

Developing, Regulating, Enforcing

The Department of Justice strives to achieve the right balance between developing and regulating industry and enterprise and enforcing civil rights and obligations.



The Department works to ensure a confident and informed marketplace where consumers are protected and traders are responsible.

Monitoring the rules of the game

The Department, through Gaming and Racing, has a critical role in promoting a policy and regulatory environment that is responsible, sustainable and inclusive, with positive outcomes for the community as a whole.

In 2003–2004, Victorians spent \$2,290 million, 1.8 per cent lower than 2002–2003, on gaming machines at more than 500 gaming venues in Victoria, and \$964 million at Crown Casino. A further \$436 million was spent on public lotteries such as Tattsлото and Powerball and \$579 million on wagering (including football and sports betting).

In the same period, the Government provided \$18 million in funding to ensure regulation of an honest, crime free and responsible gambling industry.

A number of key activities were undertaken during 2003–2004.

Gambling Regulation Act and the Commission for Gambling Regulation

The Government has developed the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* (the Act) which commenced on 1 July 2004. The Act established a new Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (VCGR), consolidated, streamlined and updated existing gaming legislation, and implemented key Government election commitments in relation to gaming.

The Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation replaced the VCGR, the Director of Gaming and Betting and the Director of Casino Surveillance in order to improve the responsiveness and transparency of gambling regulation in Victoria.

The Commission is the primary regulator of gambling in Victoria. The Commission's scope and powers covers Crown Casino, electronic gaming machines, public lotteries, wagering and charitable gaming sectors and the licensing of employees and other participants.

The Government also developed the policy underlying a range of responsible gambling measures implemented by the Act, including:

- banning gaming machine advertising and restricting gaming venue signage. The ban applies to all forms of media, including billboards, print, television, radio, Internet, and electronic advertising;
- requiring gaming venue staff to complete responsible gambling training;
- giving more power to local governments over applications for poker machines; and
- allowing the use of spending data from venues for gambling research.

Gambling Licences Review Project

The Gambling Licences Review Project Team was established during the year to develop the approach to the review of Victoria's major non-casino gambling licences, currently held by Tattersall's and TABCORP.

The review will determine the future licensing arrangements for lotteries, wagering and electronic gaming machines in Victoria and the approach to racing industry funding. The review will be guided by the Government's gambling policy principles of responsible gambling, accountability and transparency.

Regulation of lottery resellers

In a major Australian and New Zealand initiative, the Australian and New Zealand casino and gaming authorities have combined their efforts to examine the probity of lottery resellers and determine common regulatory goals. This initiative is aimed at enhancing consumers' rights, preventing misleading advertising, and ensuring the integrity of the tax-sharing arrangements between Victoria and a number of interstate and overseas jurisdictions.

Triennial casino review

The Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority completed its Third Triennial Review of the Casino Operator and Casino Licence on 30 June 2003. The review was publicly released by the Minister for Gaming on 2 September 2003. Ongoing reviews ensure that Crown Casino continues to be an entity suitable to hold a casino licence.

Bingo proceeds

New regulations were implemented to ensure that community and charitable organisations conducting bingo will receive at least 40 per cent of the overall proceeds of each session. The regulations address a finding by the Commission that the costs associated with the conduct of bingo sessions resulted in some community and charitable organisations receiving little or no proceeds from this activity.

Community Benefit Statements

Investigations have revealed that some clubs holding an electronic gaming machine venue operator's licence were not providing sufficient benefits to the community from their gaming revenue. New legislation now requires gaming venue operators to submit annual Community Benefit Statements.

2003–2004 was the first year for the lodging of Community Benefit Statements and a monitoring system will be established to ensure that they are lodged by the required date. An audit will be conducted on those received.

Gaming inspectors' data collection system

A Mobile Data Collection and Analysis System has been developed to enable gaming inspectors to collect data in the field using hand-held computers. The system will enhance the inspection process and facilitate electronic storage and the interrogation of data that can be used for analysis and forecasting of gaming trends in the industry. The system will be implemented during 2004–2005.

Growing and protecting Victoria's racing heritage

The Government is committed to supporting the industry to maintain its position as the nation's premier racing state. The Government aims to ensure that racing industry activities are carried out with honesty and integrity.

