

Victoria Police Manual

The Victoria Police Manual is issued under the authority of the Chief Commissioner of Police in s.60, Victoria Police Act 2013. Non-compliance with or a departure from the Victoria Police Manual may be subject to management or disciplinary action. Employees must use VPM Professional and ethical standards to inform the decisions they make to support compliance.

Community policing

Context

Community policing is central to how Victoria Police serves the community. It involves listening to the needs of the community, understanding these needs, and responding appropriately. Effective engagement and partnerships between Victoria Police and the community helps to increase public trust and confidence in Victoria Police.

Communities are groups of people, clustered by a common interest, a particular demographic or a defined geographical area, for example, sporting clubs, faith groups, and towns or suburbs. Working in partnership with communities helps police understand the community's concerns and develop shared solutions aimed at improving community safety.

This policy includes practical support for community engagement, including that outlined in the Neighbourhood Policing Framework. It provides minimum standards and responsibilities to ensure consistency and accountability in the delivery of community policing.

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Definitions

Community Support Hub – The Community Support Hub is a collection of online resources to support employees' understanding of human rights, cultural capability, community engagement and victims. These resources are designed to ensure employees have the tools and skills they need to build capability around respectful service delivery.

Neighbourhood Policing (NHP) – NHP is a place-based, community policing and engagement

model to standardise our community crime prevention efforts and improve safety at a local level. The NHP Framework has been developed to guide local police in strengthening relationships with their local community and partners, and in doing so, work with them to develop initiatives that seek to prevent crime in geographical areas that cause the most concern. The NHP Framework can be found on the NHP Intranet page.

Priority communities – Priority communities are those that have been identified as requiring additional focus in the delivery of police services. These communities may be overrepresented or underrepresented in their contact with police, either as offenders or victims, and/or have experienced long-standing or historical challenges in engaging with the police. Victoria Police's identified priority communities are; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer (LGBTIQ) communities, people experiencing mental health issues, multicultural and multifaith communities, seniors, and young people.

Scope and application

This policy applies to all Victoria Police employees. There are dedicated community policing roles which exist and have specific responsibilities as outlined in this policy.

Principles

1. Community engagement

Community engagement is central to how Victoria Police serves the community. It is the way the organisation and the community communicate and demonstrate their needs, commitment and accountability. Effective community engagement improves relationships and creates lasting partnerships by increasing public trust and confidence in police. Maintaining trust and confidence builds community support for the work Victoria Police does to maintain community safety.

2. Community engagement principles

Victoria Police's approach to engaging with the community should be underpinned by attention to both the person and the community they belong to. Victoria Police's community engagement practice principles are as follows.

2.1 *Everyday interaction is engagement and every interaction matters*

Victoria Police employees engage with the community every day. It is inseparable from Victoria Police work, no matter where employees work in the organisation.

2.2 *Human rights are respected*

- Members are legally required to act in accordance with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.
- As members make decisions that can both protect and limit a person's human rights in certain circumstances, they must:
 - ensure their actions and decisions are proportionate, lawful, accountable and necessary so Victoria Police can maintain the trust and confidence of the community.
- Refer to the **VPM Human rights standards** for further information.

2.3 *Communication, language and engagement approaches are inclusive*

- It is important employees use inclusive and respectful language, communication styles and approaches, particularly when working with community members and groups that require additional consideration or support.
- Inclusive engagement involves demonstrating awareness and respect for nuances in language or approach for particular communities.
- Inclusivity is also shown by going into the community rather than asking the community to come to us; meeting in their spaces is an example of working towards a more inclusive approach.

2.4 *Partnerships are critical*

- Community safety is a shared responsibility between police, government and non-government partners and all members of the community.
- Working together with community and key partners helps develop and deliver local solutions for local crime, road and public safety issues as well as helping Victoria Police stay connected to the issues that concern the public.

