

Nowra CBD Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Project

First Audit Report September 2012

Introduction

Shoalhaven City Council installed 18 Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras in the Nowra CBD following the receipt of a grant of \$150,000 from the Commonwealth Government in 2008.

The CCTV system is owned and operated by Shoalhaven City Council. The NSW Police Force is a partner in the scheme as reception; recording and viewing equipment is installed in the Nowra Police Station. A Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Police Force and Shoalhaven Council outlines the responsibilities of both the Council and the NSW Police Force.

The main objectives of the project are:

1. Reduce the incidence of crime and antisocial behaviour in the Nowra CBD through the installation of a CCTV system
2. Increase the perception of Nowra's CBD as a safe place and reduce the fear of crime amongst business operators and the community
3. Enhance the availability of evidence available to Police to identify offences as they occur, and to identify the perpetrators of offences that are committed in the locations monitored by CCTV

Audit Summary

This Audit report is based on observations and examination of protocols and equipment used in the operation of the Nowra CBD CCTV Project as at June 2012.

In February 2010 the project was reviewed by Legal & Information Services, Shoalhaven City Council. This review resulted in a number of recommendations for the refinement of the project so that it met a best practice model and was consistent with both the NSW Government Policy Statement and Guidelines for the Establishment and Implementation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in Public Places (2000) and New Zealand Privacy & CCTV – A Guide to the Privacy Act for Businesses, Agencies and Organisations. All of the recommendations have been implemented.

Code of Practice and Standard Operational Procedures

The Nowra CBD CCTV Project operates in accordance with a Code of Practice and Standard Operational procedures.

The original Code of Practice was dated 2009. The current edition is dated April 2010. This version is available on the Shoalhaven City Council webpage.

The Code has 12 sections.

Section 1 Introduction. This section of the Code of Practice outlines the general principles of the code and provides a glossary of terms referred to throughout the document.

Section 2 CCTV Project. This section provides a summary of the project. If the CBD CCTV Project is expanded or equipment relocated then this section of the document will require changing. For example 2.3 System description states, "The CCTV Project

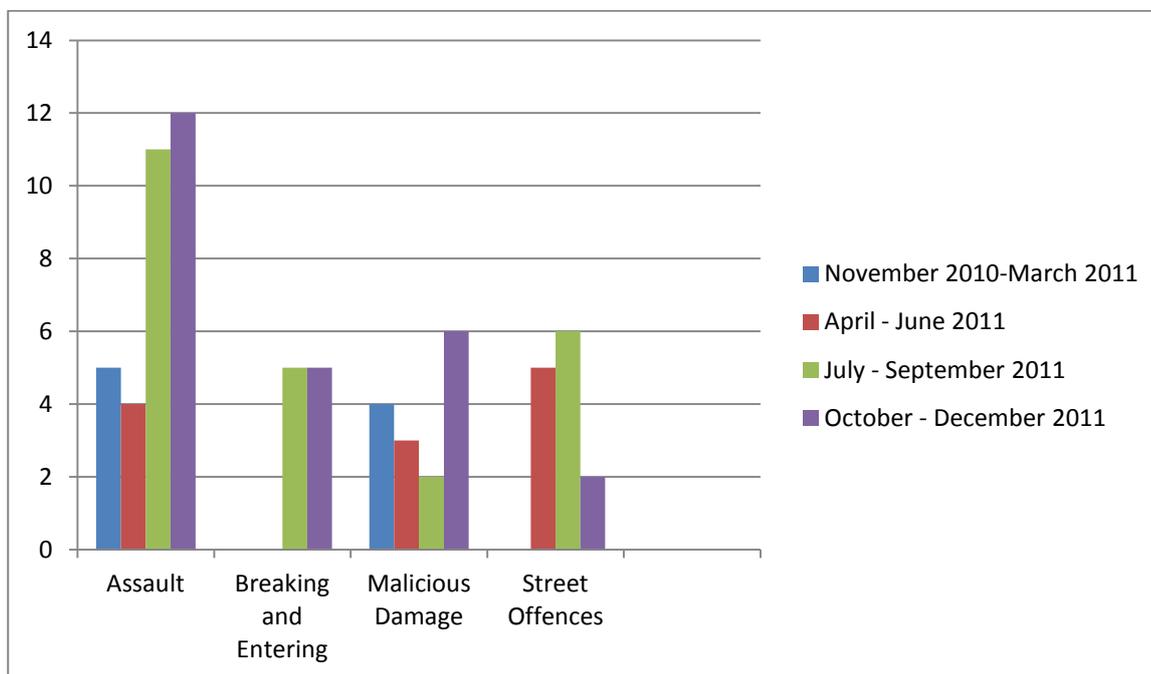
incorporates 18 cameras...” If the number of cameras is increased then this section will require an update. The same will need to occur for 2.4 Camera Design.