Champions, the Australian Racing Museum and Hall of Fame

The Museum was opened on 1 July 2004 by His Excellency the Governor General, Major-General Michael Jeffrey, and the Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks. The establishment of *Champions, the Australian Racing Museum and Hall of Fame* at Federation Square acknowledges the valuable contribution that racing makes to Victorian communities.

Developed with Government support, in conjunction with Racing Victoria, the \$7.5 million museum highlights the cultural and historical impact of racing in Victoria and has a strong educational focus for racing enthusiasts and the broader community.

Racing is one of our largest industries and is an important part of Victoria's heritage. Economic impact studies have estimated that the Victorian racing industry contributes over \$2 billion to the local economy and employs over 64,000 people, with a high representation of young people in regional areas. The industry is made up of thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing codes.

In thoroughbred racing, the Spring Racing Carnival is the biggest annual event in Australia – 2003 saw a record attendance of 658,675 compared to the 2002 record of 638,147. Of this attendance, 27,000 were international visitors and 121,000 were interstate visitors. It is estimated that over 700 million people across the world watch the Melbourne Cup.

The economic benefit of last year's Carnival has been estimated at \$388.5 million. Fashion spending peaked at \$16.6 million in 2003 – including 48,000 hats, 40,000 pairs of shoes and 23,000 handbags.

Harness and greyhound racing major events also provide significant economic benefits to the Victorian community.

The Government aims to foster the growth, standards and economic contribution of the racing industry for the benefit of all Victorians.

During 2003–2004, the Department supported a number of ongoing projects to promote industry development and the welfare of industry workers. Projects undertaken included the following.

Breeders' incentives

Victorian breeding schemes for the thoroughbred, standardbred and greyhound industry encourage owners to buy locally in a highly competitive national and international market. This local investment in turn boosts the industry and supports local rural breeding industries. The Victorian breeding incentive models are recognised nationally as a proven model and other racing jurisdictions seek to emulate them.

The Living Country Racing Program

This program is designed to assist with the upgrade and improvement of facilities at country thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing venues. A total of 33 country race clubs had grants made available to them on a dollar-for-dollar basis with priority given to improvements with both community and racing-related benefits.

The Minister for Racing, John Pandazopoulos opens Champions, the Australian Racing Museum and Hall of Fame.



Enforcement

The Department works closely with a number of agencies to reduce Victoria's road toll and help Victorians feel confident about their safety.

In November 2001, the Government launched Victoria's Road Safety Strategy *Arrive Alive!* The strategy aims to reduce the road toll by 20 per cent by 2007 through addressing road design, speeding, drink driving, fatigue and vehicle safety issues. The Department works closely with agencies such as the Victoria Police, VicRoads and the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) to implement the strategy.

In May 2004, the Department assumed responsibility for overseeing the operation of the speed camera system in Victoria. This included mobile speed cameras, combined speed/red light cameras, point-to-point systems and fixed digital speed camera programs on the CityLink/Monash Freeway, Westgate Freeway, Geelong Road and Western Ring Road. The Department manages the contract with Tenix Solutions Pty Ltd, which is contracted to operate the CityLink/Monash Freeway fixed digital speed camera system, mobile safety cameras, verify camera images and manage the administration of infringement notices.

The Department also administers the revenue collected on outstanding infringement notices through the Penalty Enforcement by Registration of Infringement Notice (PERIN) court, and the enforcement of warrants through the Sheriff's Office.

Road safety initiatives

Road safety initiatives, particularly those focused on speeding, have been highly successful – the average speed in a 60 km/h zone has fallen from 63 km/h in November 2000 to 59.7 km/h in November 2003. Initiatives undertaken by the Department in partnership with the Victoria Police, VicRoads and the TAC contributed to the lowest road toll on record in 2003.

Drink driver education campaign

A pilot program implemented in early 2004 aimed to break the cycle of repeat drink driving. Evidence suggests that for many repeat offenders, standard educational programs and/or the threat of harsher penalties are ineffective. Offenders convicted of drink driving three or more times, or those convicted twice where both blood alcohol readings were 0.15 or greater, underwent specialised assessment, medical examinations and intensive education programs. The trial will be evaluated in 2004–2005.

