



E23 Australian Bloodstain Pattern Analysis (BPA) Training and Education: A Response to Judicial Scrutiny

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the Australian education and training levels in place for forensic investigators of major crime who perform bloodstain pattern analysis (BPA) as part of their crime scene examination duties. The rationale and drivers for the training and education package's development will be explained as will the implementation process and the likely future educational direction for Australian BPA practitioners.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by describing a robust and sustainable education and training model for BPA practitioners, the components of which lend themselves to generic adoption and implementation by most forensic disciplines.

Recent judicial rulings in Australia have clearly articulated the need for robust scientific education and training for those involved in the forensic investigation of major crime. In a system where detectives and pathologists are invited guests to a crime scene controlled by forensic investigators (usually sworn police officers), the need for elevated practitioner training and education standards has never been greater. Further, typically many of the pattern recognition disciplines have been the purvey of 'police officers' who culturally have had little pressure to justify any opinions or conclusions they have derived.

In 2006, under the umbrella of its National Institute of Forensic Science, Australia embarked on a three year journey that resulted in the development of four (4) levels of BPA training and education for its forensic investigators of major crime. Foundational to those levels are: demonstrated competence, continuing proficiency, discipline and practitioner succession planning, sustainability and most importantly, a strong scientific basis. As a reconstructive "crime event" tool, the forensic discipline of BPA necessitates a contextual and holistic investigative approach and as such introduces levels of complexity over and above a number of other forensic disciplines. Subsequently, practitioners require high levels of educational and experiential exposure in order to derive the maximum, but more importantly, reliable results from the discipline.

In late 2009, the following four (4) levels of training and education were universally adopted by law enforcement jurisdictions across Australia:

- BPA Awareness: An introductory training level for all forensic investigators of major crime
- BPA Level II: Equivalent to the Basic 40 Course designed to provide a scene technician level of competence but prevent the provision of expert opinion "reconstructive" evidence
- BPA Level III: An advanced level of training designed for the provision of expert opinion "reconstructive" evidence
- BPA Level IV: LIII Mentor and Senior Instructor

The advanced levels of training (Level III and IV) are based on a curriculum including exhaustive scene analysis and case work exposure, laboratory focused exhibit examination particularly surrounding fabrics and other textiles, hypothesis testing and reconstructive considerations and in a vision for the future, the inclusion of a fluid dynamics curriculum. The adoption of these levels is already assisting to crystallise the judicial acceptance of the forensic discipline of BPA and its practitioners within Australia. Furthermore, the levels have been suggested as a demonstrative model that could be adopted by a number of forensic disciplines such as tyre and shoe outsole identification and forensic investigation of firearm related matters.

BPA, Education, Training