

From: aic.noreply@govcms.gov.au
Sent: Wednesday, 1 May 2024 3:09 PM
To: Katalina Foliaki
Subject: Webform submission from: ACVPA Nomination Form 2024

Submitted on Wed, 2024-05-01 13:29

1) What is the name of the project?

Public Transport Notification Project - STOPIT

2) When did the project commence?

July 2020

3) How is this program funded? If there is more than one source of funding, please show the percentage of funds from each source

Victoria Police - 100 %

4) Project summary — Please provide a brief statement about the project

Unwanted sexual behaviour (USB) is prevalent on Victorian public transport and mainly affects women and girls. It impacts when and where they use public transport and after being a victim, some never use public transport again. USB is significantly under reported making it difficult for police to address the issue. Launched in July 2022, Victoria Police's, innovative STOPIT passenger notification service, provides the public, including women and girls, with the means and confidence to notify police of USB. This enables police to apprehend offenders and prevent offences, leading to women and girls feeling safer and being safer on public transport.

5) Is this project led by a police organisation?

Yes

6) Name of lead organisation

Victoria Police

7) Address of lead organisation or individual responsible for the project

Level 14, Tower 1, 311 Spencer Street, Docklands Victoria 3000

8) Contact person/s for the project

Name

[Redacted Name]

Phone

Email

9) Names of all partners involved in the project

- Victorian Department of Transport & Planning
- Metro Trains Melbourne
- Victoria Public Transport Users Association
- V-Line Trains
- Yarra Trams
- Kinetic Buses
- Transdev Buses
- Bus Vic
- Dyson Bus Group Services
- CDC Bus Services

10) Has this project previously applied for an award in the ACVPA program?

No

11) Is this a nomination for a project you are working on?

Yes

12) Project description

In 2019 Victoria Police's Transit Safety Division (TSD) developed the Strategy for addressing Sex Offences on Public Transport. Research showed that unwanted sexual behaviour (USB) was prevalent on Victorian public transport. Incidents of USB are significantly under reported, with up to 95% of victims never reporting to police. Victims are mainly women and girls, and as a result of being a victim or fear of being a victim, many modify their behaviour. This includes changing when and where victims travel, with some never using public transport again. For some women this can significantly impact their life.

The STOPIT Passenger Notification Project was a key activity of the Strategy for addressing Sex Offences on Public Transport. This project was developed over a three-year period, involving extensive research and user testing. The STOPIT service is mobile phone based, enabling people to discretely notify police of unwanted sexual or anti-social behaviours occurring on public transport. Users text the word 'STOPIT' to 0499 455 455 and receive an automated response with a link to a reporting template. The template enables the user to provide information on six categories of antisocial behaviour, as well as providing additional details in relation to USB, including attaching a photo or indicating that they have a video. The template is easy to complete and covers all services on trains, trams and buses. The information can be provided when the incident happens or later as often women need to speak to a friend or family member to process the experience and decide the action they want to take.

Information received from a STOPIT notification is assessed by a dedicated team within TSD. The information includes demographics, the type of incident and the time and location of the incident. Additional information can be provided in relation to unwanted sexual and suspicious behaviour. STOPIT team members contact people who

have notified police of unwanted sexual or suspicious behaviour incidents. This is an important step as it enables the STOPIT Team member to provide advice to the person in relation to support services and their options. The person may decide to make a formal report of the incident to police. Or they may decide that they want the police to know about the incident but don't want to formally report it. It also enables the Team member to advise the notifying person of what happens next and the benefits of providing the information to police. If a formal report is made, specially trained detectives follow up with the person and provide support as the investigation and prosecution proceeds. Irrespective of whether a formal report is made all information is used as intelligence to inform investigations and identify offenders. The information is also used to identify hot spots and to inform tasking of police and Protective Services Officers.

Key objectives of the service included:

1. Increase the number of unwanted sexual behaviour incidents - (Target 20% increase).
 - o Baseline average of 303 sex offences per year (2016 to 2018).
 - o Average of 371 sex offences per year (2022 to 2023) – 22.4 % increase.
2. Reduce the level of repeat offenders.
 - o Baseline of 8 repeat offenders in 2018.
 - o 5 repeat offenders in both the 2022 and 2023 periods (37.5% reduction in repeat offenders)

STOPIT targets the prevention of unwanted sexual and anti-social behaviour on public transport. Transit Police collaborate with public transport operators with respect to hot spot locations of unwanted sexual or anti-social behaviours. This includes undertaking joint operations with police, Protective Services Officers and public transport authorised officers to prevent these behaviours.

Since the service launched in July 2022, over 2725 notifications have been made (57% by females) and 476 notifications of USB (72% by females). These notifications have resulted in over 637 intelligence reports being assessed and investigated by specialist sexual crimes detectives within TSD. 27 perpetrators have been charged with 75 sexual offence charges.

