



VICTORIA POLICE

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The Research Director
Travelsafe Committee
Parliament House, George Street
Brisbane. QLD 4000

Subject: Inquiry Into Automatic Number Plate Recognition Technology

Introduction

Victoria Police recognises the significant benefits in implementing Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology. The ability of ANPR to assist and add value to current road safety strategies should also enhance community perceptions of safety.

Whilst Victoria Police recognises the committee's inquiry focuses on road safety, we submit that the wider uses of the technology on a National level will deliver far greater benefits to all National law enforcement agencies. In addition to road safety, ANPR technology can be used to target issues of National Security/Counter Terrorism, as well as assisting crime investigation. As such, ANPR has the potential to significantly contribute to crime prevention, reduction and detection strategies.

Victoria Police is currently assisting in a scoping study of ANPR which is being undertaken by the CrimTrac agency. CrimTrac is a federally funded government agency for the development and implementation of national information sharing strategies and solutions for law enforcement agencies. The CrimTrac Strategic Plan 2007 – 2010 identified a number of initiatives for inclusion in CrimTrac's delivery program. Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) was once such initiative. In October 2006 CrimTrac made application for Proceeds of Crime funding of \$2.2m to deliver a detailed scoping study to identify a strategic approach to the use of ANPR technology. This application was subsequently approved.

The scoping study is to be completed by October 2008 for presentation to the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management in November 2008.

Current use of ANPR in Victoria

Victoria Police have not deployed Automatic Number Plate Recognition systems at this time. An internal program is currently examining the potential for the introduction of ANPR technology in Victoria Police.

In May 2007 the management team of the Victoria Police, Road Safety Strategic Services Division committed resources and funding to provide an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) 'Proof of Concept' trial program. The objective of the program is to trial ANPR in a road safety context. It is then intended to evaluate the outcomes of the trial with the purpose of constructing a business case to develop a state-wide ANPR enforcement program on behalf of Victoria Police.

ANPR evaluation trials have been conducted in Victoria through November and December 2007. These trials have consisted primarily of passive use of the technology where passing vehicle's registration plates have been read and checked against a download of Victoria Police and Vic Roads data bases. The system has detected numerous offence types including stolen vehicles, and stolen registration plates, unregistered / cancelled vehicle registration as well as numerous licence status offences. Comparisons against records have also been used to identify outstanding Sheriffs warrants.

From March to June 2008, the ANPR proof of concept trial program will proceed to the next phase 'Enforcement trials'. This will be conducted state-wide with consultation with the Regional Traffic Inspectors. An evaluation and validation phase will follow the enforcement trials, with a view to constructing a business case for procurement and State funding of ANPR technology.

Responses to Travelsafe Committee Inquiry Terms of Reference.

The efficacy of ANPR technology for road safety applications:

Victoria Police submit that ANPR technology may deliver substantial benefits for road safety applications. The benefits level will be dependant on the type and number of ANPR systems deployed, as well as the acceptance level and effective utilisation of the technology by police members.

Victoria Police is giving consideration to the use of fixed ANPR cameras, mobile ANPR cameras and in-car vehicle mounted ANPR cameras. Consideration is also been given for these systems to be used in both overt and covert applications.

From a road safety perspective, ANPR systems could be used to address such issues as:

- Unregistered motor vehicles

- Unlicensed drivers
- Disqualified/Suspended drivers
- Vehicles exceeding the speed limit
- Vehicles disobeying traffic control signals

Potential costs and benefits:

In addition to procurement, installation, training, operating and maintenance costs, Victoria Police submit that additional costs involved in the introduction of ANPR could include:

- Costs associated with leveraging off existing hardware, such as CCTV cameras, traffic monitoring cameras, toll road cameras, speed and red light cameras.

The potential benefits of an ANPR system will depend on several factors such as:

- The introduction of a State or National system
- The quality of data captured
- The quantity of data captured
- The search capabilities of any associated database.
- The accessibility of the data
- The range of system notification options for investigators.

Depending on these factors, the benefits for law enforcement agencies using ANPR include

- Increased detection rates of unlicensed, suspended and disqualified drivers
- Increased detection rates of unregistered motor vehicles
- Increased levels of road safety
- Deterrence of non-compliance (vehicle registration / unlicensed driving)
- Use of technology to enhance criminal investigation capabilities
- Reduced investigation times and therefore costs
- Reduced crime rate
- Increased community perceptions of safety
- More efficient use of police resources

Whether ANPR-enabled intercept teams should be used for traffic enforcement in Queensland, including examination of existing applications:

Victoria Police offers no opinion on this issue as it is a matter for the Queensland Government in consultation with relevant departments.

Victoria Police are considering how to best utilise ANPR technology and ANPR enabled intercept teams are certainly an option for traffic enforcement strategies in Victoria.

Other opportunities and considerations for its use by Queensland Government agencies to promote road safety:

Victoria Police have undertaken a process to identify Victorian Government Departments who may have a demonstrated use for ANPR technology. Whilst some of these areas are not directly involved in road safety, their use of the technology can indirectly promote road safety. By way of example, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) is a Victorian Government department whose purpose is to protect, care for and improve the environment. The EPA is responsible for the investigation of illicit hazardous waste transport and dumping. These are often cross-border investigations which can result in the prosecution of drivers involved in the illegal and often dangerous transport of waste via local and national transport corridors. The removal and / or reduction of such vehicles from our roads is a further opportunity to provide safer roads. Flow on results provide additional environmental benefits by reducing the dumping of hazardous waste.

Additional comments

Whether a National approach is adopted or a stand-alone State based system, Victoria Police recognise that the use of ANPR technology has significant privacy implications. Victoria Police are currently seeking advice as to the collection, storage, use and disclosure of information relating to ANPR. It is difficult to make an accurate assessment on privacy issues until it is known exactly what type of ANPR systems will be introduced, what data will be captured and who will have access to the data. Victoria Police notes the importance of issues surrounding security and access to ANPR data. It is envisaged that Victoria Police will undertake a comprehensive privacy impact assessment prior to the procurement and deployment of any ANPR system.

Conclusion

Victoria Police support the introduction of ANPR technology to Australian law enforcement agencies. There are numerous benefits associated with the use of ANPR, all of which are significantly enhanced if they form part of a National system.

The benefits of national information and data sharing systems can be demonstrated by the current systems of the National Criminal Investigation DNA Database (NCIDD), the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS), the National Child Sex Offender System (ANCOR), and the National Police Reference System (NPRS). These systems have lead to significant improvements in offender identification rates across all policing jurisdictions.