

CM13.7. Public CCTV System Biennial Report 2022-2024

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Purpose of Report

To present Council with the Public Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) System Biennial Report - 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2024, for consideration and seek endorsement of the recommendations.

Background

The Public CCTV System (the System) became operational in December 2017 with the first network installed in the Albury Central Business District (CBD). Four subsequent networks in the Lavington CBD, the Albury Skate Park, Monument Hill, and a Mobile CCTV Trailer became operational in 2022. The System is an arrangement of overt closed-circuit television surveillance networks, monitoring public spaces located across the Albury Local Government Area (LGA). The System comprises of a total of 122 cameras distributed across the different networks, with four dedicated Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR) cameras operating within the CCTV fleet.

On 24 July 2017, Council endorsed a suite of documents that provided guidance in the management of CCTV surveillance, including the *CCTV Policy* framework (Attachment 1) and the *CCTV Code of Practice and Standard Operating Procedure* (the Code; Attachment 2). To ensure that CCTV operations complied with the adopted Code, there is a requirement that an evaluation report be developed to assess how CCTV operations performed against identified parameters. This evaluation only relates to the Public CCTV System that is monitored by the NSW Police Force and installed throughout the Albury LGA.

In 2018, AlburyCity undertook its first evaluation of the System, with Council endorsing as part of the recommendations that the evaluation becomes biennial moving forward. Two biennial evaluations of the System have been conducted for the periods of 2018-2020 and 2020-2022, with this report being the third biennial evaluation. An audit of the System was also undertaken in the first quarter of 2019 as part of an internal audit that focused on Privacy and Records Management mechanisms. Subsequent audits are scheduled in line with AlburyCity's Internal Audit Program.

Of note, AlburyCity operates other internal surveillance networks for corporate purposes, which are installed within publicly accessed buildings and facilities such as the Albury LibraryMuseum, Council's Administration Building and Works Depots. The operation and evaluation of these internal CCTV networks is not within the scope of this report.

At the 10 October 2022 Council Meeting, Council was presented with the Draft Public CCTV Biennial Report 2020-2022 which further illustrated the challenges in meeting the first Objective in the CCTV Code of Practice and Standard Operating Procedure - "Decrease the Albury LGA's rate of criminal behaviour for assault (non-domestic violence), steal from retail, malicious damage, and resist or hinder officer".

Council resolved to:

- a. *Receive and notes the Draft Public CCTV System Biennial Report 2020-2022; and*
- b. *Preserve the operation of the Public CCTV System in its current state with no further investment or development, other than maintenance, planned activities/endorsed projects and community engagement until a report is presented to Council investigating how the achievement of Objective 1 as outlined in the CCTV Code of Practice and Standard Operating Procedure can be evaluated and met.*

At the 11 April 2023 Council Meeting, Council considered the findings of the investigation of the first Objective in the Code. This investigation identified that despite multiple reviews, it had been difficult to measure the impact of the Objective on specific crime rates. The challenge faced was evaluating its effectiveness due to a lack of street-level data and its integration into a broader crime reduction strategy. Therefore, Council adopted to shift the focus from reducing specific crimes to using CCTV as part of a holistic community response to criminal activity as a measure of success of the System.

At the 11 April 2023 Council Meeting, Council resolved to:

- a. *Receive and notes the Public Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) Code of Practice and Standard Operating Procedure – Objective One Investigation;*
- b. *Remove Objective One from the CCTV Code of Practice and Standard Operating Procedure and replaces it with the objective - Utilise CCTV as part of a holistic community response to criminal activity and updates the related legal and governance documents to reflect the change;*
- c. *Continue to consider investment or development and seek grant funding opportunities for expansion of the Public CCTV System, subject to Council approval; and*
- d. *Update the Public Policy and Procedure Register with the finalised document.*

This report provides Council with feedback on its performance during the 2022-2024 reporting period and gives direction to future functioning, management, and operation of the System.

Issues

The evaluation of the System seeks to determine whether the System was functioning within the established Objectives and parameters as outlined in the Code, from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2024.

