

# There's no future in lying

**T**HE biblical warning "be sure your sins will find you out" is now truer than ever as two new methods of lie detection are making their mark in Australia.

Lies are set to be exposed by a fully-computerised polygraph machine and SCAN, a technique that detects deception by analysing what people say and how they say it.

The digital polygraph machine, believed to be Australia's first, records and analyses changes in blood pressure, respiratory patterns and heart rate to pick up any lies analogue detectors used to miss.

And research in the United

By  
**Tanya Giles**



States has found it to be more than 90 per cent accurate.

In the US the polygraph is used for everything from fishing contests to test if the winning catch was really "that big" to criminal cases.

In one recent case, Atlanta Olympic bomb security guard Richard Jewell was cleared after passing a series of complex lie detector tests.

Forensic polygraph examiner Steve Van Aperen, who has trained with US FBI and

Secret Service officers, said while the polygraph was not admissible in Australian courts it could be used for internal theft and fraud and private investigations.

Mr Van Aperen has already tested:

**A TEENAGE** boy whose mother suspected him of using drugs. He confessed to taking heroin after failing a polygraph test.

**A COUPLE** who accused each other of having extra-marital affairs. The woman admitted having a "one-off" fling after failing the test.

**A MAN** who confessed to stealing about \$4000 of food from his employer after failing

Mr Van Aperen said the machine records physiological

changes, including blood pressure, heart rate and respiratory patterns, which occur when a person tells a lie and fears detection or punishment.

He said even the lies of psychopaths with poorly-developed morals could be detected because of those fears.

But Mr Van Aperen said nervousness did not cause chart distortions and would not affect the polygraph's accuracy.

Mr Van Aperen said polygraph experts correctly picked 18 of the 20 "crooks" in a mock crime, handwriting experts picked 17, eyewitnesses picked seven correctly and fingerprint experts selected four conclusively.

Another technique gaining

popularity, SCAN (Scientific Content Analysis), detects lies in written or verbal statements.

Former polygraph examiner Avinoan Sapir, who this month ran a conference in Canberra about SCAN, claims that by paying close attention to what people say and how they say it, it is possible to detect lies.

He said an example of how SCAN worked was in 1994 in the US when Susan Smith told police her two young sons had been abducted by a car hijacker.

But even before the car was found in a lake with the children's bodies strapped into the back seat, the finger was being pointed at Mrs Smith.

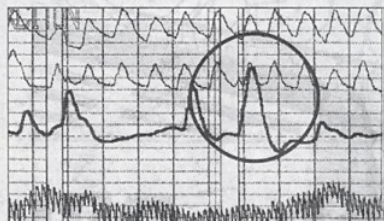
When faced with the allega-

tions, Mrs Smith told reporters: "I wouldn't do something like that to my children".

But when a student of Mr Sapir was asked what he thought of the case, he said: "I have no doubt that she killed them".

He came to the conclusion because Mrs Smith said "I wouldn't do something like that to my children" rather than "I didn't do it". She also spoke of her children in past tense.

"The theory behind SCAN is very simple," Mr Sapir said. "Most people don't really lie. What they actually say is true, but they don't say everything, they don't tell the whole truth."



**Tell-tale:** the first two lines (at the top) indicate respiratory patterns. The third line measures perspiration and the jump (circled) indicates a lie. The fourth line indicates heart rate and blood pressure.

## Caught out by a machine

**I**CONFESS, I told a lie. And I was caught.

It seemed simple enough to beat "The Machine". Even when I was wired up and blatantly lying, I thought this is too easy.

But when the digital polygraph machine started churning out the charts, all was revealed.

My conscience had got the better of me and my blood pressure, respiratory patterns and heart-beat stood as testimony.

My test in truth began when forensic examiner Steve Van Aperen attached wires to my fingers, tubes around my chest and the cuff of a blood pressure tester around my arm.

He then conducted a test to determine my normal physiological responses under question-

ing, asking "Is your first name Tanya?", "Do you live in Australia?" and "What is four times four?" — all of which I answered truthfully.

In normal circumstances, Mr Van Aperen would then ask questions relating to a specific crime in order to catch a suspect telling lies.

But in my case, he asked me to choose a number between one and seven and then lie about which number I had chosen.

And despite the fact I felt no threat of punishment if I did lie, when I told a fib the charts soared.

In Mr Van Aperen's words, I was one of the worst liars he had seen.

— TANYA GILES



**Lie detective:** Steve Van Aperen.