

6.2 Safe City Camera Program

Report Author: Craig Buckingham, Security Manager, City Safety, Security and Amenity
Kelsey Sully, Program Director, City Safety and Presentation

Report Presenter: Dean Robertson, Director City Safety Security and Amenity

Executive Leader: Rick Kwasek, General Manager Infrastructure and Amenity

Executive Summary

1. The Safe City Camera Program (SCCP) has been an important feature of the City of Melbourne's (CoM) public safety infrastructure since 1997, growing from an initial 23 cameras to today comprising 328 cameras in 126 locations across the municipality. The SCCP routinely assists Victoria Police in the early identification of criminal offences and offenders.
2. In response to a resolution of the Future Melbourne Committee (FMC) 6 May 2026 meeting, a review of the SCCP Manual has been undertaken. Following this review, a phased program of work has been established with an initial phase dedicated to delivering essential maintenance and upgrades necessary to prepare the SCCP network for an expansion. This initial phase will also deliver important upgrades to the SCCP Manual to allow for broader application to benefit the City's presentation, cleanliness and amenity.
3. Subsequent phases of work will be dedicated to planning for an expansion of the SCCP network and developing a plan to inform how CoM could consider utilising artificial intelligence (AI) and video analytics.
4. In considering changes to the SCCP we need to be cognisant of our legal obligations, including those relating to privacy and human rights, as well as our organisational commitments around transparency and community engagement.

Recommendation from management

5. That Council:
 - 5.1. Note the update provided on the review of the SCCP Manual and that a draft SCCP Policy will be prepared for the Future Melbourne Committee's endorsement on 16 September 2025.
 - 5.2. Note that a broader update on the SCCP program of work will be provided to the Future Melbourne Committee on 16 September 2025.
 - 5.3. Note that should the Future Melbourne Committee endorse the draft SCCP Policy, a community engagement process will be undertaken.
 - 5.4. Note that following community engagement, the final SCCP Policy will be considered at the Future Melbourne Committee's 18 November 2025 meeting for endorsement.

Purpose

6. The purpose of this report is to inform Councillors on the outcomes of a review of the SCCP Manual and establishment of a phased program of work to deliver key upgrades and enhancements to the SCCP.

Background

7. On 6 December 1995, CoM resolved to establish a Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) system in the Melbourne Central Business District.
8. The SCCP was one aspect of the then Council's Safer City Strategy which included Safer Taxi Ranks, lighting audits, visible police presence improved night transport and laws prohibiting the consumption of alcohol in public places.
9. The SCCP became operational on 27 February 1997 with 23 cameras with the aim to:
 - 9.1. contribute to the provision of a safer physical environment,
 - 9.2. assist Victoria Police to reduce crime levels by deterring potential offenders,
 - 9.3. aid in early identification of criminal offences and generally assisting in emergency responses.
10. An SCCP Audit Committee was established in 1997 consisting of representatives from Victoria Police, CoM and with three independent members one of whom is appointed by the Chairperson. The SCCP Audit Committee prepares an annual report which is considered by CoM Audit and Risk Committee and subsequently published on CoM's website.
11. In December 2009, CoM and Victoria Police signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under which the operation of the SCCP was expanded to stream live vision from the 54 cameras at the time, to the Victoria Police State Police Operations Centre. This functionality enabled police to respond more quickly and more appropriately to incidents of concern to police.
12. In July 2010, the FMC resolved that the SCCP was established to operate in the central business district and was not proposed to be used to enforce or assist in administering the Local Law.
13. The SCCP is governed by the SCCP Manual, MoU with Victoria Police and with oversight from the SCCP Audit Committee. The SCCP Manual incorporates a Code of Practice, Information Privacy Principles, product tracking and release provisions and general management processes.
14. SCCP cameras have generally been placed in areas which have a history of higher levels of reported crime or public concern, as well as in areas of high foot traffic and in key access/egress points across the City, informed by consultation with Victoria Police. The current locations of the cameras are in Attachment 1, which are also published on CoM's public website.
15. All cameras are linked to a centrally located Control Room via fibre optic cabling where they are monitored by trained security personnel. The SCCP Control Room Operators are required to maintain strict vigilance of the systems monitors, maintain the integrity of the storage and movement of recorded material, control access to the Control Room and report incidents to the police in a timely manner.
16. All persons involved in management of the SCCP are required to follow security procedures and guidelines designed to safeguard the SCCP's integrity and public privacy. These are set out in the SCCP Manual.
17. In 2018 the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) conducted an audit titled Security and Privacy of Surveillance Technologies in Public Places, which examined several Victorian councils including CoM's use of CCTV surveillance systems. The audit identified opportunities to improve organisational policies relating to CCTV with respect to privacy, oversight and auditing controls.

