Police get new recording powers
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POLICE will be able to record motorists' conversations without their consent after legislation boosting police powers to use new in-car video (ICV) technology was introduced to the NSW parliament. In an Australian first, the technology is being installed in more than 340 highway patrol cars across NSW at a cost of $8.6 million.

Police Minister John Watkins said ICV provides an "accurate independent witness to events".

And legislation passed by the NSW lower house last night will guarantee police can record and use all audio and video of contact with motorists, he said.

"This technology will enable officers to record every minute on the road for operational, safety and prosecution purposes," Mr Watkins said.

Previously, officers had to switch off the microphone and rely on video if a motorist objected to their voice being recorded.

"This legislation takes away that option for the motorist, ensuring the best result for operational tactics and boosting officer safety," Mr Watkins said.

"The technology also protects police and members of the public against unfounded allegations of improper conduct and behaviour."

Mr Watkins said police would not secretly record motorists, but would inform them during vehicle stops that their conversations were being taped.

The use of ICV technology in highway patrol cars is an Australian first.

The systems include front and rear colour cameras, wireless microphones for officers, global positioning tracking and radars for speed detection.

Motorists recorded on ICV will be able to view the video - which will be stored for at least two years - at police stations.

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