

Tuesday 10 March 2015

BODY WORN CAMERAS SEE 98% REDUCTION IN RANGER ASSAULTS

City of Ryde Compliance Rangers have been wearing body worn cameras (BWC) attached to their hi-vis fluoro vests since a successful six month trial in late 2013. Since then serious verbal and physical assaults have dropped a dramatic 98%.

Regulatory Services staff carried out a trail of numerous devices between May and October 2013. A new uniform (including the Reveal Media RS3 BWC) was presented to Council, who supported the WH&S initiative on 8th October 2013. Total Cost of cameras and management system = Under \$20,000.

Evidence shows that the wearing of the BWC generally acts as a deterrent for threatening and aggressive behaviour.

- Number of incidents dropped by 98%
- Since 2009/10 there were 47 reports of serious verbal and physical which included:
 - Female Officer was threatened with raped and a taxi driver exposed himself to her
 - Multiple Officers were spat upon
 - One officer had his shirt ripped off his back
 - 4 Rangers' vehicles were vandalised and tyres slashed
 - Male Ranger was threatened to be shot in the head, and shown the bullet.
- 2010 and 2012/13 saw the peak numbers of reported matters of a serious nature
- 2013/14 – 7 recorded incidents of serious verbal and physical assault (first 6 months of BWC introduction)
- 2014/15 (YTD) – 3 recorded incidents of serious verbal and physical assaults.

Since the introduction of the BWCs Rangers feel safer as they can carry out a self-assessed risk assessment at the time of the incident and if the officer feels their safety is at risk they then issue a "caution" to the offending party and engage the camera recording. This gives a transparent record of the incident which can be used to review the situation, offer assistance, for training, and as prima facie evidence to Police. In the case of disputed matters, the time taken to investigate an incident is also much less.

City of Ryde Mayor, Bill Pickering said: "The City of Ryde has taken a zero tolerance approach to assaults and threats to our staff and will ensure that Ryde continues to be at the forefront of promoting the safety and well-being of local government officers like Rangers, Parking Officers and health and building inspectors."

Verbal and physical abuse continues to be a major issue experienced by Local Government Enforcement Officers across the State on a daily basis. Although the introduction of body worn cameras has significantly assisted in the collection of real time evidence there is still a minority of people that believe it is ok to verbally and/or physically assault members of our staff.