2.5 *Engagement is tailored, planned and purposeful*

- Within local neighbourhoods there are communities within communities; a neighbourhood can include people with a diverse range of interests, identities and experiences. Communities based around demography or interest are likely to be based across several police service areas (PSAs).
- Planned and purposeful engagement assists in ensuring that the reasons for engagement are clear and generates outcomes.
- After each engagement, opportunities to report back on outcomes and actions ('closing the loop') should be actively sought. This might include, posts on social media (Eyewatch pages), presentations to a Local Safety Committee (LSC) or an article in the local paper.
- The success of our community policing approach and NHP Framework, rests on employees understanding the communities they engage with. Specific community interactions should consider and plan for the barriers that will inhibit, and enablers that will improve access and participation for the community and reflect their expectations.

Programs and processes

3. Neighbourhood Policing

3.1 *Overview*

- NHP is a place-based policing and engagement model which standardises our community crime prevention efforts to improve public safety at a local level. A statewide NHP Framework has been developed to guide local police in improving community safety through strengthened engagement, partnerships and problem solving.
- The NHP Framework ensures issues identified by the community are recorded, assessed, and considered in the deployment and tasking of local resources along

with police intelligence, crime, public order and road policing data to enable more effective tasking of resources to local safety priorities. Rostering of NHP resources should take Minimum Station Profiles into consideration. Refer to **CCI 09/24**

Minimum station profiles.

- NHP closely aligns with the T&C processes outlined in the VPM Tasking and coordination and must be added as an ongoing agenda item at divisional T&C (refer to section 6 of this policy).
- Underpinned by core community engagement principles, NHP relies on community, government, and non-government relationships to identify issues and then problem solve to design and deliver solutions in partnership to target the drivers of community safety issues.
- As part of the NHP Framework, all PSAs must:
 - establish or revive an LSC to provide a forum for police and local community, government and non-government stakeholders to work together to address local safety issues and develop a Local Safety Plan (LSP)
 - record community safety issues in a Community Issues Register (CIR).
- The Local Area Commander (LAC) is responsible for the implementation and ongoing commitment to the delivery of the NHP. The NHP Framework is supported by the Neighbourhood Policing Practice Guide (NHPPG) and other relevant resources found on the Neighbourhood Policing Intranet page.

3.2 *Local Safety Committee*

- The LSC is a forum for police engagement with local community representatives, including relevant local government and non-government organisations.
- The purpose of the LSC is to discuss, review and resolve community safety concerns identified through the scanning processes outlined in the NHPPG. This includes discussions pertaining to the management of identified High Risk Community Locations (HRCLs). Scanning involves identifying, prioritising and selecting problems that need addressing using both data from police and other sources as well as community input captured from a range of activities, including online engagement, face-to-face community consultations or targeted consultations with specific stakeholders or community groups.
- LSCs must ensure privacy of the information and that it is only used by, and disclosed to, those authorised to handle it for legitimate reasons.
- Under the NHP Framework:
 - the LAC must ensure a formal LSC exists with key stakeholders in each PSA
 - in PSAs where an LSC is not presently activated, it is the responsibility of the LAC to work with partners to develop one
 - the LAC is required to represent Victoria Police at the LSC meetings, which should be held regularly and co-chaired by the LAC and the local council
 - the LAC should establish Terms of Reference (ToR) as well as ensuring minutes of meetings are recorded.
- Engagement with LSCs will assist with the development of the LSPs, which will inform key decisions in the deployment and tasking of local police resources whilst also guiding other non-policing activities that prevent offending.

- Issues taken to or coming out of the LSC meeting that require a police response are to be captured within the CIR, including issues relevant to the management of HRCLs. For further information on LSCs and access to related templates, refer to the NHPPG and Neighbourhood Policing Intranet pages.

