

Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre Inc.

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28 February 2008

Chief Commissioner of Police
Victoria Police Centre
637 Flinders St
Melbourne 3005

Dear Chief Commissioner Nixon,

RE: Cameras in police interview rooms and other locations

I write on behalf of the Police Issues Working Group of the Federation of Community Legal Centres.

We write to you to express our concern about the continuing absence of video monitoring equipment in police interview rooms.

As you are aware, image recordings were a critical part in the successful prosecution of police involved in the May 2006 assaults of suspects in the St Kilda station, reported in the Age on 25 February 2008.

This important result can only enhance public confidence in the accountability of Victoria Police and the integrity of the police disciplinary and prosecution processes.

Unfortunately, successful prosecutions and disciplinary action against police accused of excessive use of force and brutality are unusual.

We are aware of members with long histories of complaints still working within the force.

Community Legal Centres receive numerous reports from people alleging assault by police in police interview rooms.

For example in the last two years there have been 7 separate reports made to the Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre of assaults occurring inside police interview rooms at the Flemington and Moonee Ponds Police Stations.

These are very serious allegations.

Unfortunately there are no cameras to provide independent evidence of the events that unfolded.

On 20 February 2008, I spoke to the Senior Sergeant at the Flemington Police Station about obtaining the video footage during the detention of our client in January this year. Senior Sergeant Reynolds reported that while cameras existed in the room, they were for monitoring, not recording. Senior Sergeant Reynolds and I were in agreement that video recorded footage would be greatly beneficial to both police and the public in these situations.

It is essential that equipment is installed to record whether human rights violations such as assaults of suspects within police stations occur. The capacity to effectively investigate allegations of human rights abuses is an essential component of the right to life (section 9) and protection from torture and other forms of ill-treatment (s10) in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. Victoria police have a duty to protect and promote human rights in the Charter. The provision of recording equipment in police interview rooms should be viewed in light of these obligations.

We understand that following the May 2006 revelations that cameras (capable of recording) were intended to be introduced into police station interview rooms across the state.

The benefits for everyone are clear.

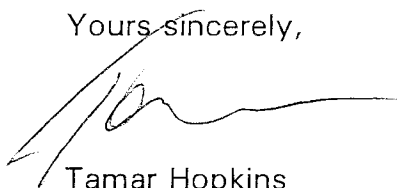
The other place where people frequently report ill-treatment is the back of police divvy vans.

We would be most grateful to you for information as to:

- a) Whether recording equipment is planned to be introduced into police interview rooms/divvy vans,
- b) What measures will be taken to protect their integrity and
- c) What time lines do you foresee for their introduction?

We look forward to hearing from you regarding our concerns.

Yours sincerely,



Tamar Hopkins
Convener

On behalf of the Police Issues Working Group of the Federations of CLCs

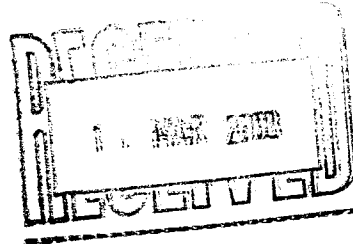


VICTORIA POLICE

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Our Ref.: 08/001525

Ms Tamar Hopkins
Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre Inc.
PO Box 487
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Dear Ms Hopkins,

I write on behalf of the Chief Commissioner to acknowledge your correspondence of 28 February, 2008 regarding the deployment of video monitoring equipment in police interview rooms.

Victoria Police is currently working towards replacement of the existing TRIM equipment with digital audio visual equipment across the State. The project team established to oversee this process is presently negotiating contract terms and service level agreements with a preferred vendor.

It is envisaged that the equipment will be pilot-tested in selected police stations in advance of a state-wide roll-out, however this is subject to obtaining the necessary funding through the State Government's Expenditure Review Committee (ERC).

Please note that the new equipment will capture audio and visual activity only while an interview is being conducted. It is not intended to provide a continuous feed of activity on a 24 hour basis.

While I am not in a position to provide advice on timelines and governance arrangements, I trust the foregoing information will address your overriding concerns regarding the position of Victoria Police on the introduction of video monitoring equipment.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Frost
Inspector
Deputy Chief of Staff to the
CHIEF COMMISSIONER

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