriate and were subject to a baseline study, which included VicPol completing safety audits of the pilot stations before being upgraded. The baseline study collected some useful information through focus groups and interviews with local businesses on perceptions of safety. However it missed the opportunity to establish a reliable basis for measuring changes in perceptions by surveying an adequate sample of passengers using these stations.

2.3.3 Working cooperatively to manage crime

The franchisee and VicPol work effectively together to share intelligence and coordinate the deployment of their resources to address agreed priorities.

While the relationship between VicPol and the department is constructive, the level of cooperation can be improved. This could be achieved through regular meetings involving the department, VicPol, the franchisee and other stakeholders.

We found examples where these agencies would be more effective if:

- they made better use of VicPol's station safety audits
- VicPol provided crime statistics to the department more regularly.

VicPol used to complete station audits that recommended ways to reduce the risk of crime and improve passengers' perceptions of safety. The audits were extensive:

- analysing crime at the target station
- completing daytime and night-time inspections
- engaging with stakeholders to understand the personal safety issues
- recommending what the franchisee and other stakeholders, such as road authorities and local councils, should do to improve personal safety.

The recommendations included design changes, improved lighting, more extensive CCTV monitoring, graffiti removal, and repairing damage.

VicPol suspended the audit program in October 2009 because it did not see any action in response to its recommendations and could not justify the commitment of resources to these audits.

The department is currently working with VicPol and the transport operators on more regular information updates and greater information sharing between organisations. This would help the department and the operators to monitor emerging trends and coordinate action.

The Safe Travel Taskforce was set up to facilitate the exchange of information between agencies and to improve coordination of safety and security initiatives. After helping to navigate the change to a more effective deployment of authorised officers, the activity of the taskforce has fallen to the point where it has become inactive and is currently under review.

The reinstatement of regular meetings along the lines of the Safe Travel Taskforce would help agencies coordinate activities better and make more effective use of each others' knowledge, resources and capabilities.

There is recent evidence that VicPol and the department, together with the public transport operators, are moving in this direction. These organisations held a public transport safety forum on 22 March 2010 and agreed to:

- focus on developing integrated policies to improve actual and perceived personal safety on all public transport modes
- set up mechanisms for greater information sharing between stakeholders.

VicPol and the department now need to deliver on this commitment.

2.4 Managing perceptions of safety

VicPol and the department do not use the same rigorous evidence-based approach that has been successful in reducing crime.

One of the aims of *Growing Victoria Together* is to improve community safety. Success is measured by the change in reported crime and whether people feel safer. The use of these two measures recognises that people's perceptions of safety are:

- influenced by factors other than the level of crime
- important because they influence how and when they use public transport.

Accordingly, alongside reducing crime, VicPol and the department have the related, but separate, objective of making people feel safer when using public transport.

We expected to find that agencies had:

- developed a good understanding of passengers' perceptions of personal safety and the factors underpinning these
- set priorities and actions to improve passengers' feelings of safety
- evaluated actions and used this information to improve performance.

2.4.1 VicPol's approach to managing perceptions

In 2006 VicPol completed research to better understand perceptions but had not:

- formed and applied a comprehensive strategy for managing perceptions
- used adequate and regular measures of passengers' perceptions of safety to inform and evaluate the success of its actions.

VicPol's research surveyed 1 700 public transport passengers on the Lilydale and Pakenham train lines. The research findings emphasised the importance of working with other stakeholders to improve perceptions of safety and showed that perceptions of train safety could be improved through:

- the greater visibility of police, security and other railway staff
- the increased use of security technologies, such as CCTV and alarms
- neat, clean, well lit, well maintained and well designed trains and stations
- access to safety information.

This research informed the VicPol *Public Transport Safety Strategy 2007–10* to reduce crime and improve passengers' perceptions. VicPol also set up a dedicated unit to embed key project lessons into its operations. It intended to pilot collaborative partnerships to improve perceptions of safety at three sites.

