Submission Information

Title: Road Policing – An Intelligent Approach

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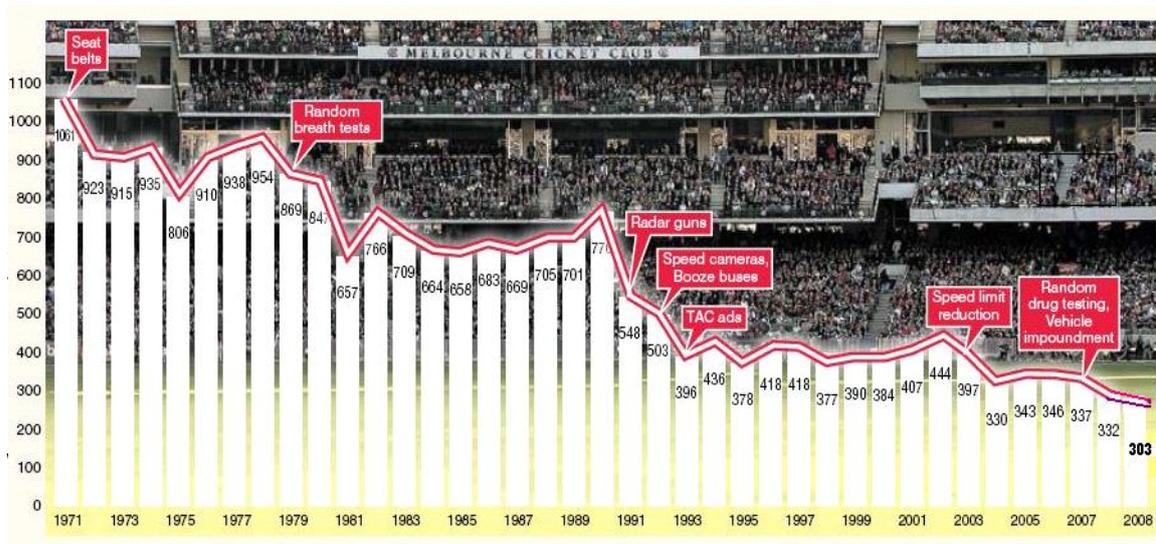Email: ryan.irwin@police.vic.gov.au

Introduction

Road safety is one of the most significant challenges facing law enforcement agencies. This is due to the complex interplay of factors involved in every collision, shifting road user dynamics and the significant intelligence gaps still present in the industry. In late 2010, Victoria Police responded to these concerns by establishing a world-class road policing intelligence unit and delivering a new commitment to road safety.

The Challenge

Victoria is recognised as a leader in the field of road safety. This is due to the unique road safety initiatives established and the proactive approach adopted by road safety partners which have resulted in dramatic reductions in road fatalities over past years. Victoria Police maintain a strong commitment to road safety and regularly implement intelligence based strategies, proactive campaigns and targeted enforcement initiatives around problem areas.

Since the road toll was first recorded, the rate of fatalities has dropped 73%, from 1061 in 1971 to 288 in 2010. The most dramatic of these reductions have occurred directly after a new initiative or legislation was introduced, as outlined by Graph A. These have included mandatory seat belts, random breath testing, use of radar guns, speed cameras and changes to speed limits. It is clear that the more intelligence based and informed the enforcement strategies are, the more successful they are. Public acceptance and support is also vital, which is achieved through high profile media coverage and through eduction campaigns delivered by road safety partners.
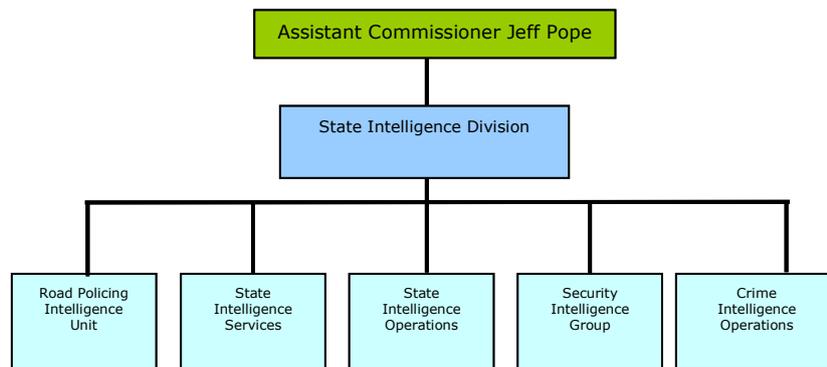