A survey of STOPIT users identified that they wouldn't have notified police of the incident without the STOPIT service. STOPIT has had a significant positive impact, encouraging women to take action against unwanted sexual and antisocial behaviour on public transport.

13) What is the annual cost of the project?

Per annum costs: Marketing \$700,000, Wages (5 personnel) \$500,000, IT Costs \$12,000

14) Do you make use of in-kind support?

In kind marketing support from Victorian Department of Transport & Planning

15) Has the project been evaluated independently?

Yes

Please provide a summary of the key evaluation findings. You may also want to provide an electronic copy of the evaluation report or a link if the report is available online.

An independent evaluation of STOPIT's first 12 months of operation was undertaken. The evaluation included implementation/operation, advertising campaign, and supporting communications. The evaluation addressed the following five key questions, with full details attached in the attachment evaluation:

1. How did the process of STOPIT work from the stakeholder perspective (internal & external)?
External stakeholders thought that the consultative processes put in place as STOPIT was developed and launched

were effective. As a result, the network operators were very supportive of the STOPIT initiative and appreciated what it was trying to achieve in making public transport travel safer, as well as providing a future additional data source to support their own efforts around safer travel.

Victoria Police interviewees involved with STOPIT agreed that the initiative has made a practical contribution to Victoria Police's capability in helping make travelling on public transport safer, particularly in relation to incidents of USB.

2. How is STOPIT working from the user perspective?

A key takeaway from the research is that the travelling public will use STOPIT if they are aware of its availability. The service is most appreciated by females aged between 16 and 34, the primary target audience in relation to incidences of USB.

The research found that from a user perspective a continuing education campaign better explaining STOPIT's focus for non-urgent incidences needs to continue to be a primary message across all communications.

Overall, the research findings show that public transport travellers view STOPIT as filling an important gap in making it easy to report non-urgent incidents on public transport.

3. How has STOPIT enhanced Victoria Police understanding of non-emergency sex offences (non-rape) and anti-social behaviours on public transport?

Between July 2022 and July 2023, STOPIT notifications for USB (272) accounted for 36 per cent of total sexual assault intelligence holdings across public transport. That was a very solid result for a newly introduced service, particularly since public transport traveller awareness was so low.

STOPIT data has also provided Victoria Police with a better understanding of who are reporting incidences of USB (mainly females), and the importance of notifications made by bystanders, much more evenly split between males and females for reporting incidences of ASB.

A breakdown of when notifications were being made identified mornings and afternoon timeframes predominated. With PSO's not operational until 6pm shift commencement on station platforms, STOPIT provides an important reporting channel for public transport travellers during the day.

In that sense the STOPIT service provides a part solution that helps address operational concerns that many USB and ASB incidents occur when PSO's are not available to respond to incidents.

4. Has STOPIT improved the ability to proactively address unwanted sexual and anti-social behaviours on the public transport system?

STOPIT is providing public transport travellers with an easy-to-use notification channel that was not previously available.

A total of 1,254 ASB notifications accounted for 82 per cent of all notifications during the first year of operation. Behavioural, drug and alcohol related incidences accounted for 59 per cent of ASB notifications. The predominance of ASB notifications was expected as these are typical of the more usual incidents experienced on public transport.

ASB notifications are unlikely to have been captured prior to STOPIT's inception. This has bolstered intelligence holdings, furthering TSD's capability to provide an intelligence-led policing response across the public transport network.

The launch of the STOPIT dashboard, outside of the evaluation period, will make a difference to the ability of Victoria Police and public transport operators in utilising intelligence gained from STOPIT notifications for ASB more effectively.

5. Has STOPIT enhanced perceptions of safety for public transport users?

A 10-week two-phased media campaign, with a budget of \$500,000, was delivered between July and October

2022. The campaign was supported by proactive media and promotion via Victoria Police's multiple communication channels.

Statistics provided by Victoria Police show that there was a significant increase in the number of notifications received from public transport users for both USB and ASB following the Phase One campaign introduction of the new service:

There was a 52 per cent increase in notifications for USB and a 48 per cent increase in ASB notifications between Phases One and Two of the media campaign.

This is an indication that the campaign was starting to generate traction in increasing awareness of the option of using STOPIT to notify police about incidences of USB or ASB.

The number of monthly notifications dropped significantly once the media campaign finalised in October.

50 per cent of people surveyed agreed that Victoria Police takes USB on public transport seriously. This was five percentage points lower than the benchmark research undertaken in November 2020. Therefore, the target of a five per cent increase post Phase Two launch of the campaign was not met.

Benchmark research found that 36 per cent of public transport users believed Victoria Police was doing a lot to tackle USB on public transport. Post campaign tracking research found that responses to this same question dropped to 28 per cent. Again the 10 per cent target increase objective was not met. Awareness of the media campaign was also low, with a 16 per cent awareness response after survey respondents were prompted with examples of the campaign creative.