However, it is not evident that the VicPol research has been practically applied to manage perceptions and the pilot projects have not gone ahead.

VicPol measures how safe Victorian public transport passengers feel from the Council of Australian Governments National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing. This provides a quarterly measure of satisfaction across all public transport for daytime and night-time travel by police region. These measures are at too high a level and too indirect to guide VicPol's planning or measure its success.

Many of VicPol's actions, especially those that provide a visible police presence at high-profile locations and target crimes that are known to intimidate passengers, aim to improve passengers' perceptions about safety.

However, and in contrast to its approach to crime, these actions are not integrated within a comprehensive strategy for improving perceptions. VicPol has not set specific improvement targets and does not have enough information to understand perceptions or measure the success of its actions.

2.4.2 Department of Transport

The department collects sufficient information to understand passengers' perceptions of safety and funded projects aimed at making passengers feel safer. While the strategy for managing crime and fare evasion was adequate, the management of perceptions of safety was not.

The current franchise agreement includes additional incentives and penalties that should influence the franchisee to better manage passengers' perceptions of safety. However, sustained improvement will require an effective strategy to understand the problems, set priorities and measure the impact of actions to address passengers' perceptions of safety.

Measuring perceptions of safety

The department measures perceptions of personal safety through regular telephone surveys that target frequent passengers, occasional passengers and a smaller quota of people who do not use public transport.

For the metropolitan train system, respondents rate:

- how safe they feel on trains, at stations and when using station car parks during the day and after dark
- their satisfaction with measures designed to improve personal safety.

The department reviewed and applied an amended survey from April 2009 after the previous survey had remained largely unchanged since 1997. The new survey includes an amended rating scale and more detail on perceptions by location and time period. These changes mean the latest results are not comparable with the scores from before April 2009.

The department publishes an overall personal safety rating for Melbourne's trains and uses detailed information underpinning this score to brief the operators. However, this detailed information is not made available to the community.

Past actions to improve perceptions of safety

Past plans and actions have focused mostly on crime and fare evasion. The previous franchisee had little contractual incentive to improve scores for perceptions of safety.

The redeployment of authorised officers proved more effective in targeting crime and fare evasion. However, research completed in 2008 on behalf of Metlink, the organisation responsible for marketing public transport in Victoria, showed that authorised officers had little positive impact on passengers' perceptions of safety. Passengers viewed the role as entirely about revenue protection and did not think authorised officers were there to provide assistance or make them feel safer.

To change this perception the department would need to better:

- equip authorised officers to assist passengers and make them feel safer
- communicate the personal safety benefits authorised officers provide to passengers.

The department's projects to upgrade stations and improve lighting and CCTV surveillance aimed to reduce crime and make passengers feel safer. These projects did not positively change overall perceptions of safety across the system and the department had not measured whether they had improved perceptions ratings at the specific locations where they were applied.

Current initiatives

The current franchise agreement includes a 'Customer Experience Performance Regime'. This requires the franchisee to achieve targets related to the condition of stations and trains, with financial incentives and penalties of up to \$1 million each year where performance exceeds or falls short of these targets.

The new regime includes targets for:

- removing graffiti
- keeping emergency alarms in good working order
- maintaining stations and trains so that they are kept clean and any damage is quickly repaired.

While these changes are positive, the department needs to develop the same rigour in its approach to managing perceptions that has been applied to fare evasion and crime. This includes building on its current understanding of passengers' perceptions, and the factors underpinning them. It also requires applying this evidence-based approach to:

- set improvement targets and priorities
- form and resource plans to achieve these targets
- evaluate success and modify plans in the light of this knowledge.

Recommendations

Victoria Police and the Department of Transport should:

1. Apply the evidence-based approach used to manage crime for managing perceptions of safety.
2. Reinstate regular high-level meetings to better assure information sharing and the coordination of personal safety initiatives.

