

Body Worn Cameras

We have introduced Body Worn Cameras (BWCs) for authorised officers, aiming to bolster transparency and accountability in our interactions with the public.

South Gippsland Shire Council is one of many councils across Victoria to invest in this technology. These cameras are exclusively used by authorised personnel, such as Council's Community Safety Officers (CSOs).

BWCs will be used at various scenarios, including public events, routine patrols, emergency situations, investigating complaints against officers, in training, and when de-escalating potentially volatile encounters.

It's important to note that BWCs are not intended for monitoring residents, but rather, their primary purpose is to record interactions between authorised officers and the public while upholding privacy rights.

How do the BWCs act as a deterrent against offences and anti-social behaviour?

The use of BWCs have been found to de-escalate an aggressive situation when the aggressor realises that there is a body worn camera filming their behaviour.

How will BWC footage be used to investigate complaints?

Complaints received from the public or from staff will be viewed by the appropriate and authorised person who will determine if a complaint can be established.

Are the cameras always on?

The BWC is in the 'pre-record mode' at all times when on operational duty. Officers must restrict recording to only areas and persons necessary in an attempt to minimise and avoid intrusion to those not involved.

Do I get notified if the camera has been turned on?

Officers may, when safe to do so, inform the other parties that they are being recorded - this notification should be captured on the BWC. However, there is a clear light indicator and viewing screen on the camera that highlights the camera is recording.

What happens with the footage and how long will it be stored for?

BWC data is downloaded and stored in a secure electronic location with strict controls. Access is restricted and it may only be accessed for defined purposes in accordance with Council's Policy.

Council will ensure that its record keeping practices comply with the Public Records Office Standards for the management of public records, Public Records Office Specifications, and the *Public Records Act 1973*.

Recordings required for evidential purposes are marked accordingly and will be retained until determined whether they are used for enforcement action. This may be either for infringements or court action. If a recording is deemed to not be required for evidence, it will be automatically deleted from the system after 90 days.



If you have general questions or believe an Authorised Officer has used a BWC inappropriately, please email council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au. You will be contacted in accordance with Council's Complaints Handling Procedure and your report or enquiry will be investigated.