Section 2.5.6 states that the location of the cameras will be reviewed as required in consultation with the Police and other stakeholders. At this point camera locations have not changed. However it is recommended that, as the project has been in operation for over a year that the Police and Council review the location of cameras.

Section 3 Purpose of the CCTV Project. This section of the Code describes the purpose and objectives of the project. The project has two main purposes. These are to assist in the prevention of crimes against the person (all types of assault) and to assist in the prevention of other serious crimes (including stealing break and enter malicious damage and drugs).

Statistics compiled during the first year of the project operating indicate the following:

	Nov 2010-March 2012	April-June 2011	July- Sept 2011	Oct-Dec 2011
Assault	5	4	11	12
Breaking and Enter	0	0	5	5
Malicious Damage	4	3	2	6
Street Offences	0	5	6	2



The objectives of the project are:

- i) to reduce crime levels by deterring potential offenders;
- ii) to reduce fear of crime;
- iii) to help ensure an effective police response in emergency situations;
- iv) to assist in the detection and prosecution of offenders; and

v) to help secure a safer environment for those people who live in, work in and visit the Nowra CBD. “

Advice from Police at Nowra Police Station is that the objectives for the project are still relevant and they see no reason for any change.

From the available statistics, it appears to be too early to judge if the system acts as a deterrent for potential offenders. Statistics for a longer period of time may identify a trend up or down but at present this is not observable from only a little over a year of compiling data. There is also a difficulty in isolating statistics for areas immediately outside the area covered by the CCTV Cameras. This means it is not possible to determine if some crime is moving from the coverage area to another area.

Discussions with a representative from the Nowra Youth Centre show that youth attending the centre are aware of the cameras presence in the CBD and believe that they provide a safer environment. This provides them with confidence to be in the CBD with the belief that if anything happens it may be captured on CCTV and be of use in detecting any offenders.

Police do not monitor the cameras on an ongoing basis. An examination of the equipment at the Nowra Police Station and discussion with staff indicate that the cameras are only monitored in the event of an incident. This assists in the allocation of resources to respond effectively.

Anecdotal evidence from the Police, provided for the regular quarterly reports, during the first year of operation show that they believe the cameras are an effective tool in identifying alleged offenders and provide one useful tool in gathering evidence. To quote from the Progress Report ending June 2011 “Nowra Police report the CCTV cameras have been of assistance in various investigations. They report that they are useful in establishing the identity of an offender however it in itself does not prove identity. It is just another tool to assist the police in dealing with crime.”

Further, the Police believe the cameras have contributed to an improvement in the behaviour of persons in the CBD, particularly in daylight hours. They have also suggested that it may be worthwhile to survey the retailers in Junction the CBD to ascertain that this is the case.

The objectives for the project, therefore, are still relevant.

Section 4 Responsibilities of Council. Under this section Shoalhaven City Council’s main responsibilities are outlined. These entail the introduction, implementation and compliance with the code and to consult and provide information to the community regarding the project.

In the main, Council has complied with this section and if any shortcomings have been apparent these have been corrected as soon as is possible. An example of this relates to a discrepancy with some statistics quoted in a progress report. As soon as this was notified to Council the report was updated and corrected.

Council has created a dedicated webpage for the CCTV Project and has placed a number of public documents on this webpage including Progress Reports, The Code of Practice and Privacy Notice.

