

COCAINE HIDDEN IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Customs officers at Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport recently detected approximately 800 grams of cocaine concealed inside children's books.

The cocaine, with an estimated street value of \$800,000, was discovered by officers using x-ray and ionscan technology.

Five children's books were examined and deconstructed by Australian Federal Police (AFP) agents and were allegedly found to contain approximately 800 grams of cocaine well concealed within the book covers.

AFP agents arrested three men in relation to the importation, one of whom allegedly had the books in his luggage when he arrived from Auckland, New Zealand.

"The combination of technology, highly-skilled officers and cooperation between our border-protection agencies has resulted in another seizure of harmful drugs and prevented them from reaching the Australian community," said Customs Regional Director Victoria Jenny Peachey.

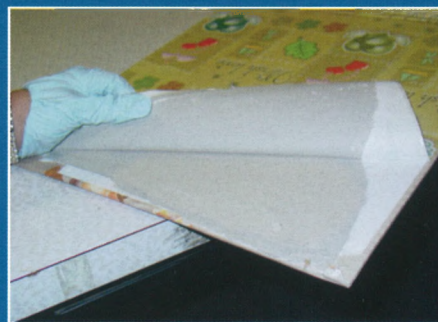
"This is yet another example of the benefits of inter-agency collaboration," said AFP Manager Melbourne office Federal Agent Frank Prendergast.

A 37-year-old man from Caulfield North was charged with aiding and abetting under the Customs Act, a 36-year-old man from Thornbury was charged with the aiding and abetting and attempting to obtain possession of a prohibited import (Customs Act). A 19-year-old New Zealand man was also charged with importing a prohibited import and possession of a prohibited import (Customs Act).

This seizure occurred not long after Customs officers in Melbourne detected approximately 900 grams of a substance, believed to be heroin, concealed in a wedding photograph album.

Customs Regional Manager Victoria Geoff Johannes said, "Customs officers selected a man who had arrived in Melbourne from Vietnam, for a baggage search. An ionscan of the album tested positive for heroin. The album was then x-rayed revealing an inconsistency inside the front and back covers and two packages containing white powder, believed to be heroin, were located."

The man was arrested by Australian Federal Police and was charged with importing prohibited imports and being in possession of prohibited imports under the provisions of the Customs Act.



These covers of the children's books were used to conceal approximately 800 grams of cocaine.

