

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: *The chemistry of latent fingerprints and their detection*

Project Summary: This program of research is aimed at investigating various aspects of latent fingerprints, including an evaluation of detection and enhancement techniques that can be applied on various surfaces. The goal is to obtain a better understanding of fingerprint deposits and their detection so that improvements can be made to how this form of forensic evidence is exploited in criminal investigations.

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by a number of research students under the direct supervision of the Forensic Science team at Western Sydney's Hawkesbury campus (Professor Chris Lennard, Dr Val Spikmans, Dr Rob Ebeyan and Dr Brenden Riley). The focus of the study is on the detection of deposited fingerprints – *the collected fingerprints will not be used for identification purposes*.

How is the study being paid for?

The program of research is sponsored by the School of Science and Health, Western Sydney University.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to rub your hands together and then place your fingers on test substrates (which may be paper or plastic strips, for example) using a similar pressure to what would be applied to an object being handled in a normal manner (e.g., drinking glass). The purpose is to deposit latent fingerprints that can later be the subject of chemical analysis and/or the application of specific fingerprint detection methods.

In addition, reference fingerprints will be collected as a means of assessing the quality of developed fingerprints. This will be performed using inkless fingerprint pads and/or an optical scanner. Inkless fingerprint pads can be used to record a reference fingerprint on plain white paper without leaving any coloured residues on the finger. Fingers are placed on the pad then on a sheet of paper to record the impressions. The inkless pads use non-toxic, non-irritant materials; however, you should wash your hands with soap and water after this process. As an alternative, you may be asked to place your fingers on an optical scanner to record your fingerprints. Both processes are quick and easy to perform, with no discomfort anticipated.

You will be asked to provide your age, gender and occupation. No other information is required, and all of the fingerprint/fingerprint samples will be de-identified for analysis purposes. The samples will be labelled with a donor number at the time of collection.

How much of my time will I need to give?

The whole process is expected to take around 15 minutes for one set of fingerprints/fingerprints. However, you may be approached on multiple occasions to collect additional sets of fingerprints.

What benefits will I, and/or the broader community, receive for participating?

There are no specific benefits to you as an individual, other than supporting valuable research that will improve fingerprint detection methodologies. The potential benefits to the community are significant. As fingerprints are one of the best forms of forensic evidence, improved detection methods will generate better evidence leading to the earlier identification of potential offenders, shorter court proceedings (saving significant amounts of money and reducing backlogs), and higher crime clear-up rates. Higher crime clear-up rates are an increased deterrence for potential criminals, remove identified offenders from the general population, and improve safety, security and wellbeing across the general population.

Will the study involve any risk or discomfort for me?

No.

How do you intend to publish or disseminate the results?

It is anticipated that the results of this research project – including images of developed fingerprints – will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that the participants cannot be identified.

Will the data and information that I have provided be disposed of?

Please be assured that only the researchers will have access to the samples you provide and that these samples will only be used for this program of research and other related projects for an extended period of time. Note that the minimum retention period for data collection is five years post publication. De-identified fingerprint samples – labelled with a donor number only – may be retained for up to 10 years but researchers will be unable to associate any fingerprint/fingerprints samples with a particular individual, only to a class of donor (aged, gender, occupation). The samples and related information you have provided will be securely disposed of at the end of any required retention period.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to be involved. If you do participate you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

If you do choose to withdraw, any information that you have supplied and any fingerprints/fingerprints provided will be destroyed (based on any samples labelled with your donor number). You can withdraw by contacting any of the researchers named on the first page of this information sheet.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study and provide them with the Chief Investigator's contact details (indicated below). They can contact the Chief Investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain a copy of the information sheet.

What if I require further information?

Should you wish to discuss the research further before deciding whether or not to participate, please contact the Chief Investigator [Chris Lennard, Professor of Forensic Science (phone: 02 4570 1739; email: c.lennard@westernsydney.edu.au)] or one of the other researchers named on the first page of this information sheet.

Privacy Notice

Western Sydney University staff and students conduct research that may require the collection of personal and/or health information from research participants.

The University's Privacy Policy and Privacy Management Plan set out how the University collects, holds, uses and discloses personal or health information. Further details about the use and disclosure of this information can be found on the [Privacy at Western Sydney webpage](#).

What if I have a complaint?

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through Research Engagement, Development and Innovation (REDI) on 02 4736 0229 or via email (humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au).

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign a *Participant Consent Form*. The information sheet is for you to keep and the consent form is retained by the researchers.

This study has been approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. The ethics approval number is H13483.