System Evaluation

The biennial evaluation of the System includes the following four elements as a minimum:

1. Assessment of its impact upon CCTV Objectives detailed within the Code;
2. Any views of the public on the operation of CCTV in the Albury LGA;
3. Operation of the Code; and
4. Whether the purposes for which CCTV was established still exist.

Public CCTV System Objectives

The Biennial Report 2022-2024 provides a detailed performance analysis of the following System Objectives in element 1 – ‘*Assessment of its impact upon CCTV Objectives detailed within the Code*’:

- i. Utilise CCTV as part of a holistic community response to criminal activity;
- ii. Support the NSW Police capacity to monitor and respond effectively to incidents in the Albury LGA where Public CCTV Systems are located;
- iii. Provide the NSW Police with recorded material to be used as evidence to assist with the detection, identification, apprehension, and prosecution of offenders engaged in criminal activity; and
- iv. Improve public perceptions of safety and confidence in the security of public areas across the Albury LGA where Public CCTV Systems are located.

The following provides a summary of the performance review of the System against the above evaluation elements and the four objectives detailed within the Code. Greater operational detail is provided in the Draft AlburyCity Public CCTV System Biennial Report 2022-2024 (Attachment 3).

1. Assessment of its impact upon CCTV Objectives detailed within the Code

Objective i: *Utilise CCTV as part of a holistic community response to criminal activity.*

The System was used to support NSW Police resourcing in the management and response to potential criminal activity during events throughout the 2022-2024 reporting period. Overt CCTV cameras can act as a deterrent to potential criminals, reducing the likelihood of crime. This can be seen by the Mobile CCTV Trailers deployment success at Mungabareena Reserve in 2022, 2023 and 2024 to prevent and disrupt hoon behaviour.

AlburyCity fixed CCTV cameras and the Mobile CCTV trailer have been utilised as a response to deter criminal activity from occurring during events. The requests for deployment of the mobile network were initiated from members of the public in conjunction with NSW Police.

The first Objective of the Public CCTV System, to utilise CCTV as part of a holistic community response to criminal activity, is deemed to be achieved during the reporting period.

Objective ii: *Support the NSW Police’s capacity to monitor and respond effectively to incidents in the Albury LGA where Public CCTV Systems are located.*

Anecdotal evidence provided by the NSW Police – Murray River Police District during the Crime Prevention Committee quarterly meetings, indicates the System continues to improve their capacity to monitor and detect crime. It has assisted in the identification of offenders, reduced the time to investigate criminal offences, supported witness accounts of incidents, de-escalated, or prevented criminal offences occurring and provided a level of safety for NSW Police as activities are monitored through the live Public CCTV feed at the monitoring point in the Albury Police Station.

The most recent update on the overall benefits of the Public CCTV System to policing matters, was provided at a confidential briefing to Councillors on 4 March 2024 by the NSW Police Senior Command. The briefing session included details of specific incidents where the Mobile CCTV Trailer network was used as an investigative tool to identify offenders and monitor criminal activity. Councillors discussed points of interest about the operations of Public CCTV.

The NSW Police can utilise ALPR capabilities that combines an internet protocol camera with Rekor Software to automatically read license plates. In real-time, the Police can receive an alert of a vehicle's plate number, make, model, colour, and direction of travel from this video stream. The system immediately notifies the NSW Police Murray River Police District - Intelligence Unit, located at the Albury Police Station, about flagged vehicles of interest.

In the 2022-2024 reporting period, 164 vehicle alerts were placed by the NSW Police within the Rekor ALPR software application. This allowed NSW Police to receive 250 automatic email alerts that related to details of stolen vehicles, missing persons and other known vehicles driven by people of interest, as the ALPR cameras capture the images in real-time. NSW Police also used the capabilities of the ALPR application to manually search for a total of 1,947 vehicles of interest during the reporting period.

The second Objective of the Public CCTV System, to support the NSW Police's capacity to monitor and respond effectively to incidents in the Albury LGA where Public CCTV Systems are located, is deemed to be achieved during the reporting period.

Objective iii: Provide the NSW Police with recorded material to be used as evidence to assist with the detection, identification, apprehension, and prosecution of offenders engaged in criminal activity.