Road safety

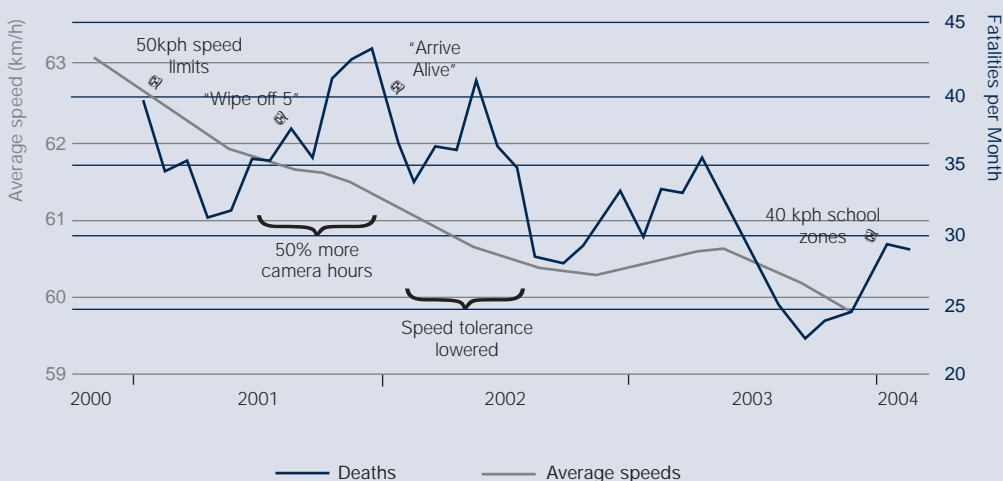
The single biggest cause of accidents on Victorian roads is speed. Speed is responsible for around one third of all deaths on our roads. Speeding results in a massive human and financial cost to the community. The cost of road trauma in Victoria in 2003–2004 was around \$3.5 billion.

Speed cameras help save lives by getting drivers to stick to the speed limit.

On 14 May 2004, the Government announced that approximately 90,000 drivers who received an infringement from a fixed digital speed camera on the Western Ring Road could apply to have the infringement withdrawn, demerit points reversed and any fine paid refunded. The decision followed the completion of comprehensive testing which found faulty reading in the fixed digital speed camera system.

The Government announced that motorists whose licences had been suspended as a result of a Western Ring Road speed camera infringement would be eligible to apply for an ex-gratia payment to cover travel costs and consequential loss of income. A staged process was commenced to advise approximately 3,400 affected motorists of their right to make an application under the scheme. Motorists suspended at the time of the announcement as a result of a Western Ring Road infringement were treated as a priority and had their licences restored, infringement withdrawn, demerit points reversed and fine refunded.

Road deaths vs vehicle speed



Enforcement continued

An upgrade of the speed camera system will take place. A new system-wide testing and maintenance regime for fixed speed cameras will be introduced across Victoria as well as additional speed verification technology. The Western Ring Road cameras will be replaced and thoroughly tested and re-certified before being turned on again. The Citylink/Monash Freeway cameras will also be re-calibrated and re-certified.

PERIN Court

The Penalty Enforcement by Registration of Infringement Notice (PERIN) Court was established to deal with large numbers of unpaid infringement notices such as littering and parking fines. While not removing the right of anyone to appear before a magistrate, the diversion of these cases out of the main court system frees up magistrates and court staff to focus on more serious criminal cases. In 2003–2004, 768,061 infringements were registered with the PERIN Court. In 2003–2004, the Penalty Enforcement Warrant Education Program was implemented to assist magistrates and open court staff in dealing with complex sentencing issues resulting from the execution of PERIN warrants.

Sheriff's Office

After receiving a penalty enforcement order from the PERIN court, the Sheriff's Office enforces court orders and warrants to deliver a higher level of community compliance with the law – in particular road traffic and property laws.

Additional Sheriff's Officers employed at the end of the 2002–2003 financial year assisted in increasing the number of warrants actioned from 408,048 in 2002–2003 to 489,087 in 2003–2004. The Sheriff's Office also focused on improving communication and analytical capability in order to upgrade enforcement systems.

Enforcement Review Program

The Enforcement Review Program assists people who suffer physical or intellectual disabilities or a diagnosed mental illness by withdrawing infringement notices or referring them to a magistrate if considered appropriate. In 2003–2004, 6,869 matters were revoked under the Enforcement Review Program.

The Department of Justice has set up an Infringements Framework Project which is investigating the broadening of the Enforcement Review Program to include people experiencing homelessness and drug addiction. The project is also taking a whole-of-government, whole-of-community approach to determine how the infringement notices system could operate more effectively, consistently and fairly across the community.

