

[Home](#) » [National](#) » Article

## Prepare for take-off: airports to trial virtual strip searches

Jano Gibson, Urban Affairs Reporter  
October 2, 2008

AIR travellers will be invited to take part in "virtual strip searches" at Australian airports when the Federal Government begins trialling a range of security screening measures this month.

The measures include a controversial body scanner that can see underneath a person's clothes.

The Government says the scanner is designed to detect hidden weapons and explosives but critics say it is an invasion of privacy.

"It provides detailed images of a person's body, in particular body shape, which many people might find highly embarrassing," Stephen Blanks from the NSW Council for Civil Liberties.

"It's not normal for security to require strip searches of people getting on aeroplanes, and why should this virtual strip search become the norm?"

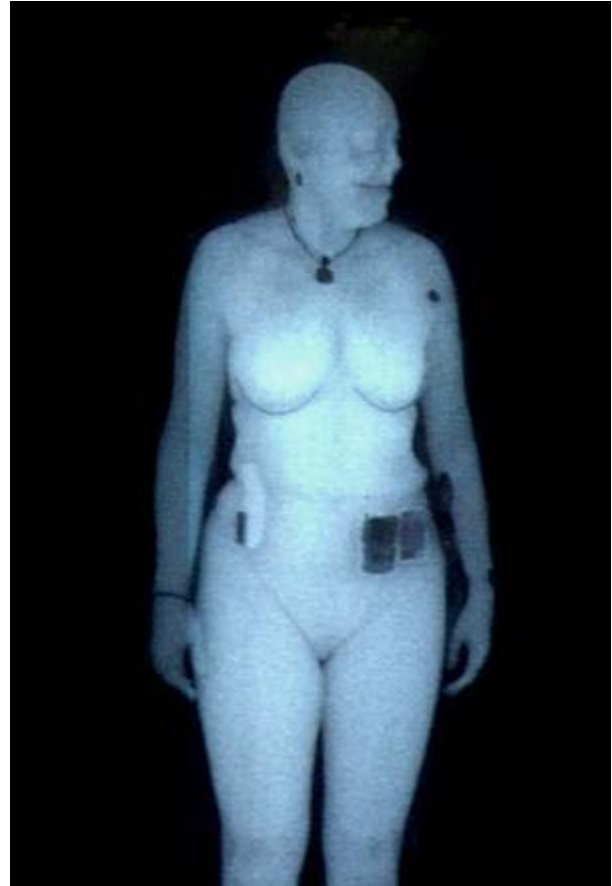
The executive director of the Government's Office of Transport Security, Paul Retter, said passengers would not be forced to use the body scanner before boarding their flights.

"During the trial, travellers will be able to choose the existing hand-luggage scanners and walk-through metal detectors, or they could choose the technology trial lane and provide feedback on the new technologies."

Measures had been put in place to ensure passengers' privacy and dignity was protected, Mr Retter said.

"People who do opt for the technology trial lane can do so knowing that the officer examining the images is located away from the screening lane and cannot see them. Faces are blurred and images are not saved and cannot be transferred."

He said the scans were safe and emitted only a very small amount of radiation. "The dosage from one body scan is 400 times less than a single medical X-ray. It would take 10,000 scans to reach the maximum level of safe radiation recommended in a year."



X-ray vision ... an image from the scanner.

Photo: AP

The other technologies on trial include explosive-detecting X-ray machines and vapour and liquid analysers. All of the equipment has been assessed by the Australian Nuclear Science Technology Organisation and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation.

"Some [of the technologies] are already used overseas as part of aviation security and we would like to assess which, if any, may be appropriate for use in Australia," Mr Retter said.

The trials will begin in the middle of this month and will run until the end of next month at airports in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

- [Email](#)
- [Print this story](#)
- [Normal font](#)
- [Large font](#)
- [Add to Facebook](#)
- [Add to del.icio.us](#)
- [Digg this story](#)
- [RSS Feed](#)

**[When news happens:](#)**

send photos, videos & tip-offs to 0424 SMS SMH (+61 424 767 764), or [email](#) us.

[\\$100 DAVID JONES GIFT CARD WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE TO THE HERALD\\*](#)

[\\*Special conditions apply- click here for details.](#)

Copyright © 2008. The Sydney Morning Herald.