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.
 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.
-

3 Personal safety outcomes

At a glance

Background

This part examines agencies' success in reducing crime and making Melbourne's train passengers feel safe.

We examined the evidence on trends in crime and passengers' ratings of safety on Melbourne's trains from mid-2005 and assessed whether agencies had adequately responded to this information.

Conclusion

Applying evidence-based approaches from mid-2006 has proved effective in reducing crime and has provided a solid basis for realising further gains in the future.

In contrast, agencies have not been successful in improving passengers' perceptions of safety and this emphasises the need to strengthen the strategy for managing perceptions.

Recommendations

- 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.
- 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.

3.1 Introduction

This part examines how successful agencies have been in reducing crime and making passengers feel safe when travelling on Melbourne's trains.

We examined information on crime and passengers' perceptions of safety since mid-2005 and assessed whether agencies had adequately responded to this information.

Victoria Police (VicPol) moved to its current, evidence-based approach between June and December 2006. Accordingly, our review of the outcomes covers the year before this transition and the period up to the end of 2009.

3.2 Conclusion

While the incidence of crime has remained largely the same between 2005–06 and 2008–09, the rate of crime relative to the number of passenger journeys has steadily declined. However, perceptions of safety have not improved commensurate with this trend.

3.3 Crime on the metropolitan train system

VicPol and the franchisee's approaches have proved effective in responding to changes in criminal activity and reducing crime.

VicPol fell short of its published targets in 2006–07, when the overall number of crimes remained constant but crimes against the person increased, and in 2007–08, when overall crime rose by 11 per cent, driven by significant increases in crimes against property and the person.

However, VicPol's evidence-based approach helped it understand and address these trends to better its targets for crimes against the person and property and achieve a 9 per cent reduction in overall reported crime in 2008–09. The statistics for the six months to December 2009 indicate it will repeat this performance for 2009–10.

A primary area for improvement is the way VicPol sets crime reduction targets. In the past it has set targets for public transport that aligned with VicPol's organisation-wide targets. Given the evidence base it has developed, VicPol should use this and its knowledge of the available resources to set specific targets for public transport.

3.3.1 Factors that influence the level of reported crime

Actions to prevent, detect and respond to crime are an important influence on the level of reported crime. For example, in some cases where VicPol operations target people possessing drugs or carrying weapons, these actions will increase reported crime.

Other factors also play a major role in determining levels of reported crime. Changes to where people live, how they travel and the social and economic factors underpinning criminal activity all affect reported crime levels. For example:

- since June 2005 the number of train passengers has increased by 50 per cent and this is likely to raise the levels of some types of opportunistic crime
- the spike in petrol prices in 2007–08 led to a significant increase in thefts from cars in station car parks because of the number of car number plates stolen so that the thieves could obtain petrol without paying or being apprehended.

We based our assessment of VicPol's performance on its record in reducing crime, but also took account of how well it had responded when changes beyond its control caused levels of crime to increase.

The levels of reported crime also depend on those affected reporting incidents to VicPol. VicPol's tactical assessments stated that some crime went unreported. This included crimes where the victim did not make a report, and some graffiti and station damage offences which the franchisee quickly addressed but did not report to VicPol.

While some unreported crime is inevitable, there was no evidence of under-reporting of crimes that VicPol had detected. The crime statistics were therefore assessed as providing a reasonable indication of changes in the levels of crime over time.