3.3 *Community Issues Register*

- The CIR is an enterprise-wide platform that can be used as a tool to record community concerns raised through engagement activities and assist with the pro-active tasking of members through eTasking patrols and other tasking activities.
- The CIR is managed by each PSA's NHP Coordinator (refer to section 7 of this policy).
- For further information on CIRs and access to related templates, refer to the NHPPG and Neighbourhood Policing Intranet pages.

3.4 *Response plans*

- Issues from the CIR that are identified as meeting the NHP criteria must be analysed further to identify whether they are a simple or complex problem before a response plan is developed.
- Simple problems can be described as problems that do not impact significantly on police resourcing and/or do not typically require collaboration with other organisations/agencies. Response plans to simple problems will be managed by the NHP Coordinator and LAC.
- Complex problems can be described as those that require additional or specialist resourcing and/or collaboration with other organisations/agencies. Response plans to complex problems will be developed by the LAC in conjunction with the divisional T&C.
- For further information on response plans and access to related templates, refer to the NHPPG and Neighbourhood Policing Intranet pages.

4. **Schools Engagement Model**

- The Schools Engagement Model (SEM) provides an opportunity for police to connect with the community via local schools, to enhance crime prevention and community safety. The SEM supports engagement with schools that is purposeful and sustainable. Activities undertaken within the SEM seek to build trust and confidence in police whilst also supporting schools to promote safety messaging and identifying opportunities to prevent harm before it occurs.
- Community safety issues and pro-active engagement opportunities identified through the SEM should be considered for entry onto the CIR. Please refer to the NHPPG on the recording of issues criteria.
- The [SEM Hub](#) on the Community Support Hub provides further information on the use of the model, including:
 - roles and responsibilities of Victoria Police, schools and other partners
 - governance arrangements
 - example activities and other resources.

5. Victoria Police e-Referral System

- Victoria Police e-Referral (VPeR) System is a consent based, non-crisis, non-family violence referral service. It provides referral options for a range of circumstances, including mental health support, victim support, and at-risk youth.
- Victoria Police aims to increase the number of referrals in all referral pathways. Police are often the agency that vulnerable populations deal with initially. e-Referrals allow police to connect at risk community members to support services, providing a referral link for individuals who may not otherwise seek support.
- The **Victoria Police e-Referral (VPeR) System Practice Guide** and Intranet provide further information on the processes of VPeR, including:
 - support services
 - reporting practices and training environments
 - FAQs.

Service delivery and responsibilities

6. Local Area Commanders

- LACs are responsible for providing 24-hour service delivery within a PSA. To do this they build relationships that will capture community safety concerns and provide appropriate responses to prevent and overcome the identified issues, as well as allocate resources.
- Under the NHP Framework, the LAC is responsible for:
 - establishing and maintaining a CIR
 - co-chairing their LSC with council (refer to section 3.2 of this policy) and initiating an LSP for ongoing safety issues
 - escalating any safety issues that require divisional support to the divisional T&C
 - promoting a culture of stronger community engagement by all members within the PSA
 - facilitating opportunities for capturing and understanding community concerns and sentiment, including priority communities
 - 'closing the loop' with community regarding police activities and results relating to local safety issues, including via Eyewatch, local media engagement and face to face meetings etc.
 - providing support to the SEM
 - nominating at least one NHP Coordinator for the PSA.
- For further information and related access to templates, refer to the NHPPG and Neighbourhood Policing Intranet pages.

7. Neighbourhood Policing coordinators

NHP coordinators are appointed by the LAC and may vary in rank. Within the NHP framework, NHP coordinators continue to perform their ordinary duties and report through existing reporting lines. NHP coordinators promote a culture of strong community engagement with all members within the PSA through:

- compilation and maintenance of the CIR
- information collation and sharing
- pro-active tasking to safety issues identified by the community

- support of 'closing the loop' activities
- support of NHP activities including monitoring and reporting of community concerns and sentiment
- applying a problem-solving approach to identified issues.

