



VICTORIA POLICE



FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR VICTIM-CENTRIC POLICING

Victoria Police pay our respects to the Traditional Owners of lands on which we live and work.

We pay our respects to Elders and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples who continue to care for their country, culture and people.

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Foreword from the Chief Commissioner



It is my pleasure to deliver the *Future Directions for Victim-Centric Policing*, a policy statement that sets a vision for Victoria Police to reduce victimisation and improve service delivery.

This Statement forms part of a strategic framework that has been developed as a result of extensive consultation and advice received from our workforce, partners and victims of crime. We have identified a number of opportunities to further enhance service delivery to victims and those in need of assistance, and will be working proactively to enhance our practices across the organisation.

We know that we need to be proactive if we want to keep people safe and prevent harm before it occurs. As part of our ongoing efforts to keep the community safe, we will be focussed on addressing the drivers of crime to prevent and reduce victimisation. When people are impacted, we will strive to deliver service excellence to victims of all crime types, helping those in need of assistance and building community confidence and trust.

Our work will initially be focused on:

- developing new customer service standards
- continuing to work with our partners to develop additional referral pathways for early intervention and support services

- changing the way we do business and embedding victim-centric thinking into organisational planning
- embedding victim-centric practice into our education, training and promotional programs
- developing tools and processes to ensure that members are adequately equipped to provide service excellence
- developing new reporting and accountability measures
- rewarding and recognising victim-centric policing practice.

Importantly, this work is part of our leadership commitment to victims of crime and those in need of assistance.

We will also be working closely with our stakeholders to ensure that we are listening to their needs and working to provide a seamless, multi-agency response.

I am proud of the achievements we have made over the past decade but we know there is still work to do. We recognise that building capability to deliver victim-centric policing services and the continued development of a victim-centric culture will be important to our ongoing success.

**Graham Ashton AM,
Chief Commissioner**

1. VISION

The *Future Directions for Victim-Centric Policing* is a policy statement outlining Victoria Police's commitment and revised approach to enhanced service delivery for victims and those in need of assistance.

The vision is to:

- prevent crime and victimisation
- build predictive capability for early intervention
- be responsive to the diverse needs of victims
- provide service excellence to everyone.

2. STATEMENT

The *Future Directions for Victim-Centric Policing* policy statement builds upon the success of the *Victims of Crime Policy Statement 2007* and the *Victims of Crime Operational Procedures April 2010*. It provides a strategic framework within which Victoria Police will enhance its services to victims of all crime types and those in need of assistance.

Victim-centric is defined as the undertaking of lawful activities with an aim to prevent primary or secondary victimisation, and reduce the effects of victimisation upon the broader community¹. An enhanced victim-centric focus on preventing crime or secondary victimisation will be achieved through:

- understanding the drivers of crime and victimisation with a focus on prevention
- enhancing referral pathways to support services for victims and those in need of assistance with a focus on early intervention

- continuing to foster an organisational victim-centric culture that recognises victims and those in need of assistance as being of critical importance in all aspects of our work
- enabling the workforce to provide victim-centric policing through education, training, the development of tools and recognition of victim-centric practices
- treating victims with sensitivity, fairness, empathy, dignity and respect
- providing support to victims from the initial point of contact to closure of their matter
- providing victims with timely information that is tailored to their needs
- working with stakeholders and government partners to deliver enhanced victim services and identify opportunities to empower victims.

3. RATIONALE

Service delivery

Victoria Police must continuously evolve to meet the requirements and expectations of the community by recognising the effects of victimisation and the diverse needs of victims. Although approaches have varied over time, the Victoria Police mission to ensure a safe, secure and orderly society by serving the community and the law has remained constant and relevant.

The objectives of Victoria Police are to:

- preserve the peace
- protect life and property
- prevent offences

¹ Clark, M 2003, 'Victim-centred policing: The Shepherd's solution to policing in the 21st Century'. *The Police Journal*, Volume 76, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1350/pojo.764.314.25823>

- detect and apprehend offenders
- help those in need of assistance.

Victoria Police will continue to focus on the full range of these objectives. This commitment demonstrates that the needs of victims and those in need of assistance are a key focus for improved service delivery into the future and further supports the transition to becoming a victim-centric organisation. Victoria Police will continue to foster and strengthen a culture that views victims and those in need of assistance as being of equal importance to its responsibility to detect and apprehend offenders.