3.3.2 Performance in reducing crime

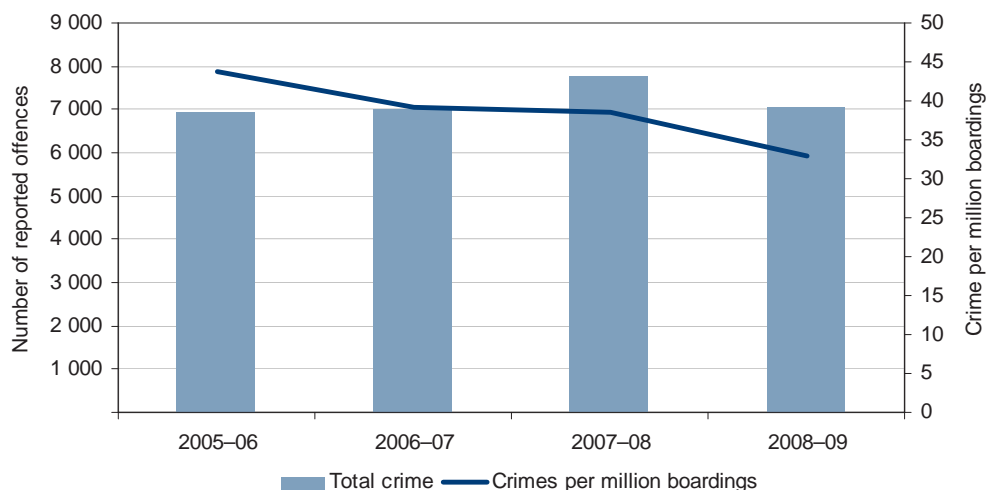
Overall levels of reported crime

VicPol's performance in reducing crime has improved over the past four years.

Figure 3A shows that reported crime on Melbourne's train system remained constant over the four years between 2005–06 and 2008–09 at around 7 000 offences per year. This included an 11 per cent increase to around 7 800 in 2007–08 and a subsequent 9 per cent fall to 7 055 crimes in 2008–09. The latest information for the first half of 2009–10 shows a further 11 per cent fall compared to the same period in 2008–09.

While the impacts of crime can be devastating for those involved, the chances of a passenger being affected by crime on any single journey are statistically very low. In 2005–06 there were 45 offences per million passengers boarding a train. Patronage growth meant that this rate fell by 27 per cent by 2008–09, to 33 offences per million boardings.

Figure 3A
Reported crime on the metropolitan train system



Source: Victorian Auditor-General's Office from data provided by VicPol.

Performance against crime reduction targets

Figure 3B shows that VicPol fell well short of its crime reduction targets in 2006-07 and 2007-08, but exceeded these targets for 2008-09 and is on track to do this again for 2009-10. This has regained some but not all of the ground lost up to 2007-08.

Figure 3B
Reported crime and VicPol's targets

Type of crime	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	Jul-Dec 2009
Against the person	887	1 114	1 327	1 190	567
• target		-2%	-2%	-2%	-3.8%
• actual		25.6%	19.1%	-10.3%	-2.9%
Against property	4 268	4 193	5 126	4 397	1 979
• target ^(a)		-3.9%	-3.6%	-1.6%	-2.8%
• actual		-1.8%	22.3%	-14.2%	-13.8%
Drug related offences	231	215	269	317	153
• target		na	na	na	na
• actual		-6.9%	25.1%	17.8%	-19.5%
Other crimes	1 563	1 476	1 052	1 151	562
• target		na	na	na	na
• actual		-5.6%	-28.7%	9.4%	-5.9%
Total	6 949	6 998	7 774	7 055	3 261

(a) VicPol's targets only covered some categories of property crime. We converted these to an overall reduction target for all property crime.

Source: Victorian Auditor-General's Office from data provided by VicPol.

VicPol did not achieve its targets up to 2007–08 but improved on this performance in 2008–09 because crimes:

- against the person rose by 26 per cent and 19 per cent respectively between 2005–06 and 2007–08, before falling by 10 per cent in 2008–09
- against property fell by 1.8 per cent and rose by 22.3 per cent in the two years between 2005–06 and 2007–08, before falling by 14 per cent in 2008–09.

The information for the six months to December 2009 shows that VicPol is close to or is likely to exceed its targets for 2009–10 because crimes:

- against the person fell by 2.9 per cent compared to a target of 3.8 per cent
- against property fell by 13.8 per cent compared to a target of 2.8 per cent.