Seizing crime proceeds

The Department operates the Asset Confiscation Scheme, which manages the forfeiture of crime proceeds. In 2003–2004, \$3.392 million was realised through the scheme. The proceeds go towards supporting victims of crime, crime prevention and control programs, and criminological research.

Improving consumer protection

The Department works with business to create a fair and equitable marketplace.

The Department, through Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV), registers business names and limited partnerships, and incorporates associations and cooperatives. It maintains public registers of these organisations and monitors their compliance with relevant laws. Consumer confidence is built by ensuring that only eligible businesses and individuals enter and remain in these industries.

The Department provides support to the Business Licensing Authority (BLA). A statutory body which is part of the wider Justice Portfolio, the BLA administers the licensing and registration of finance brokers, travel agents, credit providers, estate agents, motor car traders, prostitution service providers, second-hand dealers, pawnbrokers and introduction agents.

In 2003–2004, the BLA carried out inquiries in relation to more than 2,000 new applications and determined around 1,800 applications, by refusing 46 and imposing conditions or restrictions on 109 applications.

Developing online transactions

Together with the BLA, CAV has continued to enhance its online service delivery for regulated occupations and industries. Over 24,000 application forms and guides were downloaded from the BLA website in 2003–2004.

Online services went live in March 2004, providing access to licensing and registration information to assist applicants and licensee/registrants, particularly in regional and remote areas.

Online developments have significantly improved services to consumers and businesses by providing a 24-hour, seven days a week online service including:

- public register of licensed motor car traders;
- public register of licensed estate agents; and
- facilities for licensed estate agents to lodge their annual statements and pay their annual licence fee, as well as update the records of the business.

In May 2004, CAV launched the online Business Names Registration service. Interest has been very strong with more than 500 registrations a week, or more than one-third, now being undertaken online.

Business name testing

In a world first, CAV has established the online Business Names Test. Businesses can apply for a business name online, and use the test to determine whether the name is acceptable under Victorian legislation. In approximately 65 per cent of cases, a business receives instant online approval, with 35 per cent of cases referred to a Consumer Affairs officer for assessment.

Liquor licensing

The Director of Liquor Licensing is a statutory office which is part of the wider Justice Portfolio. The Department assists the office in contributing to the whole-of-government alcohol-related agenda – including the development of the Victorian Alcohol Action Plan, the implementation of the recommendations from the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*, the Live Music Taskforce, and the Inner-City Entertainment Precinct Working Party.

The Department, through CAV seeks to ensure that potential licence holders and others approved under the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* (the Act) are suitable, and have relevant training and adequate knowledge of the Act. Licence conditions aim to minimise potential negative impacts on the community and are drafted to be pragmatic and enforceable.

CAV undertook a range of initiatives throughout 2003–2004 to promote the responsible serving of alcohol and minimise the harm of alcohol, including the following.

- more than 39,000 licensees, hospitality staff and students attended Responsible Serving of Alcohol workshops provided by Liquor Licensing accredited training providers;
- mandatory training for all new entrants to the industry was introduced in March 2004. As of 30 June 2004, more than 700 participants had undertaken the 'Licensee's First Step' course; and
- more than 6,500 Proof of Age cards were issued to assist licensees to comply with their responsibilities concerning underage persons on licensed premises.

In 2003–2004, CAV processed 16,628 liquor licensing applications and the number of licensed premises increased by eight per cent to 16,511 up from 15,190 in 2002–2003. Victoria Police, who enforce the Act, issued 3,415 'On the Spot' infringement notices against licensees for breaches of the Act.

Trade Measurement

Through the Trade Measurement unit, the Department assists business, industry and consumers with advice and inspection of instruments used for measurement for trade purposes.

More than 250 complaints were received and investigated during 2003–2004. Of these complaints, 23 per cent were found to be justified and the complainant advised of the outcome of the investigations.

In 2003–2004, over 5,200 trade premises were inspected and two per cent warning letters for minor breaches of the trade measurement legislation, such as short weight/measurement across a range of food products and non-compliance with labelling requirements, were issued.

During the year, more than 150 infringement notices were issued for a range of penalties. A further three prosecutions were undertaken, with fines totalling \$50,000, plus court costs, awarded by magistrates in these matters.