Section 5 Responsibilities of Police. This section outlines a number of responsibilities the Police have in respect to the project. The responsibilities are straightforward and include that the Police are a partner in the project, a Memorandum of Understanding to be entered into by both the Police and Council, Police would endorse the Standard Operating Procedures and provide statistics to Council.

In general, the Police have fulfilled these responsibilities although the provision of both the MOU and statistics has not been completed on a timely basis.

Section 6 Monitoring, Evaluation and Audit This section outlines principles in relation to ongoing evaluation of the project. Council and Police both have roles in monitoring the operation and implementation of the project. Council's technical staff have been responsible for ensuring that equipment is operating correctly. This has been completed in response to request from the Police when a problem with the equipment is identified.

Evaluation of the project, to date, has been completed by quarterly evaluation reports. Council has posted these reports online as soon as they have been authorised by the General Manager. The compilation of these reports has relied on information from the Police, Council technical staff and staff responsible for overseeing requests for data from the cameras.

Evaluations are conducted by internal Council staff following criteria established by the CCTV Audit Committee. Although the CCTV Audit Committee is facilitated by Council staff Council views the Audit Committee as an independent instrument.

Reports have not been submitted to the Crime Prevention Division of the NSW Attorney General's Department for review.

As per the Code Council has established an Audit Committee for the project. This committee meets on a regular monthly basis. Expressions of interest were sought from interest groups in the CBD and have included representatives from seniors groups, youth sector, business interests and the Aboriginal sector. At present there is no representative from seniors groups and attendance from representatives of the business sector have been sporadic.

This is the first report produced by the Audit Committee and has proved to be a much larger task than initially anticipated. It is suggested that the timeframe for Audit Reports be increased from 6 months to an annual report.

Section 7 Image Recording Point & Monitoring Point. Both the Image recording point and the monitoring point are located at the Nowra Police Station. On a visit to the Police station the Audit Committee found that the image recording point was located in a PABX cabinet at the Police station, but that this cabinet had been left unlocked. The Police escorting the group around the station believed that this was an unusual occurrence.

The Monitoring point was located in an area that was not accessible by the public but easily accessible by authorised officers. This is in accordance with the Code of Practice.

Police do not have authority to access the operation of cameras. This is restricted to authorised Council staff.

Section 8 Access to & Use of Recorded Material by Council & Police This section provides details of accessing and using recorded materials. The Audit Committee is of the opinion that Council and the Police act in accordance with this section.

Section 9 Storage of Information Material is retained for 30 days on the computer hard disk (recording point) at the Police station. At the end of 30 days material is overwritten. This is controlled by computer software.

Section 10 Access to Personal Information. This section outlines the process for obtaining personal information.

Section 11 Breaches of the Code This section relates to compliance, breaches of the code and complaints. Details are provided of the process for lodging both general complaints and Privacy complaints.

Section 12 Changes to the CCTV Project and/or the Code This section details how both major and minor changes to the code are to be made.

Standard Operating Procedures

The Standard Operating Procedures have been developed by Shoalhaven City Council in consultation with the NSW Police Force. They detail how the system is to be operated.

The document has 5 sections:

Introduction; Equipment Usage; Access to Recorded Material; Confidentiality.

The Introduction provides a background to the document and a list of definitions.

Section 2 Equipment Usage.

2.1 Monitoring Equipment. This section provides detail on how the monitoring equipment is to be used. At the inception of the project Police received training in the use of the monitoring equipment, issued with user names and passwords. These details were to appear on the Register of Authorised Persons. At this stage there are seven officers listed as authorised officers. It is noted, however, that the list may require updating due to a change in Local Area Commanders. The previous commander's details should be removed from the register and replaced with details for the new Local Area Commander. The intended use of this register is for the appropriate authorised officer on duty for each shift is responsible for the use of the monitoring equipment on that shift (as per 2.1.5 of the Standard Operating Procedures).

The use of this register appears to be in accordance with this section of the SOPs.