18. VAGO made nine recommendations relevant to the CoM all of which were accepted. By 2020 all recommendations relevant to the CoM had been implemented, which was validated by the SCCP Audit Committee in 2020.
19. At the 30 May 2023 Council Meeting, Council moved a motion relating to the SCCP, with Council resolving “that any expansion of the SCCP beyond its purpose to “aid detection of crime, aid identification and apprehension of offenders, and assist emergency response” should only come after the SCCP policies and manual are comprehensively reviewed, including by the SCCP Audit Committee, Victoria Police and the same stakeholders involved in advising on the program at its inception and in the 2010 policy review, and proposed updated policies and manuals are endorsed by Council or delegated Committee in open session, on notice.”
20. On 6 May 2025, it was resolved that FMC:
 - 20.1. Notes the resolution of Council dated 30 May 2023 relating to the Safe City Camera Program
 - 20.2. Resolves to allocate new capital expenditure to upgrade the existing Safe City Camera Network, and the purchase and installation of new cameras to expand the network and refers this expenditure to the 2025/26 draft Budget
 - 20.3. Requests City of Melbourne management undertakes a review of the Safe City Camera Program policies and manual which will include consulting with the SCCP Audit Committee, Victoria Police and similar stakeholders involved in advising the program at its inception and in the 2010 policy review, to consider:
 - 20.3.1. Permitting the use of camera footage by Council authorised officers for the investigation and enforcement of incidents involving:
 - 20.3.1.1. damage to public or private property and infrastructure
 - 20.3.1.2. defacement or destruction of the natural environment
 - 20.3.1.3. acts of public nuisance, and
 - 20.3.1.4. other enforcement issues that result in costs to the organisation and rate payers
 - 20.4. Requests City of Melbourne management review options regarding the use of video analytics to enhance the effectiveness of the Safe City Camera Program.
 - 20.5. Requests management seek expert assistance in assessing whether the above proposals are reasonable and consistent with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and include this assessment in its report to Council.
 - 20.6. Requests Management prepare a report to Council on the outcomes of the review by July 2025.

Key considerations

21. Between 1 January 2018 and 30 August 2024, the SCCP observed or responded to almost 37,000 incidents. Of these incidents, over 10,000 incidents were provided to Victoria Police for their investigation.
22. Perceptions of safety in the city have decreased with the 2024 CoM Social Indicator Survey finding that 74 per cent of people feeling safe during the day, a decrease from 82 per cent in 2022/23 and only 48 per cent of people feeling safe during the night. According to data published by the Crime Statistics Agency, the number of criminal incidents in the Melbourne is also at its highest point since 2018.
23. The 2024 Victoria Police Community Sentiment Survey which collects data on local safety concerns and priorities identified “improving community environments” such as through additional CCTV as a suggestion

to improve safety. Increased CCTV is commonly suggested in CoM community engagement as an action that could be taken to improve perceptions of safety.

24. Management has undertaken a review of the SCCP Manual which has led to the establishment of a phased program of work.
25. The first phase which will be undertaken over the next 12 months prioritises critical enabling works including essential upgrades to the SCCP network and reforming the current SCCP Manual to develop an SCCP Policy which can be published publicly, and to expand the aims of the SCCP network.
26. Later phases of work will deliver expansions to the SCCP network and consider how the SCCP could be evolved into the future including through the exploration of AI and video analytics.
27. Guiding this program of work are a set of principles informed by the OVIC Guiding Principles for Surveillance and the Victorian State Governments Guide to Developing CCTV for Public Safety in Victoria. These principles are transparency, legitimacy and proportionality, legality, privacy and data protection and accountability.
28. This program of work engages several legislated obligations that we must meet including under the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014, the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and the Local Government Act 2020. Additionally, the CoM Engagement Policy and Transparency Policy contains principles which this program of work has regard to.
29. Management has engaged an external legal partner to provide advice on this program of work to ensure consistency with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and associated Information Privacy Principles and any other relevant legal or regulatory compliance obligations.
30. Proactive engagement with several key stakeholders including Victoria Police, the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC), Liberty Victoria, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) and Safe City Camera Operators will be undertaken throughout this program of work.

Program of Work: Phase 1 – essential maintenance upgrades and update of the SCCP Manual

31. Essential maintenance to the existing SCCP network, including upgrades to the server, hardware, switches and communication points commenced on 1 July 2025 and is expected to be completed in May 2026. These upgrades must be undertaken prior to any expansion of the SCCP network which will occur in Phase 2.
32. The 2025–26 CoM Budget includes \$1.56m to fund these upgrades.
33. A review of the SCCP Manual has identified an opportunity to expand the remit of the SCCP to enable CoM authorised officers to utilise the SCCP for investigations under the Activities Local Laws and the Road Management Act 2004.
34. This change is anticipated to strengthen CoM authorised officers' ability to investigate breaches of the Activities Local Law and Road Management Act 2004, enabling more efficient investigations which is expected to improve enforcement outcomes for breaches of Local Laws such as rubbish dumping and through appropriate asset reinstatement by utility providers.
35. As part of the review of the SCCP Manual, a standalone SCCP Policy and separate Operations Instructions Manual will be developed. This will allow for the SCCP Policy to be published on CoM's public facing website.
36. In revising the SCCP Manual and developing the SCCP Policy, stakeholder consultation will occur with Victoria Police and the same or similar stakeholders involved in advising on the SCCP at its inception and in the 2010 policy review including OVIC, Liberty Victoria (formerly the Victorian Council of Civil Liberties) and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). This is in line with the 30 May 2023 and 6 May 2025 Council resolutions.