The Needs of Victims

The *Victims' Charter Act 2006* (the Charter) identifies a victim as a person who has suffered an 'injury' as a direct result of a criminal offence and also identifies 'persons adversely affected' by crime. This can include the primary victim, family members of a victim and witnesses for all crime types.

In 2013/14, there were over 210,000 recorded victims of crime in Victoria. Of this figure, approximately three quarters were victims of crime against property and one quarter were victims of crime against the person². Being a victim of crime can lead to serious physical, psychological, emotional and financial consequences. Most people have little or no contact with the criminal justice system in the normal course of their lives and trying to navigate their way through the system can be daunting. Victims report that involvement in the criminal justice system can increase the trauma already experienced and cause secondary victimisation. This not only hinders recovery but can impact on a victim's willingness to participate in the justice process and report further crime. If this occurs, public confidence in the efficacy of the criminal justice system is undermined as a whole.

² Victoria Police 2014, *Crime Statistics 2013/2014*.

From the initial point of contact, victims rely on Victoria Police to provide support in various ways. In order to provide this support and deliver a high standard of customer service, it is important that police understand the diverse needs of victims. Victims can have a range of needs, including: practical, material, social or emotional³. Often they will place greater importance on being treated fairly above effective action being taken by police in relation to their matter. Fair, respectful and supportive treatment includes:

- positive interactions with police throughout the investigation
- an opportunity to be heard
- developing strong interpersonal relationships with the relevant officer/s⁴
- the provision of adequate and timely information throughout the criminal justice process
- ensuring referrals to support services⁵.

Person-to-person interactions play an important role in the overall public perception of police and the decisions made by victims regarding their willingness to report crime and participate in the criminal justice system. Research indicates that victims who report negative experiences with police are less likely to initiate future contact and are more likely to express negative opinions about police in general. The provision of a high quality policing service to both victims and the community is essential for establishing and maintaining confidence in Victoria Police⁶.

³ Goodey, J 2005, *Victims and Victimology - Research, Policy and Practice*, Pearson Education Limited, Essex.

⁴ Department of Justice and Regulation 2014, *Building the confidence of victims in the criminal justice system - Final Report*, Research Report – Unpublished, Melbourne.

⁵ Department of Justice and Regulation 2015, *A survey about how our justice system meets the needs of the community 2014*, Results, Melbourne.

⁶ Segrave, M. & Wilson, D. 2011, *The Station Study Report, Victoria Police and victims of crime: Police perspective and experiences from across Victoria*, Monash University, Clayton.

A Diverse Community

Given the breadth of its policing responsibilities, there is a community expectation that Victoria Police provide assistance to a broad range of people and communities. Therefore Victoria Police is committed to providing the best possible service to individuals and communities who are adversely affected by crime and to those in need of assistance. A person in need of assistance is any person whose safety and security may be at risk. Police officers are often the first point of contact for people in need of assistance and therefore have the opportunity to refer them to appropriate support services. This preventative approach ensures the most vulnerable community members are connected to services at the earliest opportunity.

To better tailor victim-centric responses and identify those at a heightened risk, Victoria Police needs to consider the evolving demographics of the community. This is especially the case when combined with reduced protective factors, such as financial, social and family networks.

These considerations include the:

- reporting of crime and engagement in the criminal justice system by people from CALD backgrounds
- reduced perceptions of safety experienced by the elderly
- over-representation of young people in offending and victimisation
- complex barriers faced by people with disabilities when reporting crime to police.

The Future Needs

Victoria Police has taken steps to enhance services to victims and those in need of assistance as it continues its transition to providing a stronger victim-centric approach. Some of the activities undertaken include the introduction of policy, guidelines, IT enhancements and formalised referral pathways. The introduction of such measures has resulted in a marked increase in satisfaction with Victoria Police service.

Future Directions for Victim-Centric Policing forms part of a strategic framework that presents exciting opportunities to solidify the commitment to victims. It is a platform for the introduction of a suite of measures to further enhance a victim-centric culture amongst the work-force. This focus will extend beyond simply meeting legislative requirements. It will deliver service excellence to victims, help those in need of assistance and build community confidence and trust.

4. POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The *Future Directions for Victim-Centric Policing* is informed by extensive research and consultation. Further, the following three documents that have guided the development of this policy statement include:

The Charter

Our Service Delivery Model to 2025

The Victoria Police Blue Paper: A Vision for Police in 2025.