The current reporting period shows a total of 351 total requests for footage. The NSW Police's formal requests to AlburyCity for footage has increased significantly over time with 327 requests for footage released, which represents a 161% increase from the 2020-2022 reporting period.

The extensive use by the NSW Police of the Recorded Image Playback feature of the System to view recorded incidents, demonstrates the considerable number of times they have accessed this feature, as detailed in Attachment 3. The System continues to support police operations in the detection and identification of offenders, with the NSW Police using the System as part of a suite of tools to investigate criminal activity.

The third Objective of the Public CCTV System to provide the NSW Police with recorded material to be used as evidence to assist with the detection, identification, apprehension, and prosecution of offenders engaged in criminal activity is deemed to be achieved during the reporting period.

Objective iv: Improve public perceptions of safety and confidence in the security of public areas across the Albury LGA where Public CCTV Systems are located.

The Public CCTV System survey conducted in July and August 2024 indicated that of the 173 people who responded to the survey, only 85% indicated that they are aware of at least one location where fixed CCTV cameras are located. There were 15% (26) of respondents who were unaware of any locations where fixed CCTV cameras are installed. Of those 26 respondents, 15 were visitors to the Albury LGA.

The public's perception of safety should be evaluated in relation to their awareness of Public CCTV networks. Overall, most respondents who were aware of the Public CCTV networks reported feeling safe in those areas during the day. There were 38 respondents who reported not feeling safe in any locations where CCTV cameras are located during the day. There was a drop in perceptions of safety at night in locations with CCTV cameras. However, there were 93 respondents who don't feel safe at night in any location where fixed CCTV cameras are located.

The results are not intended to suggest that one location is either safe or not safe. This is an overall representation of the 173 respondents completing the survey, as CCTV is not the singular determination of a person's perception of safety. There are a range of different factors that can contribute to this perception.

Although, there were locations identified where respondents do not feel safe, 81% of respondents still believe that CCTV is an effective tool for Police. This suggests that there may be other factors that lead to a person's perception of safety. Nonetheless, consideration will be given to how AlburyCity can continue to deliver initiatives that create a safer environment across the city.

The fourth Objective of the Public CCTV System, to improve public perceptions of safety and confidence in the security of public areas across the Albury LGA where Public CCTV Systems are located, is deemed to have been achieved during the reporting period.

2. Views of the public on the operation of CCTV in the Albury LGA

AlburyCity operates and manages Public CCTV surveillance across the Albury LGA, to discourage potential offenders from criminal activity and aid in the detection, investigation, and prosecution of offenders by the NSW Police. The results of the survey indicate that most respondents are aware of the AlburyCity Public CCTV Networks with only 15% of respondents out of 173 not being aware of any (noting of the 26 respondents, 15 were visitors to the Albury LGA). Furthermore, the results indicate that 81% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that CCTV cameras are an effective tool for Police with 62% of respondents believing that the Mobile CCTV Trailer is also effective in reducing crime.

The results of the survey indicated that 39% of respondents would like to see more CCTV cameras located in Albury. Whereas 21% of respondents do not wish to see more CCTV cameras installed in Albury and 40% of respondents not sure. It is important to note that this does not necessarily mean AlburyCity will implement and install any CCTV Networks in these areas.

The responses received by survey respondents indicates that the Public CCTV Networks and the Mobile CCTV Network are considered effective tools for NSW Police by the community.

3. Operation of the Code

The operating costs of the System for the two-year reporting period expenditure was \$66,941. This represents an overall decrease of -43% from \$116,616 as per the previous reporting period in 2020 to 2022. Operating costs have shown a decrease from the last reporting period due to the camera licences agreement being a three-year contract, ending in late 2024. This will not be reported on until the next reporting period. As outlined in the Report, the cost of resources required to manage the system are not included in the aforementioned given the varying functions and responsibilities undertaken by a range of different officers.

The electronic data transfer protocol between AlburyCity and the NSW Police - Albury Police Station was successfully implemented in February 2022. The transfer of data has been performed using a network shared drive between AlburyCity and the NSW Police - Albury Police Station computer systems. The implementation of this process continues to remain an improvement on evidence continuity protocols as well as improving Police access to retrieved footage.

The Public CCTV System has been successfully managed with no complaints received and any breaches identified were resolved.

