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Airport safety innovation wins prestigious Eureka Prize

A portable device which rapidly detects homemade explosives, using technology invented at the University of Tasmania, has won a prestigious Eureka Prize at a ceremony tonight in Sydney.

The University, together with commercial partner Grey Innovation, was successful in the Outstanding Science in Safeguarding Australia category.

GreyScan is the world's first trace-detection device that can identify inorganic explosives in under a minute, and its use in mass transit locations such as airports and train stations could help make Australia and the world safer.

The chemistry was initially developed by the Australian Centre for Research on Separation Science (ACROSS) based at the University of Tasmania.

The technology was invented by a team led by Professor Michael Breadmore and developed in strategic partnership with Grey Innovation, Australian Federal Police, National Institute of Forensic Science, Australian Customs Service and US Homeland Security.

The instrument is the product of more than 20 years of research from a team of more than 20 researchers.

"The instrument can detect homemade bombs of the types used in the Oklahoma bombings, Bali and the Boston marathon bombings," Professor Breadmore said.

"This is excellent recognition for our team and just goes to show what Australia can achieve when we back ourselves to not only do the critical research to demonstrate the capability, but also to invest in translating the product to bring to market through value-based, long-term strategic relationships with innovation partners such as Grey Innovation."

The Executive Dean of the College of Sciences and Engineering, Professor Brian Yates, last night congratulated Professor Breadmore and the School of Natural Sciences.

“The technology behind GreyScan has been developed over a number of years at the University of Tasmania, alongside commercial partner Grey Innovation, with the final product promising to make travel across the world safer.

“This recognition at the national level brings great credit to the University of Tasmania, and to its research capabilities in science.”

Established in 1990, the Australian Museum Eureka Prizes are the country’s most comprehensive national science awards, honouring excellence across the areas of research and innovation, leadership, and science engagement and education.

Winners of the 2019 Eureka Prizes were announced at a gala dinner tonight at the Australian Museum in Sydney.

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