5. PRIORITY AREAS AND OUTCOMES

Victoria Police will achieve its vision through the successful implementation of the following actions:

Priority	Goal	Actions	Outcomes
Raise the organisational focus on victims and persons in need of assistance	To build a whole of organisation business model that ensures accountability to victims in accordance with legislative requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen organisational victim-centric culture through enhanced tools, training, education, accountability measures and recognition of victim-centric policing practices. • Better understand the diverse needs of all members of our community. • Develop mechanisms to enhance predicative capabilities and ensure efficient use of our resources to better meet the needs of victims. • Address the drivers of offending and victimisation with early intervention and referral to support. • Clearly communicate the policy position across the organisation through the development of a communications strategy. • Monitor outcomes of Royal Commissions and act accordingly upon findings and recommendations. • Ensure repeat victims and those at risk of repeat victimisation are identified, and that prompt and appropriate action is taken to reduce risk. • Strengthen data collection and analysis capabilities to monitor compliance with the Charter. • Provide police members with greater access to information about victimisation. • Redevelop organisational customer service standards. • Ensure a victim-centric approach is applied across organisational projects. 	<p>Victim-centric policing practices are embedded</p> <p>The diverse needs of victims across all crime types will be understood and met</p> <p>Strengthened relationships and enhanced victim services delivered in a collaborative approach</p>

Priority	Goal	Actions	Outcomes
Provide timely and appropriate information to victims	To improve the timeliness, amount and quality of information provided to victims in accordance with the Charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable police to provide timely information to victims through the scoping of IT and process solutions. • Work with stakeholders to identify practices to streamline the flow of information to victims. • Where Victoria Police is performing functions outside of its remit, identify suitable providers and work collaboratively. • Improve access to timely information for victims of all crime types. 	<p>Victims will be provided with timely information that is tailored to their needs</p> <p>Increased customer service satisfaction</p>
Streamline the process for referring victims and those in need of assistance to support	Raise awareness of the Victoria Police e-Referral (VPeR) system and the benefits of making an appropriate referral to increase support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders and support services to enhance referral pathways, identify additional referral pathways (increasing referral types) and bridge service gaps. • Increase the number of referrals for victims and those in need of assistance through building awareness and relevance across the organisation and promoting the use of new referral pathways. • Scope VPeR business enhancements to increase usability for Victoria Police and referral agencies. • Scope a VPeR benchmarking model and opportunities to enhance VPeR reporting capabilities. • Promote the value of referring persons from an organisational perspective, focusing on the drivers of crime, early intervention and benefits of referring persons to support. 	<p>VPeR usability ensures appropriate referrals will be made</p> <p>Service demand will reduce through deploying early intervention techniques</p>

Priority	Goal	Actions	Outcomes
Increase opportunities to empower victims	Further understand what victims need and work with our stakeholders to provide victims with greater options and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders and government partners in a collaborative approach to deliver enhanced victim services. • Increase access to alternative justice pathways through identifying new pathways and enhancing access to existing pathways for police and victims. • Streamline the Victims Register information check function to expedite the process. • Support the Victim Assistance Co-location Program. • Work with stakeholders to develop solutions to enable victims to provide a victim impact statement where appropriate. 	<p>Victims will be better supported over the course of their journey through the criminal justice system</p> <p>Community trust, confidence and satisfaction with police services and contact will increase</p> <p>The cycle of offending and victimisation will be interrupted</p>



6. GOVERNANCE AND PERFORMANCE

Future Directions for Victim-Centric Policing, represents a commitment to further organisational transformation, namely effective translation of victims' rights into operational practice⁷. The development of the strategic framework includes this policy statement, a three year strategy and annual work-plans. The implementation will be coordinated by the Victims Advisory Unit, overseen by the office of the Deputy Commissioner Capability.

7. PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

These activities will be supported with the following principles of practice:

- the workforce will be consulted and engaged to deliver a service that is equitable, sustainable, and consistent
- compliance will be measured and customer service will be evaluated to ensure community trust and satisfaction
- established governance frameworks will guide activity and robust accountability measures will monitor performance
- ongoing development of relationships and strategic partnerships.

REFERENCES

Clark, M 2003, 'Victim-centred policing: The Shepherd's solution to policing in the 21st Century'. *The Police Journal*, Volume 76, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1350/pojo.764.314.25823>

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Victoria Police 2014, *Crime Statistics 2013/2014*.

⁷ Clarke, M Opt Cit p4



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