The number of crimes in the ‘other’ category followed a different pathway, falling by over 30 per cent to 2007–08 and rising by 9 per cent in 2008–09. However, VicPol had not set targets for this category because it viewed most of these offences as less serious than crimes against the person and less damaging than crimes against property.

In 2006–07, more than 60 per cent of this category comprised offences such as fare evasion, throwing missiles at trains, using offensive behaviour or indecent language, smoking or dropping litter and travelling improperly on trains. The category also included some offences, for example, the possession of weapons, which remain a high priority for VicPol.

The sharp decline in ‘other’ offences to 2007–08 reflected:

- a greater focus of resources on offences against the person and property
- an operational change where police members started their shifts at a suburban station, rather than with a train journey from the CBD. Some of these minor offences were detected on this initial journey
- the more effective deployment of authorised officers, allowing VicPol to focus on more serious crimes.

The change in drug offences is not a reliable indicator of crime. VicPol ran more operations that targeted drug offences in 2007–08 and 2008–09 and this is the likely explanation for the increase in reported crime.

The impact of moving to an improved approach

The move to an improved, evidence-based approach by the end of 2006 helped VicPol understand and respond to the increased level of crime up to 2007–08. A similar change for the train franchisee in early 2008 improved its effectiveness in addressing fare evasion and offences such as antisocial behaviour and property damage.

VicPol's documentation and operations showed that it had:

- used sound intelligence to detect and understand these upward trends
- applied resources through targeted, regular deployments and special operations to address the areas of greatest risk
- monitored the success of these decisions and used this to inform future operations.

VicPol's tactical assessments identified an increase in assaults and robberies and thefts from motor vehicles as the most important drivers of increased crime between 2005–06 and 2007–08.

The analysis of detailed crime statistics, together with intelligence from patrolling police members and the train franchisee, showed where and when the problems were worst. For example, assaults and robberies were concentrated around stations in the CBD, sections of the Pakenham and Sydenham lines and at other stations, such as Frankston.

VicPol deployed resources to address these specific risks and applied operations designed to prevent crime. For example, to reduce thefts from motor vehicles, VicPol:

- increased patrols at larger station car parks
- provided car park users with information on how to lower the risk of theft
- distributed tamper-proof screws that made it more difficult to steal a car's number plates.

These actions were effective in lowering crime in 2008–09 and the first half of 2009–10.

3.3.3 Setting targets for crime on public transport

Past targets for reducing crime on public transport have been the same as the overall targets set in VicPol's annual business plan. These top-down targets were not based on VicPol's intelligence about recent crime trends and changes in levels of risk, for example due to more people using public transport, future plans to address crime or its expectations about what will be achieved in the coming year.

We calculate that if VicPol had consistently achieved its targets then in 2008–09 there would have been:

- 835, rather than 1 190 crimes against the person—a 43 per cent difference
- 3 891, rather than 4 397 crimes against property—a 13 per cent difference
- 6 193, rather than 7 055 crimes across all categories—a 14 per cent difference.

The targets set in 2006–07 and 2007–08 proved to be too optimistic, while VicPol significantly exceeded its targets in 2008–09 once its evidence-based approach had been fully established. Future targets should be informed by VicPol's detailed intelligence about crime trends and risks and its expected effectiveness in addressing these.

3.4 Perceptions of safety on the metropolitan train system

Agencies have not been successful in making passengers feel safer when using Melbourne's trains. The perception scores are significantly lower than for Melbourne's trams and buses and have not improved over the past five years.

This reinforces the need to strengthen the approach agencies apply to manage perceptions of safety.

3.4.1 Factors that influence perceptions of safety

How safe people feel when they use public transport is influenced by, but does not only depend upon, the level of reported crime.