16) What makes the project special or innovative?

STOPIT is an Australian-first text-based notification service that makes it easier to report unwanted sexual and anti-social behaviour on public transport. Research undertaken by Victoria Police showed people who experience or witness unwanted sexual behaviour often don't report it at the time out of safety concerns or because they don't know how to make a complaint. STOPIT removes those barriers and allows commuters to notify police about incidents easily and discreetly.

Research identified that 42% of female public transport users spoke a language other than English. Consequently, having the service available in other languages was important to enable women who didn't speak English to use the service. The service was developed to be available in 12 languages in addition to English. The languages selection was based on use of public transport and low English literacy levels. The media campaign creative was translated into languages and fact sheets in language were also provided. Encouraging the most disadvantaged women to use the service and enhancing the relationship between police and CALD communities.

STOPIT has given women the confidence to notify police of unwanted sexual and anti-social behaviours, which is enabling police to act against offenders, and improve the safety of women and girls and the community in general, on public transport.

The STOPIT service is available across the entire Victorian public transport system, including metropolitan and country services – train, tram and bus.

At a Victorian level there is opportunity to expand the STOPIT model to include non-public transport public places, such as shopping centres and community locations. At a national level there is opportunity for other police services to consider the STOPIT project as an alternative pathway to receiving notifications of unwanted sexual or anti-social behaviours.

An important part of developing the STOPIT service and campaign has been to engage with public transport operators, public transport users, government departments and various community organisations. The prevalence of unwanted sexual behaviours on public transport requires a holistic approach. During development of the service and marketing campaign a public transport sector project advisory group was established involving public

transport operators, the Department of Transport and Planning (DOTP) and the Public Transport Users Association.

DOTP is a particularly key stakeholder and the STOPIT service and campaign supports the department's 'Transport Personal Safety Strategy Addressing suicide and violence on the Victoria transport system'. One of the key pillars of the strategy is the safety of women and girls. The Transport Personal Safety Executive Committee is responsible for implementing the strategy. The committee includes Victoria Police's TSD, DOTP and a range of other government departments, including Crime Prevention, Office for Women, and the Office for Youth. Partnerships are critical to ensuring an integrated approach to improving the safety of women and girls and ensuring alignment with government strategies, such as 'Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy' (August 2021) and the 'Crime Prevention Strategy' (July 2021).

17) Referees

[Redacted content]

Referee 2

[Redacted content]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

18) What would winning an ACVPA mean for your project / organisation?

Winning an ACVPA would recognise the extensive research and consultation undertaken by Victoria Police with other government agencies, public transport operators and the public in developing and implementation of the STOPIT passenger notification service.

Victoria Police acknowledges the significant harm that unwanted sexual behaviour has on the community, primarily on women and children. Providing an alternative pathway for the public to discretely notify Victoria Police of unwanted sexual or anti-social behaviour on public transport is essential in enhancing community confidence and safety on public transport.

19) How did you find out about the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards?

- Through my workplace

20) Would you like to be on an emailing list so you can be notified about future Awards?

Yes

Please provide your email address.

[REDACTED]

21) Media Contact details

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

File Uploads

- https://www.aic.gov.au/system/files/webform/acvpa_nomination_form_2024/1458/DTP%20-%20STOPIT%20Nomination_Supporting%20Letter.pdf
- https://www.aic.gov.au/system/files/webform/acvpa_nomination_form_2024/1458/Metro%20Trains%20-%20STOPIT%20Safety%20Campaign.pdf
- https://www.aic.gov.au/system/files/webform/acvpa_nomination_form_2024/1458/PTPNP%20PTSAFE%20Platform%20Overview.pdf
- https://www.aic.gov.au/system/files/webform/acvpa_nomination_form_2024/1458/STOPIT%20Stakeholder%20Kit.pdf
- https://www.aic.gov.au/system/files/webform/acvpa_nomination_form_2024/1458/STOPIT%20Data%20%26%20Post%20Campaign%20Tracking%20Research%20Insights.pdf
- https://www.aic.gov.au/system/files/webform/acvpa_nomination_form_2024/1458/STOPIT%20Evaluation%20-%20Final%20report%20-%202029%20April%202024.docx
- https://www.aic.gov.au/system/files/webform/acvpa_nomination_form_2024/1458/Appendix%20A%20-%20STOPIT%20program%20Evaluation%20-Final%20Report%20-%202029%20April%202024.docx
- https://www.aic.gov.au/system/files/webform/acvpa_nomination_form_2024/1458/Herald%20Sun%20print%20-%202011%20July.pdf
- https://www.aic.gov.au/system/files/webform/acvpa_nomination_form_2024/1458/Appendix%20B%20-%20STOPIT%20Advertising%20Campaign%20Evaluation%20-%20Final%20Report%2029%20April%202024.docx