

SURVEILLANCE IN PUBLIC PLACES Consultation Paper

The Victorian Association of Photographic Societies (VAPS) would like to register its interest in the current Consultation.

VAPS is the umbrella body for camera clubs in Victoria. There are over 60 camera clubs registered with VAPS, and they represent in excess of 2,000 photographers, the vast majority being amateurs.

VAPS has noted a trend to limit photographers' capacity to take photographs in public places. Two examples of this are:-

One - police intervention when an amateur photographer from Geelong was photographing an oil refinery in evening light. Industrial photography, particularly when taken at the right time of day, definitely has artistic merit.

The other major concern is restrictions on the taking of photographs in parks and in the streets, or at festivals, parades and sporting events.

Increasingly photographers are being approached by the public and asked what are you doing? Why are you doing it? What will happen to the photographs? And did you take a picture of me or my child?

Street photography and photojournalism has for a long time been recognised as part of the art of photography. It is hoped that a balance can be achieved so that the amateur photographers can continue to use their cameras in public places while the public do not feel threatened or intimidated by their actions.

It is regrettable that schools have banned the taking photographs on their premises. No longer can parents photograph their children at a sports or theatrical event, because other children may be included in the image.

VAPS understands how these limits have evolved, but we are concerned that in some cases they appear to have gone too far. If new legislation further limits the capacity to take photographs in public that would be a great shame. Photography is a wonderful recreational interest, not just for the 2,000 camera club members affiliated with our organisation, but also for the millions of citizens who either use cameras or phone cameras to record events.

Common sense and balance is required. Don't let the behaviour of a few ruin a recreational pursuit that given great pleasure to many.

VAPS would appreciate being advised of any proposed changes before the legislation is passed, and are happy to cooperate if it is felt we can be of assistance.

Jim Weatherill

President – Victorian Association of Photographic Societies.

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