2.1.8 Authorises the use of this register in concert with the log in details recorded by the Monitoring Equipment for the audit. Although a spreadsheet of log in details has been acquired for the purpose of this audit this does not show who was using the Monitoring Equipment. Further investigations have revealed that the current licence for the software does not allow multiple usernames and passwords. The result has been that one username and password has been in operation for all users of the Monitoring Equipment.

This is not in accordance with 2.1.7 of the Standard operating Procedures and needs to be addressed.

Sections 3, 4, 5. Actions appear to be in compliance with these sections.

Appendices. The appendices comprise a number of forms.

Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Police Force and Shoalhaven City Council further outlines responsibilities of both the Police and Council in the operation of the CCTV Project. In many ways it restates items and responsibilities already described in the Code and the Standard Operating Procedures. Its role is to clearly set out each party's responsibilities.

Camera locations

There are 18 Council owned CCTV cameras in the Nowra CBD. These cameras are located in Junction Street, Kinghorne Street and Junction Court at the following locations:



All cameras operate on a 7-day a week 24 hour basis. As per the Code of Practice no "dummy" cameras are used.

Although there are 11 cameras in Junction Street between Berry Street and Kinghorne Street this does not provide full coverage of this street. This means there are a number of locations in Junction Street where there exists “black spots”.

Signage

There are signs throughout the Nowra CBD indicating the presence of CCTV camera coverage in the area. There are signs on all the pedestrian boundaries to the CCTV coverage area as well as signs within the coverage area. Not all cameras have a sign near their location. Although this may be adequate to inform of the presence of cameras increased signage could assist in ensuring that CBD users have the greatest opportunity to be informed of the CCTV system..

Pictured below is one of the signs in the CBD, Signs state cameras are in operation 24 hours a day, the Council logo is included to indicate Council as owner/operator of the system, a contact phone number is also included for anyone wishing to contact Council regarding the CCTV system.



Operation at the Nowra Police Station

An inspection of the equipment at the Nowra Police Station assisted in familiarising the Audit Committee with the equipment and its operation. Police explained the process for applying for information from Council and showed committee members where equipment was located in the station.

The process for applying for hard copies of information from the CCTV hard drive was in accordance with the Code of Practice.

The monitoring equipment is located in the reception area of the Police Station. It is some distance from the public and it is not possible for the public to view the equipment in operation. This is in accordance with the Code of Practice. Police also stated that although the monitoring station was active throughout the day they did not have time to sit and watch the monitors. They are only accessed at peak times (when an incident is likely) or when an event is notified to the Police.

The recording equipment is in another room in a PABX cabinet. On the day of the Audit Committee's visit, the cabinet was unlocked. The Police stated that this was unusual. This contravenes the Code of practice. (See recommendation for Section 7 of the Code of Practice).

Requests for Information

Council maintains a register of requests for information from the CCTV system. This register reflects requests from the public and the Police for information captured by the CCTV system. In 2011, there were 25 requests for information and 22 instances where footage was provided to applicants. In 2012 (the last request being at the end of May 2012) there have been 12 requests where information has been able to be supplied on 8 occasions.

The instances where information was not provided relate to: the request being outside the CCTV area; request being made or actioned after the information had been written over or problems with the equipment that did not allow recording of information.

The appropriate paperwork was lodged for all requests and requests were actioned according to processes outlined in the Code of Practice.

A significant cost in the provision of information is the labour cost involved in sourcing the correct footage. Both the Police and Shoaltec have requested that the current Memorandum of Understanding between Shoalhaven City Council and the NSW Police Force be revised to permit Police to review recorded information in order to pin point exact times and camera for information required for burning to disc. This will represent a saving in both time and cost of the project.

Shoaltec have also requested that Police be permitted access to the recording equipment to allow them to burn footage to disc themselves. Although it may save time and funds the committee is not certain such a change would ensure private information is protected.

Maintenance of the System

There have been technical problems with the CCTV system over the period since operation commenced. This has meant that there have been periods of time when the system has not been functioning or not functioning as well as it could be. For example, on the day of the Audit Committee's visit to the Nowra Police Station one or two cameras were not focussed correctly and other cameras required adjustment of the angle of view.