37. A Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) for the new SCCP Policy and Operation Instructions Manual is being prepared by our external legal partner and will be considered alongside the new SCCP Policy at the SCCP Audit Committee on 19 August 2025. A draft SCCP Policy will then be presented to the 30 September 2025 FMC meeting for endorsement.
38. As this program of work will introduce the SCCP Policy to the public at the same time an expansion to the SCCP remit is being proposed, community engagement is proposed. Should FMC endorse the draft SCCP Policy, approximately four weeks of community engagement will occur, concluding on 26 October 2025.
39. At the conclusion of community engagement, a final SCCP Policy will be returned to the FMC 18 November 2025 meeting. Should the final SCCP Policy be endorsed, it will then be published on CoM's website.

Program of Work: Phase 2 - expanding the SCCP network

40. A second phase of work is planned which will consider expanding the SCCP network, to increase the SCCP camera footprint.
41. The Victorian State Government has committed \$3.6m across the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years to expand the SCCP. In determining which locations to expand the SCCP network, consideration will be given to locations without SCCP coverage or locations that would benefit from expanded coverage in consultation with key stakeholders including Victoria Police and CoM's Safe City Camera Operators.
42. In line with planned revisions to the SCCP Policy to enable use of the SCCP by CoM authorised officers to address breaches of the Activities Local Law and the Road Management Act 2004, consideration will also be given to expanding the SCCP network to locations where such breaches are detected.
43. Management is working with the State Government to establish an MoU in relation to the funding and the execution of the SCCP expansion.

Program of Work: Phase 3 - consideration of integration of AI/analytics

44. Following critical enabling work including the expansion and embedding of the new SCCP Policy, consideration of the video analytics and AI capabilities which could be utilised in conjunction with the SCCP will occur.
45. During Phase 3 we will consider engaging a consultant with relevant experience to undertake the end-to-end project management of this work.
46. Management will prepare an update to Council on Phases 2 and 3 in May 2026.

Legal

47. An independent external advisor has been engaged to assist in respect to the program of work being undertaken.

Finance

48. Financial implications of the policy change will be determined once the draft policy is developed.
49. The 2025/26 CoM Budget includes \$1.56m to upgrade the existing SCCP network. This work commenced on 1 July 2025 and it is expected this work will be completed in May 2026. Historically Council has been responsible for funding maintenance and upgrades to the SCCP network. This is essential work which must be completed prior to any expansion of the SCCP network.
50. The Victorian Government has committed \$3.6m to the SCCP to be spent across the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years. This funding will be utilised to expand the existing SCCP network in consultation with key stakeholders.

Conflict of interest

51. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

52. A Human Rights Compatibility Assessment will be undertaken on the draft SCCP Policy and during each phase of the program of work.

Health and Safety

53. Work environment: use of the SCCP by CoM authorised officers to address breaches of the Activities Local Law and the Road Management Act 2004 will allow them to gather evidence more efficiently, reducing the need for other evidence gathering techniques including digging through rubbish, working throughout the night and having to engage with numerous witnesses.
54. Community Health and Safety: the objective of this SCCP is to contribute to a safer physical environment and support Victoria Police and other emergency services organisations in their essential functions. Expanding the remit of the SCCP to enable use by CoM authorised officers to address breaches of the Activities Local Laws and the Road Management Act 2004 is anticipated to benefit community health and safety by enabling more efficient resolution to breaches of local laws.

Consultation

55. Consultation with key stakeholders is planned to include those stakeholders, or similar, who were involved at the SCCP inception and 2010 policy review including the SCCP Audit Committee, OVIC, VEOHRC, Liberty Victoria and Victoria Police.
56. To ensure consistency with the Community Engagement Policy, a communications and community engagement approach is being developed in relation to the program of work.
57. When adopted by the Council, the SCCP Policy will be made available to the community via the Council website.

Relevance to Council Plan and Council Policies

58. Major Initiative 50 (MI50) 'Street Safety Initiatives', commits to continuing to work with Victoria Police and other agencies to deliver a range of initiatives that improve safety and the perception of safety in the city.

Social and environmental impactsSocial impacts

59. Expanded use of the SCCP for the purposes of investigating breaches of the Activities Local Law and the Road Management Act 2004 is anticipated to enable swifter enforcement of amenity related issues impacting quality of life including dumped rubbish and waste.

Gender Impact Assessment

60. A Gender Impact Assessment will be undertaken of the SCCP Policy and as part of the broader program of work.

Environmental impacts

61. Expanding the SCCP Policy scope to enable its use in the investigation of breaches of the Activities Local Law and the Road Management Act 2004 presents an opportunity to achieve environmental benefits, by enabling investigations into issues impacting the environment including dumped rubbish and waste.

Attachment List

1. Safe City Cameras Map - Current locations [6.2.1 - 1 page]