There was one internal System breach identified during the reporting period, that was promptly resolved, which has led to improved internal surveillance monitoring and review processes to ensure Code compliance. Due to the constraints of maintaining privacy and confidentiality further disclosure of the breach is limited.

4. Whether the purpose for which CCTV was established still exists

AlburyCity's investment in upgrades and expansions of the System across the Albury LGA continue to provide high quality live and recorded footage to support the NSW Police in monitoring public safety and crime investigations. It provides the NSW Police with the technological tools to aid in the detection, investigation, and prosecution of offenders. As part of a broader crime prevention and community safety strategy, it has a deterrent effect on crime by discouraging potential offenders from criminal activity and has shown to enhance the perception of safety in the community.

The Community Safety Team and the NSW Police work collaboratively to determine the highest priority locations for deployment that is based on current patterns of offending and ongoing crime hotspots, with a focus on public safety to support NSW Police operations. In total, there were 41 Mobile CCTV Trailer deployments with the trailer being operational for 660 days for the two-year reporting period.

The Public CCTV System across the Albury LGA remains a critical and important part of AlburyCity's focus on safety in the provision to the NSW Police with the tools to deter, investigate and prosecute crime in the Albury LGA.

Future Actions

After reviewing operations of the Public CCTV System between 2022-2024, a number of follow-up actions have been identified. The following future actions are proposed to be undertaken in the next reporting period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2026, these include:

- Review of the AlburyCity CCTV Policy*;
- Review of the AlburyCity Public CCTV System Code of Practice and Standard Operating Procedure*;
- Review of the MoU between AlburyCity and the NSW Police;
- Review of camera licences;
- Develop short on-line training modules for NSW Police;
- Review the CCTV Request for Footage form to specify incident type;
- Continue to review individual camera utilisation from the System;
- Review methodology of survey questionnaire;
- Review of CCTV signage; and
- Investigation of an ALPR camera for monitoring vehicles entering and leaving the Albury LGA on Wodonga Place*.

**Note, some of the actions listed above may require endorsement from Council and will be presented accordingly for further consideration.*

The Public CCTV System aligns with the following strategic themes and actions in the AlburyCity Community Strategic Plan - Towards Albury 2050:

A Caring Community

3.5 *Albury is a safe, inclusive, and accessible region for our entire community.*

A Leading Community

4.2.1 *The community is consulted and engaged on important decisions in two-way conversation that results in informed decision making and shared leadership.*

Risk

- **Business Risk** – An operational review is an important method to monitor performance against the endorsed objectives. This process can identify issues in relation to resources (human and financial). Reviews also provide continuity of data, highlighting areas for change and improvements to be made where necessary.
- **Corporate Risk** – This review provides the community with the assurance that governance and legislative requirements are being adhered to, and outlines to the community what has transpired and what is proposed. This is to ensure the system is managed effectively and diligently. AlburyCity will continue to publicise and educate people on the potential benefits of the Public CCTV System to improve the public's confidence in the safety of the area.
- **WHS and Public Risk** – The NSW Police have made extensive use of the Public CCTV System to assist in resolving criminal issues in the Albury LGA. This improves community safety and amenity.

- **Environmental Risk** – The utilisation of solar panels as the main power source for the Mobile CCTV Trailer contribute to a cleaner and more sustainable environment.
- **Delivery Program Risk** – Actions identified can be funded through operational budgets. Where future Public CCTV networks are identified, appropriate oversight will be undertaken by the internal Public CCTV Working Group to ensure integrity and compliance with the Code for Public CCTV operated and managed by AlburyCity.

Community Engagement

To provide an insight into perceptions of public safety and Public CCTV awareness in Albury, a Public CCTV System survey was developed and launched at the end of the reporting period. To reach a broader demographic of our community, the survey was made available online on AlburyCity's 'Have Your Say' engagement platform, and administered face-to-face using the following engagement methods:

- Four pop-up stands at Westend and Lavington shopping centres where people were asked to complete the survey;
- Intercept surveys of community members down Dean Street and Volt Lane; and
- In-person surveys at businesses in Albury and Lavington.