In November 2003, a trade measurement conference brought together participants from the food manufacturing and retail groceries industries to discuss sound manufacturing practices and compliance with trade measurement legislation.

Improving consumer protection continued

Building, buying, selling or renting property affects all Victorians. The Department, through Consumer Affairs Victoria, works to regulate the building and real estate industry to ensure a confident and informed marketplace where consumers are protected and traders are responsible.

The Department, through Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV), in partnership with the Building Commission, operates Building Advice and Conciliation Victoria (BACV). BACV is a one-stop service for consumers and builders which provides information, advice and assistance with home building and renovating issues. BACV also monitors and maintains standards for building contracts and building.

In 2003–2004, BACV received over 20,000 telephone enquiries and 1,600 written complaints relating to building matters – increases from 2002–2003 of 33 per cent and 37 per cent respectively. The total amount recovered was around \$630,000, an increase of 44 per cent on last year's figure.

Key prosecutions – domestic building

A person who was not a registered building practitioner acted as the director of a company that entered into several major domestic building contracts to build homes. In some cases, the person failed to complete the work and did not have the insurance which he claimed he did. The magistrate convicted him on 36 charges. He was also fined \$270,750 and ordered to pay \$2,422 in costs.

Buying and selling

On 1 February 2004, major sections of the *Estate Agents and Sale of Land Acts (Amendment) Act 2003* came into effect, making under- and over-quoting of property prices illegal and introducing severe penalties for dummy bidding at public auctions.

In February 2004, a campaign was implemented to raise awareness of the new legislation among consumers and estate agents. A central component of the campaign is a free 56-page guide, *Real estate; a guide for buyers and sellers*, which provides an overview of the steps involved in a real estate transaction.

The Estate Agents Resolution Service (EARS) provides consumers with free advice, information, complaint handling and dispute resolution on real estate matters. In 2003–2004, EARS answered more than 10,500 telephone enquiries from consumers and agents and responded to over 1,000 written complaints concerning the conduct of real estate agents in Victoria.

EARS received 49 complaints about under- and over-quoting during the year, with some of these matters recommended for further investigation for breaches of legislation.

Mortgage brokers

Approximately 40 per cent of borrowers now use mortgage brokers when sourcing a home loan. To protect consumers, CAV and its counterparts in other States and Territories have made significant progress towards a nationally consistent regulatory scheme to cover all mortgage and finance brokers.

Key prosecutions – Fair Trading Act

For the first time, CAV initiated proceedings under the unconscionable conduct provisions of the *Fair Trading Act 1999* (the Act). Two companies persuaded a consumer to purchase a property, initially under a vendor terms contract, for \$55,000, which they were in the process of purchasing for \$25,600.

The Magistrates' Court awarded the consumer a \$31,584 refund and found that the companies had contravened the unconscionable conduct provisions of the Act and concealed the true value of the house from the consumer.

Key prosecutions – real estate

A person was employed as an agent's representative at an estate agency of which his wife was a director. The person was commissioned to sell a property and, after advising the vendor not to go to auction, sold the property at below market value to a company that was controlled by his wife without the vendor's knowledge.

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal fined the person \$5,000 and suspended them for four and a half months. The person's wife was reprimanded and fined \$2,500 and the agency was reprimanded and fined \$5,000.

The agent who was the officer in effective control of the agency, surrendered his estate agents licence for three years, and paid the vendor the \$12,000 the agency had received in commission as well as the \$16,000 difference between the sale price and the subsequent valuation of the property.

Renting

As part of its services to tenants, landlords and estate agents, CAV provides a dedicated inspection service in line with its statutory obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*. These obligations include reporting on goods left behind by vacating tenants, rent increases and repairs that tenants have been unable to convince landlords or agents to carry out.

In addition to more than 6,500 inspections, CAV also implemented an extensive information campaign, informing tenants, landlords and estate agents of changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*. A major component of the campaign was the direct mail out of *Renting a Home: A Guide for Tenants and Landlords*, to over half a million private tenants, private landlords and estate agents.

Delivering Major Projects

The Department of Justice provides state-of-the art buildings and infrastructure for the delivery of modern justice services.



John Richardson (left) and Pat Smith (right) oversee the construction of the \$20 million Beechworth prison – part of a \$194 million program to improve Victoria's prisons.