8. Regional senior managers

Regional senior managers including divisional superintendents, supported by the LAC, are required to address the drivers of harm in the community. By actively engaging and collaborating, approaches to safer communities can be developed to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Divisional superintendents are required to:

- contextualise and manage stakeholder consultation and community issues
- assess and apply organisational and government strategies to the delivery of policing services.

9. Proactive members and units

Each division has specialist proactive members and units which are often aligned to particular priority communities within an area. These units have local knowledge of their particular community issues and will both inform and operationalise activities at the discretion of the LAC, the divisional leadership team or via a T&C process. These include:

- Youth Specialist Officers (YSOs) and Youth Resource Officers (YROs)
- Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs) and Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers (PALOs)
- LGBTIQ Liaison Officers (LLOs)
- Farm Crime Liaison Officers (FCLOs).

10. Priority communities

10.1 Overview

- Priority and Safer Communities Division (PSCD) supports the organisational capability and confidence to deliver a policing service which is responsive and respectful to community needs. The Community Engagement page on the Community Support Hub provides guidance to members working within the regions to enhance service delivery to priority communities. PSCD can also be contacted directly for assistance.
- Members must understand best practice when policing priority communities. Many of these obligations exist when delivering a police service to all Victorians, such as the community engagement principles (see section 1 of this policy) and obligations under the Human Rights Charter (see section 2.3 of this policy) and Victims Charter (see section 10.2 of this policy).
- Victoria Police has defined seven groups (included in the definitions of the policy) as priority communities or cohorts that require nuanced consideration and approaches in our service delivery.
- These priority communities have been identified due to reasons including; over representation as offenders, victims or contact with police, lack of confidence to

report victimisation when it occurs, disproportionate fear and perceptions of safety, difficulty in engaging police services, and challenging relationships/perceptions of police.

- In acknowledgement of this, and Victoria Police's obligations under s.6, *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, police must not make decisions that are based on a person's protected attributes. Attributes can include such things as a person's race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental health, and/or disability (for the complete list of protected attributes refer to s.6, *Equal Opportunity Act*).
- The following policies include requirements for working with priority community members in operational contexts:
 - **VPM Arrests and warrants to arrest**
 - **VPM Emergency management response**
 - **VPM Family violence**
 - **VPM Interviews and statements**
 - **VPM Management of people in police care or custody**
 - **VPM Searches of a person**
 - **VPM Victim support.**
- Community policing utilises a person-centred approach that requires adapting communication, language and engagement approaches to be inclusive. For priority communities this may include making sure venues are accessible for people with mobility needs, using person-first language (for example, "person with mental health issues" not "mentally ill person") and asking people which pronouns they use (and using those pronouns when working with them). This extends beyond operational interactions to all interactions between employees and community members.
- Information and resources to support community engagement, the application of human rights, and support and engagement of victims and priority communities is available on the Community Support Hub. Knowing the demographic profile of the community (or PSA) can assist in tailoring police responses and improving engagement.
- The Community Engagement page on the Community Support Hub provides guidance on developing a community profile.

10.2 Victims

- Victoria Police is often the first point of contact for victims and plays an essential role in providing support and assistance to victims through the criminal justice system. The *Victims Charter Act 2006* mandates legislated standards for the treatment of victims of crime by police. This includes that:
 - victims of crime are to be referred to support services and entitlements via the VPeR system if appropriate
 - victims referrals on VPeR must be consent based for non-crisis, non-family violence, sexual offence or child abuse
 - victims of crime are to be informed about the progress of an investigation into a criminal offence, unless the victim wishes not to be contacted
 - Victoria Police should consider and be responsive to the particular needs of the victim, relating to factors such as race, gender, identity, cultural diversity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and/or age.

- See **VPM Victim support** and the **Victoria Police e-Referral (VPeR) System Practice Guide** for more information.