For example, the Pakenham and Cranbourne lines have the highest number of reported crimes and the Merinda Park to Cranbourne section had the worst score for perceptions of safety in 2007 and 2008. However, the correlation between recorded crime and perceptions of safety is not always this consistent:

- some parts of the train system, with relatively high levels of recorded crime such as the city loop, had a similar rating for perceptions of safety as those parts of the system, such as the Glen Waverly line, with much lower levels of crime
- changes in reported crime were not always reflected in passengers' perceptions of safety. For example, overall crime fell by 10 per cent between 2007–08 and 2008–09 but this was accompanied by worse, rather than improved, perceptions.

Observing a crime on Melbourne's train system is, in relative terms, a rare event and passengers' perceptions of safety are strongly influenced by other factors.

While media coverage affects passengers' perceptions, VicPol's research showed that perceptions are also influenced by:

- providing stations, car parks and trains that minimised the risks to personal safety through good design and features, such as closed circuit television and assistance alarms
- maintaining facilities and trains so that they remained clean and in a good state of repair
- increasing levels of activity and, in particular, providing a visible presence of people seen as being responsible for passenger safety.

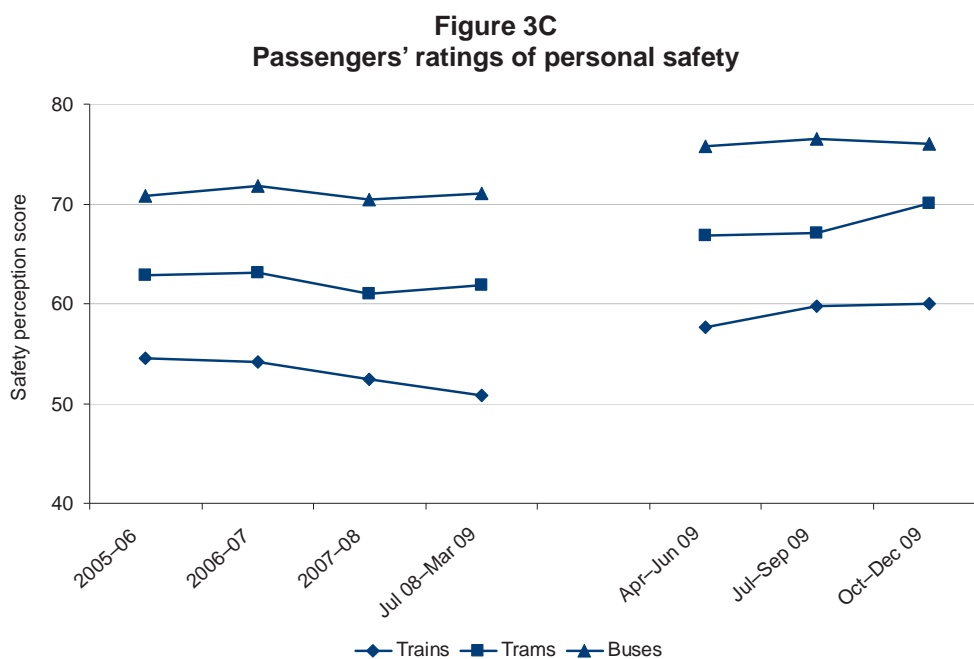
3.4.2 Performance in improving perceptions

Train passengers' perceptions of safety are low when compared to those of tram and bus passengers and VicPol, the Department of Transport (the department) and the franchisee have not improved these perceptions over the past five years.

Overall perceptions

Figure 3C shows overall safety perception scores for Melbourne's trains, trams and buses.

Between 2005–06 and March 2009 train passenger perceptions got worse and were significantly lower than those for tram and bus passengers. Results from the new survey method showed a material improvement between the second and third quarter in 2009, but then levelled off.



Note: The uplift in scores after March 2009 does not reflect improvement, rather it is a recalibration because the department changed the way it measured perceptions.

Source: Victorian Auditor-General's Office, from data provided by the Department of Transport.