Investing in infrastructure

In 2003–2004, the Department managed a \$153 million construction and facilities program for police stations, courts and prisons and other justice facilities across Victoria.

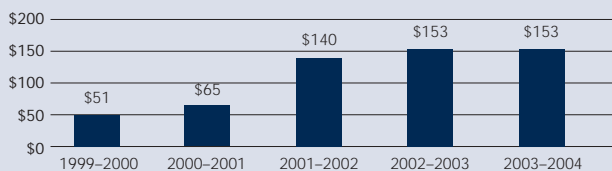
This program is designed to meet the growth in Victorian communities, upgrade facilities to meet contemporary requirements, replace out-of-date facilities and respond to the growth in Victoria's prison population.

The Department's program has been successfully implemented with projects delivered in accordance with the Government's financial policies, including the provision of the best outcomes in terms of value for money, public interests and client satisfaction.

New or upgraded buildings and capital investment increases access to justice services and improves the community's confidence in the legal and courts systems. Building better prisons supports the delivery of new rehabilitation and pre- and post-release initiatives, which, in turn, will help to reduce offending and re-offending rates and the proportion of ex-prisoners returning to prison.

Approximately \$150 million has been spent annually over the last three financial years in delivering buildings and other capital infrastructure, and it is anticipated that spending will remain at this level in the 2004–2005 financial year.

Capital expenditure budget 1999–2000 to 2003–2004 (\$ million)



A \$1.4 million upgrade of facilities at the Bendigo Law Courts has helped restore and maintain this heritage-listed building.

Melbourne Legal Precinct Masterplan

2003–2004 saw work commence on the Melbourne Legal Precinct Masterplan. The plan will provide a set of options for capital works to improve the Legal Precinct with the aim of improving capacity to meet medium and long term demand for Court services in the Precinct. The Department has employed an architectural firm to assist in preparation of the options.

Investing in courts

Completed initiatives 2003–2004

Bendigo Law Courts

Work was completed on a \$1.4 million upgrade at the historic Bendigo Court in July 2003. The upgrade provides for heating and cooling of courtrooms, public waiting areas and administration offices and the relocation of a hearing room. Built in the 1890s, Bendigo Court is the largest and grandest court building outside Melbourne and is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register for its historical, architectural and aesthetic significance.

Horsham Court

The upgrade of Horsham Court has provided new jury amenities, a jury poolroom, two public interview rooms and improved air conditioning. The \$640,000 project was completed in August 2003.

Continuing initiatives 2003–2004

Warrnambool Court Complex

Construction on the \$15.5 million Warrnambool Court Complex continued throughout 2003–2004. After conducting extensive community consultation on building design, the complex will contain multi-jurisdictional courts with jury and custody facilities, a pre-trial hearing room, interview rooms and facilities for public and staff. The building will also accommodate the Office of the Public Prosecutions, Sheriff's Office, Community Correctional Services and the pilot Koori Court.

The facility will incorporate ecologically sustainable development principles, including energy efficient design and feature the latest in court technology. The project is due for completion in 2004–2005.

Mildura Court Complex

Work continued on the new \$16.7 million Mildura Court Complex through 2003–2004. The complex will comprise multi-jurisdictional courts with jury and custody facilities as well as a pre-trial hearing room, interview rooms and facilities for public and staff. Community consultation sessions were held on the proposed design.

The building, incorporating ecologically sustainable development principles and energy efficient design, will also accommodate the Office of the Public Prosecutions, Sheriff's Office and Community Correctional Services. The project is due for completion in 2004–2005.

Investing in police stations

The Department is delivering the biggest police station building program in the State's history – by the end of 2006, the Government will have built or upgraded 135 police stations at a total of \$280 million.

The Department works closely with Victoria Police in the strategic planning and development of new police stations, providing over-arching policy advice, coordination and monitoring of investments.

Opportunities for police to co-locate with courts and/or emergency services are strongly monitored by the Department, consistent with the principles of joined-up Government. Wider policy initiatives, such as Melbourne 2030, growth corridors and local council priorities, are also influencing factors and are taken into account by Victoria Police in their Strategic Facilities Development Plan, which has been the basis of the Government's investment.



The \$6.44 million Northcote Police Station is part of the State Government's \$280 million program to improve and upgrade police stations across Victoria to house a record number of police.

In 2003–2004, the building or upgrading of 20 police stations was completed.