10.3 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*

- Victoria Police is committed to reducing the over representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system. To achieve this all members are required to deliver services in accordance with the Victorian Government Self Determination Reform Framework, which includes:
 - working in partnership with Aboriginal communities to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal Victorians in the criminal justice system
 - responding to offending involving Aboriginal people
 - connecting Aboriginal people with services to address the underlying causes of offending
 - partnering with agencies, communities and services to better meet the needs of Aboriginal Victorians and the wider community as per the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023 (VAAF)*, *Burra Loptja Dunguludja Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 4 (AJA4)*, and *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*.
- The Standard Indigenous Question (SIQ) should be asked of all victims and must be asked of all offenders, on each occasion. Entering a positive response to this question in the attendance module creates an automatic notification to Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services (VALS) and enables a culturally responsive legal service.

10.4 *People with disability*

- Policing services and premises must be accessible to people with disability with the provision of reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments are responses to a person's accessibility needs to improve their ability to access police services. They might include having a ramp at the front of a police station, making AUSLAN interpreters or a hearing loop available, or conducting an interview with someone with sensory sensitivities in a quiet location.
- An Independent Third Person (ITP) must be contacted when a person has either a cognitive impairment, intellectual disability or a mental health issue. See **VPM Interviews and statements** for direction and further guidance on seeking advice to establish if a person has a cognitive impairment, intellectual disability or mental health issue.

10.5 *LGBTIQ people*

- Members should not ask a person about their sexual orientation, gender identity or whether they are intersex, unless it is specifically relevant to an investigation.
- If unsure how to refer to someone it is appropriate to ask a question such as "how would you like me to refer to you?" or "what pronouns do you use?". Once the person's identification is known, using their correct pronouns (for example, she/her, he/him, they/them) demonstrates a person-centric approach to service delivery.
- Members should update LEAP and the dossier with a new alias when a member becomes aware someone is transitioning or has transitioned and is using a different name. Transgender or intersex persons must be treated as a person of the gender with which they identify.

- When policing beats (public places including beaches, parks and public toilets that men frequent for the purpose of social or sexual contact with other men), members should be conscious of all persons' right of association and assembly and the range of responses available if an offence is detected. See **VPM Policing beat locations** for more information.

10.6 *People experiencing mental health issues*

- Police responses to people experiencing mental health issues must be collaborative between police, other emergency responders, mental health clinicians and mental health services, if applicable.
- Wherever possible, the response to a person experiencing mental health issues should be health led. Police involvement in transportation must be as a last resort. See **VPM Management of people in police care or custody**.
- There are a range of specific requirements when taking a person into care and control the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*. See **VPM Care and control under the Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022** for more information.

10.7 *Multicultural and multifaith people*

- Members should be aware of cultural considerations that may impact the way people present or prefer to engage with police. These include not making eye contact and avoiding physical contact (for example, not shaking hands). Members should, where possible, arrange to meet (including interview) community members outside of prayer times or other periods of religious observance.
- Members should not assume people from these communities understand the Australian legal system.
- Members must accommodate the language needs of witnesses', suspects and offenders. It is important not to assume a person can read their spoken language. **VPM Interviews and statements** provides further guidance, including the use of interpreters.
- As far as possible, custody meals and catering at events should cater for specific dietary, religious or cultural requirements.

10.8 *Seniors*

- Whilst there is no specific age that defines a 'senior' Victorian, the age of 65 years is often used as a threshold. The influence and importance of age is also culturally relative and influenced by a person's lived experience and background.
- Employees should consider the impact of ageism and ensure all older Victorians are engaged with dignity and respect, recognising that a person's capacity to participate in police processes and engagement is not constrained by age.
- On receiving reports of serious incidents involving seniors living in residential aged care services, members are to comply with the Serious Incident Response Scheme, an initiative to help prevent and reduce incidents of abuse and neglect in residential aged care services.
- Elder abuse is family violence, often committed by adult children or grandchildren, intimate partners, other family members or carers in 'family-like' relationships with the victim. Where a member suspects elder abuse, see **VPM Family violence**.