Graph A: Victorian road fatalities and State-wide road safety initiatives

The Victoria Police Road Policing Intelligence Unit (RPIU) was established in July 2010 to provide a world class intelligence capability focussing on road safety. The intelligence developed will inform and lead the next generation of road safety strategies and policies. Other aims involve the establishment of a robust road policing intelligence sharing network and the building of partnerships with other law enforcement agencies and road safety stakeholders.

Unit Structure

The RPIU has been formed within the State Intelligence Division (SID) of the Intelligence and Covert Support Department (I&CSD). This is due to the specialist intelligence services and industry leadership activities undertaken within the Division. The SID is the primary intelligence source that supports Victoria Police's enforcement activities.

The RPIU became fully operational in January 2011, with a structure of thirteen employees. This includes one Inspector, one Sergeant, four Senior Strategic Analysts, seven Intelligence Analysts and one Administrative Assistant. Many of the staff have been recruited internally and were familiar with the Victoria Police commitment to road policing prior to their commencement.

Intelligence Products

A wide range of intelligence products are produced by the RPIU. These products are delivered with a high level of expertise and are designed to set a high standard for road policing intelligence practitioners State-wide. Detailed mapping, aoristic charts, collision drawings, extensive timelines and imagery are often used to complement the information provided to clients to ensure that products are informative and comprehensive.

Products regularly produced include intelligence briefs, intelligence summaries, intelligence assessments, strategic assessments, tactical assessments and individual profiles. These are delivered by a team of Analysts, which is generally managed by a Senior Strategic Analyst or Sergeant, who have extensive experience and qualifications in this field.

Since the Unit became operational in January 2011 a number of products have been released. These products have generated intelligence covering a broad range of current issues and have included high impact strategic reports, standard intelligence products and advisory pieces. Please find a categorical breakdown of some of these products below:

a) Strategic Reports

The RPIU supports the strategic commitments and priorities outlined in the Victoria Police Business Plan, The Way Ahead 2008-2013 and Arrive Alive 2008-2017 strategies. Intelligence products also educate and inform staff members of current trends, patterns and emerging issues associated with road trauma. One such example is the State-wide intelligence assessment on regional road trauma.

This document included comprehensive analysis of the issues associated with road trauma in regional Victoria, temporal analysis, profiling of key road user types, examination of the effectiveness of enforcement and identification of future trends.

Another key report was the Heavy Vehicle Fatal Collision intelligence summary. This document analysed fatal collisions involving heavy vehicles during 2010, identifying the causes, trends, road users at fault and examining enforcement. To assist the client meet their outcomes, the analysis included an examination of heavy vehicle drivers and criminal histories. The intelligence produced in this report assisted the development of a State-wide strategy and inform future products that will be delivered on this topic.

b) Regular Intelligence Reporting

The RPIU produces both monthly and bimonthly documents that inform tasking and strategy groups.

One of these is a monthly intelligence brief for the Victoria Police Executive Tasking and Co-ordination Group. This document outlines current issues and trends affecting road safety in Victoria and explores innovative solutions adopted by other jurisdictions. Issues analysed during 2011 have included a 2010 road trauma overview, motorcycle rider deaths, regional road trauma, mental health, passenger deaths and a State-wide trauma scan.

A further monthly report is being prepared for two operational road policing units. This document will outlines road trauma hot spots, high risk offenders, issues and trends, detailed road trauma figures and upcoming events.

c) Specialist Intelligence Documents

Numerous intelligence documents have been prepared by the RPIU for internal clients using specialist knowledge and unique data analysis skills. These products are often required within limited timeframes and therefore involve careful planning, efficient data interpretation, strong research and high level writing ability.