Determinants of overall perceptions of safety

The department's survey information since April 2009 shows that passengers:

- felt safer when using trains, stations and car parks during the day, with average scores between 70 and 73
- felt less safe when using the system after dark, with average scores of 40 for car parks, 45 for stations and 48 for trains
- expressed low levels of satisfaction with the visibility of staff other than the driver and the ability to call for assistance giving these ratings of 40 and 48
- expressed a greater level of satisfaction with the visibility of security cameras.

This information and VicPol's research on perceptions of safety provides a starting point to formulate a plan to improve passengers perceptions of safety.

It was not evident that VicPol or the department had used information on perceptions of safety to inform their future plans and actions. However, VicPol, the department, and the public transport operators have now commenced a project to better understand and improve perceptions of safety on public transport.

Recommendations

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.
 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.
-

Appendix A.

Audit Act 1994 section 16— submissions and comments

Introduction

In accordance with section 16(3) of the *Audit Act 1994* a copy of this report, or relevant extracts from the report, was provided to Victoria Police and the Department of Transport with a request for comments or submissions.

The comments and submissions provided are not subject to audit nor the evidentiary standards required to reach an audit conclusion. Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of those comments rests solely with the agency head.

Submissions and comments received

RESPONSE provided by Victoria Police



VICTORIA POLICE

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Victoria Australia
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Melbourne 3005
Victoria Australia

Our Ref: 060553/09

Mr Ray Winn
Director, Performance Audit
Victorian Auditor General's Office
Level 24, 35 Collins St
Melbourne Vic 3000

Dear Mr Winn,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ray'.

Proposed Audit Report: Personal Safety and Security on the Metropolitan Train System

Thank you for your letter dated 12 May 2010 providing me with the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed audit report.

I have reviewed the report and agree with the recommendations outlined therein that relate to Victoria Police.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ken Jones'.

Sir Ken Jones QPM
Deputy Commissioner

26/5/10

RESPONSE provided by the Department of Transport



Department of Transport

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Melbourne, Victoria 3001
Telephone: (03) 9655 6666
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DX 210410

Our Ref: DOC/10/314110

Mr D D R Pearson
Auditor-General
Victorian Auditor-General's Office
Level 24, 35 Collins St
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Mr ^{des} Pearson

PROPOSED AUDIT REPORT-PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY ON THE METROPOLITAN TRAIN NETWORK

I refer to your above report issued on 12 May 2010 and note your conclusion that the department has been [jointly] successful in reducing crime on Melbourne's train system since 2007-08.

I accept your recommendations relevant to the Department both individually and jointly to improve passengers' perceptions of safety on the train system.

I understand the Department, Victoria Police and the operators are already moving in this direction.

Yours sincerely

JIM BETTS
Secretary

20 / 5 / 10



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Report title	Date tabled
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Maintaining the Integrity and Confidentiality of Personal Information (2009–10:8)	November 2009
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Making Public Transport More Accessible for People Who Face Mobility Challenges (2009–10:12)	December 2009
Use of Development Contributions by Local Government (2009–10:13)	December 2009
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Management of Concessions by the Department of Human Services (2009–10:16)	February 2010
Irrigation Water Stores: Lake Mokoan and Tarago Reservoir (2009–10:17)	March 2010
Management of Safety Risks at Level Crossings (2009–10:18)	March 2010
Fees and Charges—cost recovery by local government (2009–10:19)	April 2010
Performance Reporting by Departments (2009–10:20)	May 2010
Tertiary Education and Other Entities: Results of the 2009 Audits (2009–10:21)	May 2010

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Report title	Date tabled
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Control of Invasive Plants and Animals in Victoria's Parks (2009–10:23)	May 2010
Partnering with the Community Sector in Human Services and Health (2009–10:24)	May 2010
The Community Building Initiative (2009–10:25)	May 2010
Administration of the Victorian Certificate of Education (2009–10:26)	June 2010
Hazardous Waste Management (2009–10:27)	June 2010

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