Station	Cost (million)
Beaufort	\$0.5
Bellarine (Ocean Grove)	\$5.0
Bunyip	\$0.65
Camberwell	\$0.93
Croydon	\$5.11
Diamond Creek	\$6.37
Gisborne	\$4.81
Gordon	\$0.25
Heidelberg	\$8.43
Inglewood	\$0.63
Kilmore	\$3.98
Macarthur	\$0.27
Maryborough	\$4.85
Northcote	\$6.44
Preston	\$6.72
Pyramid Hill	\$0.32
Richmond	\$8.18
Seymour	\$7.44
Whitfield	\$0.25
Yea	\$0.55
Total	\$71.68

A further 13 police station projects were commenced during 2003–2004 and will become operational during 2004–2005.

Station	Cost (million)
Bendoc	\$0.30
Bannockburn	\$0.64
Cressy	\$0.28
Edenhope	\$0.64
Endeavour Hills	\$4.42
Merbein	\$0.63
Myrtleford	\$0.82
Nyah	\$0.89
Robinvale	\$0.92
Rowville	\$4.5
Smythesdale	\$0.28
Swifts Creek	\$0.53
Tarnagulla	\$0.55
Total	\$15.4

Investing in infrastructure continued

Improving prisons

Redeveloping Victoria's prison infrastructure

Victoria's prison infrastructure is undergoing a major redevelopment, and is on track to deliver a total of 1,073 new permanent beds by late 2005. The program includes building three new facilities – a 600-bed maximum security remand prison at Ravenhall, a 300-bed medium security correctional programs centre near Geelong, a 120-bed minimum security open prison near Beechworth and new accommodation units at the existing Langi Kal Kal and Ararat Prisons.

A \$194 million correctional building program began in 2001 and is the largest ever undertaken in Victoria. The program aims to deliver quality facilities that contribute to a system better able to meet new challenges, the changing prisoner profile, and support the delivery of new rehabilitation and pre- and post-release initiatives.

A Building Design Review Project established the cell design guidelines and fire safety for all new maximum and medium security prisons. These have been consolidated into one set of comprehensive guidelines.

In 2003–2004, a risk assessment audit was conducted as part of this project on all operational prisons within the maximum and medium security classification. The aim was to identify obvious risks, such as hanging points within the cellular accommodation facilities and fire safety issues. This assessment has prioritised works in maximum security units and these works are on track.

A flexible bed strategy has seen the construction of 940 temporary beds across the prison system, including the construction of six 50-bed relocatable cellular accommodation units, the remainder being bunk beds.

Prison redevelopments

Beechworth prison

Construction of the \$20 million regional minimum security prison near Beechworth continued and the project is on schedule to be completed in 2004–2005. The prison is designed to accommodate up to 120 minimum security classified prisoners and 40 Corrections Victoria staff. The prison will take over from the existing Beechworth prison as a major facility in the Beechworth area.

The minimum security Langi Kal Kal Prison accommodates 110 prisoners. It is a pre-release prison focusing on re-integration issues such as accommodation, employment and family ties.



The Minister for Corrections, André Haermeyer, (foreground right) and Tim Cave, Director of Major Projects, Department of Justice, (foreground left) discuss plans for the construction of the new 300-bed Correctional Programs Centre at Lara, near Geelong.

The Langi Kal Kal Prison Redevelopment project was officially opened in March 2004. The project, which was completed on time and under budget, has upgraded accommodation and other prison-related facilities, including:

- construction of two new 14-bed prisoner accommodation units;
- refurbishment of an existing prisoner accommodation unit;
- construction of a new Officers Post and two Observation Cells; and
- construction of a six-megalitre dam to ensure the sustainability of water for fire management purposes.

In addition, construction of a new 26-bed unit at the medium security Ararat Prison continued in 2003–2004.

Indigenous Adult Residential Diversion Program

As part of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement, a \$1.75 million residential facility will be built to provide a diversionary option for Indigenous offenders. Following an extensive search and evaluation process, a site was purchased in December 2003 approximately 18 kilometres south of Euroa in central Victoria. The program will provide an alternative sentencing option for the Koori Courts in Shepparton, Broadmeadows and Warrnambool, and will cater for up to 20 offenders at any one time, with an average stay of four to six months.