Some of the issues examined include distraction offences, speed and speeding, elderly drivers, mental health, international drivers, passenger fatalities, hoon drivers, motorcycle trauma, off-road collisions, urban growth, vulnerable road users and unauthorised drivers. Each of these issues and their contribution to road trauma has been quantified and explored, with detailed documentation delivered to clients.

d) Individual Threat Assessments

RPIU has commenced the High Risk driver project, which identifies recidivist and high risk drivers in specific locations. Analysts use a specific formula to first identify these dangerous road users, incorporating several data sources which are used to complete a threat assessment on each person. This information is relayed to the appropriate unit for actioning and can inform complex investigations.

e) State-wide Harm Assessments

To ensure a high level of consistency and information about road policing is shared within Victoria Police, the RPIU delivered detailed harm assessments on major road policing topics in early 2011. These included examinations on the social, political and economic impact of identified influences of road trauma, as well as harm ratings for each topic.

The topics analysed includes drink driving, drug driving, fatigue, hoon driving, low level speeding and statutory offences.

f) Databases

Two databases are currently managed by the RPIU. These include the Fatal Accident Collation Table (FACT) and the Unauthorised driver's database.

FACT is a unique data set which provides Victoria Police with comprehensive intelligence about each fatality during 2011. It is the first of its kind to collate data from multiple sources, allowing for the reporting of extensive variables and providing analysts with an in-depth examination the issues influencing fatal collisions. These include information about the persons involved such as criminal linkages, infringement history, impoundment history, previous intelligence collated, traffic offending history and licensing information. This information complements the standard intelligence collected from the crime scene about the driver, vehicle, road conditions, involved parties and external conditions.

The Unauthorised driver database is a current list of suspended and disqualified drivers in Victoria. The RPIU attains the information from an external source, uploads it into a specific format and distributes it to internal Units. This allows for road policing departments to maintain timely intelligence and target problematic unauthorised drivers.

g) Education

The incorporation of intelligence training into the field of road policing education has not been a traditional focus of many law enforcement agencies. Instead, the focus has been upon teaching members law, regulations, policies, advanced vehicle usage and how to undertake their policing responsibilities. To ensure that intelligence processes are incorporated into road policing activities, the RPIU has adopted a leadership role in this area and delivers a specialised education package to road policing specialists at the Victoria Police Highway Patrol course.

The package is designed to equip members the best practice of incorporating intelligence into their roles, to teach them about the role of intelligence in road policing and to encourage specific practices in their daily duties. The package is delivered by RPIU staff on a monthly basis to participants on the Highway Patrol Course.

Conferences are another method used by the RPIU to encourage communication and intelligence sharing between the internal road policing intelligence network. Biannually, the RPIU convenes a daily workshop for members, which includes guest speakers, presentations on problematic road trauma trends, round table discussions, topic specific workshops and training. As the event only involves road policing practitioners, the discussions are held at a very high level and are extremely rewarding for all participants.

h) Clients

The RPIU is responsible for providing a service to the Victorian community by providing high quality products to numerous clients. The internal clients include the Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Road Policing, Police Commissioners, the State-wide Tasking and Co-ordination Committee Regional and Divisional road policing units, the Media Unit and the State Highway Patrol. Our external clients include the Victorian government, VicRoads, TAC, the State Coroner, academic organisations and research bodies.

Conclusion

Victoria Police is proud of its commitment to road safety. As the organisation is aware, this area of law enforcement is complex, constantly evolving and will provide constant challenges as time passes. In order to meet these challenges and introduce strong innovative solutions, the Road Policing Intelligence Unit has been formed.

The RPIU will deliver specialist advice, intelligence products, numerous solutions to client needs and strategic solutions to assist both internal and external decision makers. With the aim of 237 fatalities or less per annum by 2017 firmly in the mind of the Inspector, this Centre of Excellence will soon become a common point of reference for those in the field of road policing and beyond.