Additionally, system components had to be replaced or upgraded over the life of the project for a number of reasons e.g. cabling required replacing due to bird damage and a server required upgrading to prevent it from crashing.

There have been some delays in notifying Council of problems with equipment. This has resulted in periods when the system has not been functioning or functioning poorly. This will require the Police to develop a better system of notification.

The current cameras are MPEG4 cameras, and while still working, represent aging technology. Shoaltec advice is that cameras could be upgraded to H.264 compression cameras. This would give higher resolution video.

Of cameras are replaced software would also need to be upgraded to a version that is compatible with H.264 cameras.

Shoaltec has also advised that if cameras are upgraded Council install cameras that have better night vision capability and that lighting is improved in the field of view of some of the cameras.

Members of the Audit Committee viewed CCTV footage recorded during the day and during the night. While there was clarity with the daytime footage the night footage lacked clarity. The Audit Committee was of the opinion that when cameras are upgraded that cameras with greater night vision capacity be installed.

Prior to installing the original cameras lighting quality was improved in the CBD. However, this will require re-examining with any future installation of cameras.

Shoaltec have further requested reinstalling an ADSL VPN line into the system so that faults can be remotely diagnosed.

Over the period of the project there have been requests for improvements and expansion of the system. Police have requested additional cameras at Morrison Arcade; Corner of Berry and Junction Streets; the Old Bus Terminal in Schofield's Lane. Police have also requested a viewing station in a room opposite the PABX room. There are currently no funds available for an expansion of the current system.

CCTV Information on the Shoalhaven City Council Website

The Shoalhaven City Council website contains information about the Nowra CBD CCTV Project.

There is a brief description of the project. The information on this page appears to be correct and up to date.

The following public documents are linked to this page: Code of Practice; Standard Operation procedures; privacy Notification; Camera Location Map; CCTV Nowra CBD FAQ.

The review reports for the project are also linked to this page.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment of the Nowra CBD CCTV system has been conducted. That assessment highlighted the following risks to the system: vandalism; theft; malfunction; natural damage; privacy breach; complaint due to lack of knowledge of the system and Insecure storage of data. Treatments/controls have been put in place to address each of these risks. A copy of the risk assessment is attached to this Audit Report.

Recommendations of Report

Following an audit of the Nowra CBD CCTV Project the following recommendations are made:

Recommendations relating to CCTV cameras and hardware:

1. Council and the Police review the location, number and quality of cameras in the Nowra CBD CCTV Project.
2. Shoaltec to provide a report to Council of requested technical improvements and expansion of the CCTV system with full costing
3. Prior to seeking additional funding or purchasing and installing additional cameras Council consult and engage with all stakeholders including Police, Retailers, Shoalhaven Business Chamber and Community members
4. Council seeks funding to install more cameras in Nowra CBD to ensure there are no spots lacking coverage and to provide additional coverage for locations as advised by Police
5. If grants or funding are not available Council consider the provision of a budget to replace and update current cameras and software
6. Police and Shoaltec meet to discuss and implement realignment of cameras and any other repairs
7. Council staff and any authorised contractors accessing the recording point to ensure that the PABX cabinet is locked after use.

Recommendations Relating to Community Engagement:

1. Council survey users of the CBD(including retailers and community members) as to the effects (perceived or otherwise) of CCTV on crime and safety in the CBD

Recommendations Relating to Processes:

1. Police examine their own processes and establish a protocol to be able to respond to Council requests for information and statistics in a shorter timeframe.
2. Police to develop a mechanism to report faults with the CCTV system to Council
3. Council advertise publicly for additional membership of the CCTV Audit Committee. Section 6.4.3 of the Code of Practice be adjusted to reflect an annual cycle for Audit Reports.
4. The Register of Authorised Persons form be updated to reflect current authorisations.
5. The MOU between Council and the Police to be reviewed to include allowing Police to review footage to identify required information to be requested from Council.
6. Shoalhaven City Council to seek legal opinion in regards to the request from Shoaltec and the Police for the Police to be granted access to the recording equipment to allow them to burn footage to discs themselves

Appendices

1/. CCTV Risk Assessment