



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Justice & Customs

Senator the Hon. Amanda Vanstone
Senator for South Australia

Tuesday 30 May 2000

Science and technology in law enforcement

Law enforcement will rely on science and technology more and more in the future. As criminals use science to their advantage, law enforcement and crime detection and prevention must adopt new measures to keep ahead of criminals' arsenal of the latest technology.

This is the finding of the Working Group preparing an agenda item entitled *Science and Crime Fighting*. The item will be presented by Senator Amanda Vanstone, Minister for Justice and Customs, and Dr Simon Hawkins from the CSIRO to the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council when it meets this Friday, 2nd June.

"In the past, real-time information about criminals has not been readily available, even to law enforcement agencies. It has sometimes taken weeks for law enforcement agencies to build up a profile of criminals," Senator Vanstone said.

"With the introduction of CrimTrac, the Federal Government's \$50 million initiative to help combat crime, information about criminals will be available to police in real time. CrimTrac will contain the national fingerprint database, and the national DNA database. CrimTrac will also contain a database of all known child sex offenders.

"While there is a national fingerprint database, across Australian jurisdictions there are a range of databases on DNA, paedophiles, and gun licences.

"Having this information integrated and available in real-time will better equip our law enforcement agencies to deal with crime.

"For example, through CrimTrac, police will be able to immediately retrieve information on a criminal suspect, including any history of violence or current firearms registrations. This will be invaluable for the frontline officers, giving them a much better idea of what they may face when responding to reports of crime, such as domestic violence or robbery.

"It will be possible to add mugshots of criminals to the CrimTrac database. With technology now available, it will also be possible to 'age' the mugshots so that law enforcement officers can see what a suspect looks like several years after the photographs was taken.

"Other aspects of science and crime fighting the Working Group looked at included Face in the Crowd technology. This was developed by the CSIRO Division of Telecommunications and Industrial Physics in Marsfield near Sydney.

"The technology scans faces of people as they pass cameras. The faces can then be run through a database and could in the future be matched against photographs of known criminals.

"The Face in the Crowd technology was originally developed to detect soccer hooligans, but it is just one aspect of technology that has potential application in law enforcement.

"Vision Control International, a Melbourne based firm, has developed technology that can 'age' the photograph of the face of a child. Using such technology, it is possible to see what a child looks like up to two decades after a photograph is taken. This technology has applications in detecting missing children.

"Science used in the National Drug Strategy Profile System can provide law enforcement with important intelligence concerning drugs. As well as helping identify the original source-country of a drug, it can provide information to map supply networks, based on the unique drug 'signatures' or qualities, as well as identifying trends in production and

distribution of illicit drugs."

PMSEIC was established by the Government to promote and foster exciting and leading edge solutions to issues of importance and challenge to Australia. It is based on the view that through appropriate targeting and support, the intellectual capacity and knowledge of Australia can deliver economic growth and national prosperity. It was established in 1997 and meets twice yearly.

PMSEIC is chaired by the Prime Minister, with Senator Minchin the deputy chair. Other Ministerial Council members are Senators Hill and Alston, and MPs Kemp, Wooldridge, and Truss. Other Council members are eminent individuals drawn from business and academia. The Council is supported by the Department of Industry, Science, and Resources (DISR).