

Spray marks the future of crime fighting

DNA method identifies robbers

By Mark Sawa

AFTER two armed robberies in a week, one Canberra business owner has turned to a high-tech security system to catch and deter potential future thieves.

The DNA ultraviolet spray marks criminals at the scene of a crime and remains on them for up to six weeks. The CSI-like technology gives police time to pursue suspects.

The Ngunnawal supermarket that was robbed became the first to employ the technology in Canberra after its installation at the end of last year.

Ngunnawal supermarket owner Tom O'Connell said they had not had any trouble since installing the system.

"The way the system is set up now, if we get robbed they get

sprayed on the way out," Mr O'Connell said.

"If they come in here now they are going to get marked and they are going to glow in the dark.

"It's peace of mind for us because the biggest thing for us is these people rob the stores and don't get caught."

He said he had operated the Ngunnawal business for seven years and in that time they had been broken into a dozen times.

Leader Security spokesman Troy Cassell, who introduced the technology to the ACT, said it was not just a deterrent but helped police link thieves to the crime.

"When there is a robbery, police are relying on eyewitness evidence and CCTV," Mr Cassell said.

"That's not reliable because



Leader Security general manager Troy Cassell with Star Express store owner Tim O'Connell, who is the first in the ACT to install DNA spray security.

Picture: Elesia Lee

[the criminals] are typically wearing a hoody. The police generally ... have a good idea who has done the robbery and they can narrow it down to a small group of people. But the challenge for them is generating enough evidence to get a conviction.

"This system marks the criminal and places them at the scene of the crime. I suppose it is just another tool that works hand in hand with the CCTV evidence and the eyewitness evidence but it gives police a forensic link. They can say, 'Well, not only have we got the CCTV but you've been identified by these people and we've also got a forensic link

placing you at the robbery.'"

An Australian Federal Police spokeswoman said as the sophistication of DNA technology continued to improve it was safe to assume its application also had the potential to expand.

The spokeswoman also said a national project was underway to advance DNA analysis capability.

"This will see Australia adopt the most advanced DNA profiling technology available for forensic purposes," she said.

"This will result in higher levels of discrimination between individuals and an increased ability to obtain DNA results from compromised evidence."