Police fudge on ID theft: expert
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REPORTS of increasing identity fraud attacks have been exaggerated by law enforcement agencies seeking to maintain budgets, according to a former Scotland Yard detective.

Identity fraud attacks, such as phishing, have increased in the past year as international syndicates target Australian financial institutions.

However, SAS Institute fraud and anti-money laundering solutions director Rowan Bosworth-Davies, a former Scotland Yard detective and lawyer, says identity theft is relatively rare.

"I would need more evidence from law enforcement agencies of identity theft before I got too excited about it," he says.

"It is a sexy subject and you can say what you like and no-one will say that you are wrong."

Bosworth-Davies says there is a lot of hype around identity theft and a great deal of misinformation, which he attributes partly to some police agencies that want to increase funding.

"If someone was living the life of Riley on your credit card, wouldn't you know within a month, when you got your credit card statement?"

Bosworth-Davies says genuine cases of identity fraud, using stolen credit card details and other identity documents, are relatively few.

Speaking at the SAS International Forum 2004 in Copenhagen, Bosworth-Davies was also critical of banks' ability to deal with money laundering.

Prior to September 11, 2001, there was debate about money laundering, and if banks had software it was largely developed internally, he says.

In the past three or four years, however, large banks had installed anti-money-laundering software to comply with new international regulations.

"Leading banks in the UK have adopted new solutions, but it would be less true in Australia, which has different regulatory drivers."

Kelly Mills attended SAS Forum International 2004 in Copenhagen as a guest of SAS Australia.

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