PEEPING TOM'S SCANNER

New technologies certainly change our everyday lives. They make our world more interesting and work easier but in wrong hands they may cause huge damage. The travel industry started using devices that allow seeing through another person's clothes. The technology is used in airport scanners also known as whole-body security scanners which allow the operator to see naked image of the scanned person. The technology is already being used at various airports in the world.

This month the scanners are being tested in Australia. Airports in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide are therefore conducting these so called "virtual strip searches" that should reveal whether the scanned person carries a gun or some explosives. Reasons for use of the technology are obvious. It is much faster than a regular body search and some people find it even less uncomfortable. It may also increase the air travel safety. The procedure takes only 30 to 45 seconds.

Nevertheless, many people find it immoral. They are concerned about possible health impacts on pregnant women and others fear their naked pictures will end up on the Internet. People also asked how pedophiles will be prevented from screening children.

The procedure is conducted to be as comfortable as possible. Passengers that are to be searched are randomly picked and they may choose to undergo the "virtual strip search" or go through the "old" procedure that includes hand-luggage scanners and walk-through detectors. Those who consent to be scanned need to take off their shoes and coat, and to remove all items from their pockets and to put away all their jewelry. The examining officer is located away from the scanning lane so that they could not see the person they scan. Faces of the scanned passengers are automatically blurred. The pictures are not saved and could not be transferred. This, however, can not prevent an officer from taking a picture by e.g. their cell phone camera.

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