

The following article was printed in the Sunday Age on the 28/02/2003, and formed the starting point for researching the script for *Black Market: Adventure*. With any hope, the release of this short film will help promote awareness of the dangers of camping in Victoria and NSW.

MYSTERIOUS CAMPSITE THEFTS CONFUSE POLICE

By Gareth Van Maanen

A SERIES of robberies from campsites around Victoria and New South Wales over the past year has left investigators baffled.

“It appears that they’re only after adventure equipment like tents and backpacks,” says Snr Sgt. Francis Treacey of Victoria Police, “whether all of these thefts are related though, is still speculation.”

The latest theft occurred in Warrandyte State Park where a group of campers were subdued in their sleep, using chloroform, while their camping equipment was stolen.

Andrew Pike, 22, recalls “we were just asleep and all of a sudden someone was on top of me with that stuff that knocks you out...then I woke up and it was all gone, even my waterproof matches!”

Mr. Pike and his friends lost about \$2000 worth of camping gear.

None of it was covered



What the? Andrew Pike at the scene of the crime. Picture: Simon Wilmot

by insurance.

The latest robbery marks the twenty-seventh campsite theft in the past year, but police have yet to find enough conclusive evidence that could lead to a suspect.

“Admittedly, the people behind these crimes are very good at covering their tracks,” continued Snr Sgt. Treacey. “But eventually the net will close in.”

However, another detective, now removed from the case, has a theory regarding the perpetrators: that they are

ninja.

Sgt. Anthony Moore says, “looking at their techniques, and the ability for the thieves to seemingly disappear so easily, there is reason to believe that our perpetrators are ninja. But we’re unsure why ninja people would steal camping equipment.”

Sgt. Moore was replaced by Snr. Sgt. Treacey last month.

Victoria Police has advised campers to be extra cautious.