

Pub to give robbers a DNA spray after string of hold-ups

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A PUB in Melbourne's north is the first business in Victoria to trial a DNA spray to catch armed robbers.

The Sylvania Hotel in Campbellfield installed the "DNA Guardian" spray device last week after terrified staff had been held up five times since January.

Anyone who holds up the hotel will now be sprayed with a colourless mist containing a laboratory-made bio-synthetic DNA harmless to humans.

The device can be activated by staff from a number of different areas. If an innocent bystander is tagged by the spray, it is non-toxic and invisible to the naked eye.

Developed by Adelaide-based DNA Security Solutions, the DNA tracer remains on the thief's skin for up to six weeks and will glow under ultraviolet light.

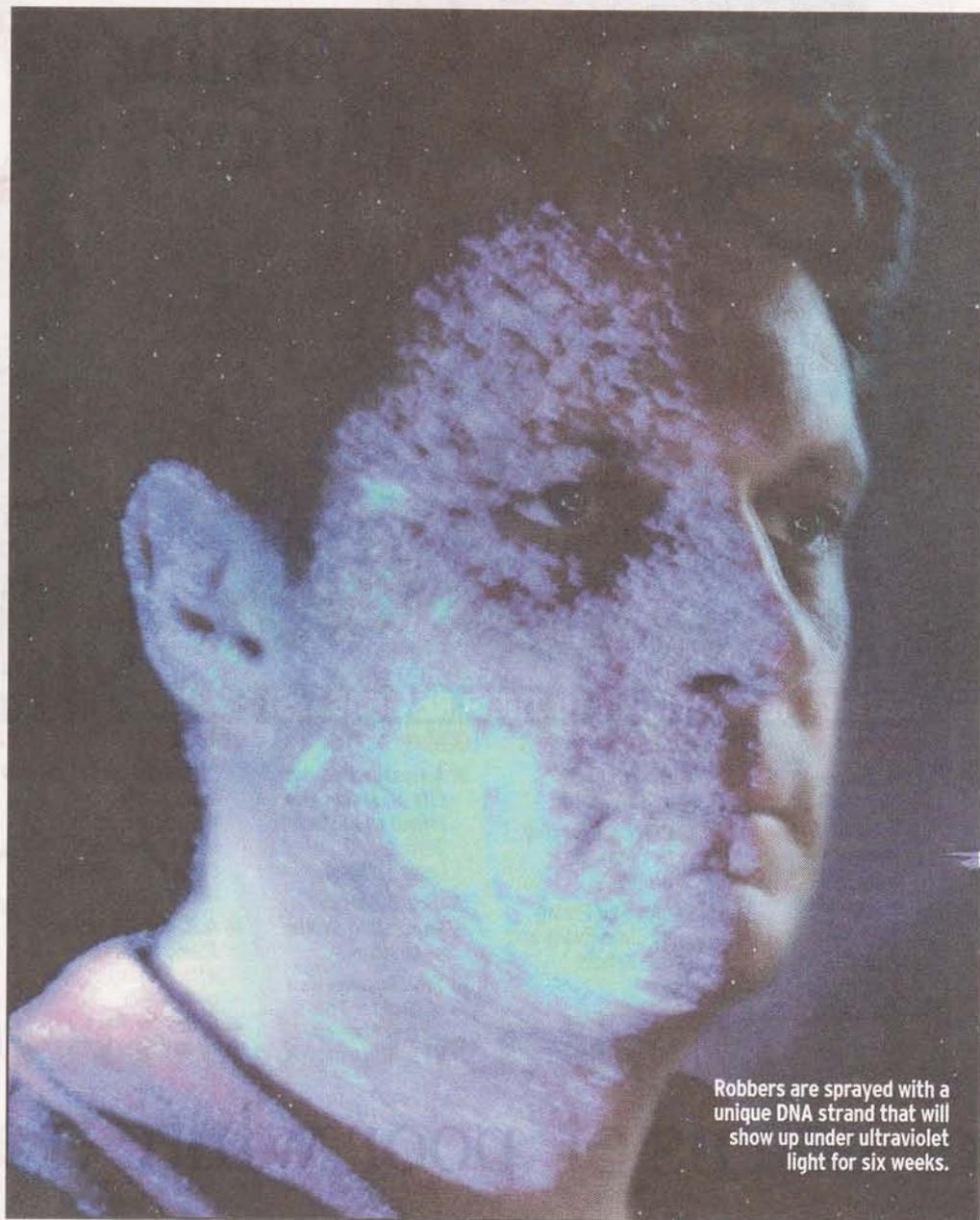
CCTV footage might help police identify a suspect but it is often difficult to prove they had committed the robbery.

"This technology gives police the forensic evidence they need to link the thief to the crime," managing director Tania Jolley told *The Sunday Age*. "What we are doing is closing the gap that currently exists when people come up with false alibis. They can't be with a friend or at home if they have been sprayed with the solution."

Customers inadvertently sprayed need not worry about being considered a suspect because the technology was being used to support other forms of identification, including eyewitness statements.

Businesses in Victoria had been slow to take up the technology, Ms Jolley said, because most put profits before protecting staff and customers. "Too many decision-makers sit too far away from having that gun stuck up their nose," she said.

Victoria Police crime department Detective Superintendent Brett Guerin said police supported in principle the use of the spray as an added crime-



Robbers are sprayed with a unique DNA strand that will show up under ultraviolet light for six weeks.

"Decision-makers sit far away from that gun stuck up their nose." TANIA JOLLEY

fighting tool. The spray had been used effectively overseas for more than a decade.

Superintendent Guerin said a national approach was needed to set up guidelines to determine what equipment was needed to detect the DNA, who

would collect the DNA from a suspect, where it would be stored, who would analyse it, and how the chain of evidence would be handled.

Victoria Police had asked the Australian New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency to put the criminal marking technology on the agenda at its next board meeting on September 15.

"It's a good idea but obviously the devil's in the detail," Superintendent Guerin said.

Gaming-venue owner Bruce Mathieson was reluctant to discuss security measures at the Sylvania Hotel when contacted by *The Sunday Age* but said the spray would complement the work already being done by security guards.

"There's a whole raft of measures that we implement and this is another option for us," Mr Mathieson said.

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