To promote the survey to the community, posters were displayed in the Glenecho and Mirambeena Community Centres, the Lavington Library and the Albury LibraryMuseum. Additionally, corflute signage was displayed at the Dean Street and Griffith Road bus stops, Monument Hill and the Albury Skatepark linking community members to the survey via a QR Code. A series of social media posts were made on the AlburyCity Facebook page encouraging Albury residents to complete the online survey.

The survey was available on AlburyCity's 'Have your Say' page for a 28-day period from Monday 29 July to Sunday 25 August 2024. Due to resourcing constraints and other business demands, a consultant was engaged to collect responses from the community and businesses. The results reflect an overall representation of the 173 respondents' safety perceptions across the Albury LGA. In previous evaluations of the System, independent surveys were administered to the community and to businesses, in this reporting period they have been combined to better align with the Public CCTV Objectives and to provide an overall representation of the community.

The Public CCTV System Biennial Report 2022-2024 will be made available on Council's website following Council endorsement.

Options

That Council:

1. Receive and note the Draft Public CCTV System Biennial Report 2022-2024. **Recommended.**
2. Continue to develop and implement best practice methods in the delivery of a Public CCTV System across the Albury Local Government Area. **Recommended.**

This option is recommended as part of the continuous improvement of AlburyCity's operation of Public CCTV and to ensure the purpose and objectives of the public-facing CCTV System will continue to be met.

3. Endorse the future actions proposed to be undertaken in the next reporting period 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2026 as referenced in the report. **Recommended.**

This option is recommended to deliver best practice methods and will ensure future functioning and efficiency of the System.

4. Place the Public CCTV Biennial Report 2022-2024 on the AlburyCity website. **Recommended.**
5. That Council receive and notes the Draft Public CCTV System Biennial Report 2022-2024 and adopts an alternative recommendation. **Not Recommended.**

This option could include changes to the recommendation identified in the report. For example, Council may seek to consider preserving the operation of the Public CCTV System in its current state with no further development or improvement to processes and procedures.

Conclusion

The Public CCTV System Biennial Report 2022-2024 assessed the performance of the 122 Public CCTV cameras installed across the Albury Local Government Area and found the Public CCTV System was compliant with legislative obligations and met requirements of AlburyCity's Code of Practice and Standard Operating Procedures. The Public CCTV System has been successfully managed with no complaints received and any breaches identified and resolved.

During the reporting period, it has been determined that the four elements used to measure the effectiveness of the CCTV system have been successfully achieved.

The qualitative data suggests that the NSW Police use of the Public CCTV System has assisted the way they prevent and respond to crime in and around Albury. Similarly, the quantitative data shows the significant use of various system features by the NSW Police. Therefore, both the qualitative and quantitative data demonstrates the value of the Public CCTV System in supporting Police operations in the Albury Local Government Area, to improve community safety outcomes.

AlburyCity is continually making improvements to existing networks to enhance performance outcomes for the detection, investigation, and prosecution of offenders by NSW Police. The planned actions to be delivered during the next reporting period include the review and update of various CCTV policies, procedures and processes, development of training modules for NSW Police, and the investigation of the use of an ALPR camera for monitoring vehicles leaving and entering Albury at Wodonga Place. These proposed actions deliver best practice methods to ensure future functioning and efficiency of the System.

Overall, the System is successfully managed and continues to deliver highly effective controls over the critical risks associated with public CCTV operations and is compliant in all legislative aspects.

The Public CCTV System is a key component of AlburyCity's approach to enhancing community safety and security in the Albury Local Government Area.

Recommendation

That Council:

- a. Receive and note the Draft Public CCTV System Biennial Report 2022-2024;
- b. Continue to develop and implement best practice methods in the delivery of a Public CCTV System across the Albury Local Government Area;
- c. Endorse the future actions proposed to be undertaken in the next reporting period 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2026 as referenced in the report; and
- d. Place the Public CCTV Biennial Report 2022-2024 on the AlburyCity website.

Attachments

1. CCTV Policy (DOC16/227261)
2. AlburyCity Public Code of Practice and Standard Operating Procedures (DOC21/244664[v2])
3. Draft Public CCTV system Biennial Report 2022-2024 (DOC24/247553)