



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Justice & Customs

Senator the Hon. Amanda Vanstone
Senator for South Australia

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Opening of CrimTrac agency

The first element of the Federal Government's CrimTrac initiative - a national fingerprint identification system - is expected to be operational from early next year, the Minister for Justice and Customs announced today at the opening of the office of the new CrimTrac Agency in Canberra.

CrimTrac will provide police and those involved in the fight against crime with leading edge information and investigation tools to help them solve more crime.

CrimTrac is backed by a \$50 million financial commitment from the Federal Government. It will bring together a number of police operational databases on a national scale, including fingerprints, DNA and a child sex offender system, to take Australian policing into the 21st century.

"The transfer of former National Exchange of Police Information operational systems, which include the old fingerprint system and several other databases, including criminal histories, has been a significant exercise and has gone very smoothly.

"The implementation of the new national fingerprint identification system is on track and is expected to be fully operational from January next year," Senator Vanstone said.

"This new system, the first major CrimTrac outcome, will give all Australian police services rapid access to a much better system for matching fingerprints taken from crime scenes with those taken from suspects and known offenders. It will also include a national palmprint database that will enable Australian police to capture and match palmprint data electronically for the first time.

"CrimTrac will dramatically change the way police go about their work.

"The national DNA system particularly will break new ground in Australian policing.

"The DNA database will enable the matching, on a national basis, of DNA profiles taken from crime scenes, suspects, known criminals, volunteers, missing persons, and unidentified bodies. This system is expected to be operating in early 2001.

"Unsolved crimes will be a key targeted by the national DNA system. Experience in the United Kingdom has shown that the establishment of a national DNA database was highly successful in clearing up previously unsolved crimes."

CrimTrac will also give police much better access to important information on the criminal history of offenders such as court notices including Domestic or Apprehended Violence Orders, Warrants and Bail Conditions; firearms licences; vehicles of interest; charged persons; and missing persons, including details of their disappearance.

Once all systems come on line through CrimTrac, police will be able to immediately retrieve information on a criminal suspect, regardless of jurisdiction, 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.

"This project has the full backing of all States and Territories," Senator Vanstone said.

"Australian police services recognise the enormous benefits they will reap in having this information integrated and available in real-time."

Senator Vanstone congratulated all those people who had helped get CrimTrac to this stage.

"This is a very good start and the CrimTrac Agency will play a major role in making Australia safer," Senator Vanstone said.