10.9 *Young people*

- The inherent vulnerability of children is embedded in a range of legislation which is covered by various Victoria Police policies, in particular:
 - **VPM Arrests and warrants to arrest**
 - **VPM Bail and remand**
 - **VPM Family violence**
 - **VPM Interviews and statements**
 - **VPM Management of people in police care or custody**
- A parent, guardian or Independent Person (IP) is required when interviewing a young person. See **VPM Interviews and statements** and **VPM Searches of a person** for direction and further guidance when searching/interviewing young people under 18 years. Where the young person has a cognitive impairment, an ITP must be present; an independent person from the Youth Referral and Independent Person Program (YRIPP) must not be used.
- When encountering groups of young people, members should be aware, public spaces may be the only (or preferred) place for young people to socialise and may be a safer space than home.
- Police are mandatory reporters. This creates obligations when a member forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury and/or sexual abuse. See **VPM Protecting children** for more information.
- Members can share information with other prescribed entities, under the Family Violence Information Sharing and Child Information Sharing schemes, for the purposes of identifying, assessing and managing a range of wellbeing and safety needs and risks for children, families and individuals. See **VPM Family violence and child sharing information sharing** and the Family Violence, and Child Information sharing schemes for more information.

10.10 *Intersectionality*

Intersectionality is where a person identifies with more than one priority community which can create overlapping forms of discrimination and amplify service barriers. Members should be aware of and consider intersectionality.

10.11 *Other considerations for working with priority communities*

- Prejudice is a preconceived belief, opinion or judgement towards a person or group of people with common characteristics or based on their perceived characteristics. All members of priority communities may be impacted by prejudice motivated crimes and incidents.
- Inclusion of prejudice motivating factors in a Victim's Statement [Form 287], and the Preliminary Brief - Statement of Alleged Facts made by Informant [Form 372] or Summary of Offence (Hand Up Brief Only - VP L20) will maximise the prospect of the judicial officer utilising s.5(2)(daaa) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*.
- For more information see **VPMG Prejudice motivated crime** and the Prejudice Motivated Crime and Incidents page on the Community Support Hub.

- The disclosure of personal and health information must comply, with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and the *Health Records Act 2001*.

Related documents

- Neighbourhood Policing Practice Guide – provides further information and best practice principles in support of this policy
- VPM Arrests and warrants to arrest
- VPM Attendance and Custody modules
- VPM Emergency management response
- VPM Family violence
- VPM Human rights standards
- VPM Interviews and statements
- VPM Policing beat locations
- VPMG Prejudice motivated crime
- VPM Protecting children
- VPM Searches of a person
- VPM Management of people in police care or custody
- VPM Tasking and coordination
- VPM Victim support
- VPM Care and control under the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*
- Victoria Police e-Referral (VPeR) System Practice Guide
- CCI 09/24 Minimum station profiles
- Community Support Hub

Further advice and information

For further advice and assistance regarding this policy, contact your supervisor.

Update history

DATE UPDATED	SUMMARY OF CHANGE	FORCE FILE NUMBER
22/08/22	VPMP Community policing and VPMG Community safety and liaison reviewed as part of VPM Review. CCI 08/21 Schools Engagement Model and NHP Framework content incorporated	FF-190643
04/02/23	Updates to reference CCI 01/23 Minimum station profiles	FF-219163
01/09/23	Update to reflect new terminology and legislative references under the VPM Care and control under the <i>Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022</i>	FF-232451 1
11/01/24	Updated to reflect CCI 01/24 Minimum station profiles and CCI 11/23 Oversight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in police custody.	FF0219163.2

19/06/2025	Consequential amendments relating to VPM Protecting children and minor administrative updates.	FF- 197943-1
22/09/2025	Consequential amendment to include reference to the new Victoria Police e-Referral (VPeR) System Practice Guide .	FF-266230