

Fraud Group pins card-skimming tourist

Staff at a Gold Coast resort became suspicious of an English tourist following a series of strange occurrences and erratic behaviour in November 2006.

The man had a large number of visitors to his room, ordered room service and movies at all hours of the day and night, and denied access to the room to cleaning staff.

Resort staff suspected he may have been involved in unlawful activity and contacted the local police.

Before the police could arrive the man checked out, saying he was heading to the Surfers Paradise Transit Centre. Police located him there and upon searching his bags found \$117,944 in cash, along with a laptop computer, a credit card reader/writer and a large number of telephone cards, each containing a magnetic strip on the back.

When questioned he declared he was a multi-millionaire and had brought the money with him from London for his holiday. When further questioned he changed his story and stated he had won the money at the Gold Coast Casino. He was arrested and taken to the Southport Watchhouse.

Inquiries with the Australian Customs Service revealed the man had entered Australia two days previously via Sydney, and at the time had possession of only a small amount of cash, as well as the credit card reader/writer and the telephone cards.

Police examined the laptop computer and found the details of 1,800 'stolen' card numbers and PIN numbers from valid credit and debit cards.



After identifying and arresting a co-offender, further investigation revealed the man had encoded the stolen credit and debit card details onto the telephone cards and then used them to withdraw cash from ATMs.

The card numbers and PIN numbers had allegedly been obtained through a relative who ran a number of retail outlets in London. According to the co-offender, the man had obtained a further \$100,000 while still in Sydney. The man was charged

with a number of fraud offences and upon conviction was deported to the United Kingdom.

By Detective Senior Sergeant David Lewis, Fraud and Corporate Crime Group