State-of-the-art technology

Criminal Justice Enhancement Program

The five-year Criminal Justice Enhancement Program (CJEP) is linking vital parties across the Victorian justice system, including police, the courts, legal professionals and corrections. The program, which is scheduled for completion in early 2005, is introducing improved business processes, case management and the integration of an over-arching information sharing framework across the individual agencies. The program also ensures jurisdictional independence, data security and privacy protection.

Building on work from previous years, the program achieved a number of milestones in 2003–2004.

- Implementation of the E-Filing system in the County Court for lodgement and processing of civil cases. This allows civil law firms and litigants to initiate and respond to civil matters over the Internet. The system is cost-effective and convenient – lodgement of documents can occur 24 hours a day and does not require sending staff to the court. Documents are also returned online after they have been processed by the court.
- Implementation of the Attendance module of the E-Justice system, enabling computer-based access to data on offenders and accused persons who attend police stations for interview. It is anticipated that over 85,000 attendances will be recorded annually. The new system improves data accessibility and removes the need for manual forms and registers.
- Further trials of the E-Justice system in both prisons and community corrections environments. Trial results showed that the system was more efficient than traditional manual systems and improved data quality and timeliness. Training and roll-out of the next module is planned for early 2005.
- Completion of development, testing and training plans for the brief preparation module of E-Justice. This module is now ready for introduction in the Office of Public Prosecutions in 2004–2005.

Strengthening emergency communications

In 2001, the Victorian Government endorsed the *Statewide Integrated Public Safety and Communications Strategy*. The aim of the strategy is to maximise value for money by using common infrastructure where possible and employing technologies that provide high quality management information for all emergency service organisations.

As part of the strategy, the Department is undertaking three major technology projects – the Mobile Data Network, the Metropolitan Mobile Radio and the Emergency Alerting System. These will enable emergency service organisations to strengthen and enhance communications and community safety in Victoria in the next decade.

The development and implementation of these projects is overseen on behalf of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services by a Ministerial Steering Committee comprising an independent chair with extensive telecommunications and business experience. Other members of the Committee include representatives and Chief Executive Officers' of

Victoria Police and emergency service organisations as well as senior representatives of the Department of Justice, Department of Treasury and Finance, Department of Human Service and the Minister's office.

Mobile Data Network

On 25 June 2003, the Victorian Government and Motorola Australia signed a contract to supply a Mobile Data Network (MDN). This will enable real-time operational information to be sent via Emergency Communications Victoria (ECV) computer-aided dispatch system to computer terminals located in police and emergency services vehicles and offices. The system also allows for the latest data to be reported from the field.

After a detailed design process, factory prototype testing and the pre-implementation review, MDN is now about to enter the pilot phase. Initial services will be on line and available for selected Metropolitan Ambulance Service and Victoria Police Pilot vehicles in late 2004, with full operations expected to commence in late 2005.

The MDN will provide for automatic incident dispatch from ECV. It will also provide remote database access, incident information, and automatic vehicle location for select Victoria Police and Metropolitan Ambulance Service vehicles. Secure and rapid transmission will enable more effective responses by emergency services. Victoria Police will use the MDN to assist in rapidly identifying unregistered vehicles and unlicensed drivers.

A performance management system will automatically record performance data and statistics. Results from the data can be used to improve the performance of emergency service organisations.

Metropolitan Mobile Radio

In March 2004, a contract was signed with Motorola Australia to supply a multi-agency digital radio system for use throughout the greater Melbourne metropolitan area. It is anticipated that the Victoria Police and the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFESB) will operate the system by late 2005, in time for the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

When fully implemented, the new system will replace the analogue networks currently used by the Victoria Police, the MFESB, and the Metropolitan Ambulance Service and will provide enhanced security for voice and data transmissions, improved coverage, and allow for a range of emergency call features.

Emergency Alerting System

In June 2004, a contract was signed with VEC Networks for an Emergency Alerting System (EAS) – a personal alerting system for emergency service staff and volunteers. It is anticipated that the EAS will begin operating in selected regions of the State in time for the 2004–2005 fire season. Full operations will commence in 2005, giving an unprecedented 95 per cent coverage of the State.

The system will enable emergency services to instantly receive and send up-to-date, text-based information at the incident site. The project will provide infrastructure and messaging devices for up to 29,000 staff and volunteers from the Country Fire Authority, Rural Ambulance Victoria and the Victoria State Emergency Service.