AUSTRALIA’S electronic crime investigators are at risk of being outrun by new technology, one of the country’s senior computer forensic technicians has revealed.

Australian Federal Police (AFP) Electronic Evidence Forensic and Technical co-ordinator Paul Reedy said police investigators would have to spend their training budgets wisely in order to keep pace as with technological changes.

"The rate at which systems we encounter is changing is so rapidly that it's difficult to stay across all of it. We've been looking at alternative ways of doing it in terms of resources and training. I'm satisfied with the level that we are at but we've got to target our training very carefully," Mr Reedy said.

Mr Reedy said that the AFP investigators may soon be called on to gather evidence from an increasingly diverse range of gadgets that go beyond its traditional areas of expertise.

Such devices could include mobile phones, satellite positioning systems, game consoles and even internet fridges, he said.

The problem wasn't limited to the AFP, he said.

"I think all police agencies are in the same position that we are in - that this wasn't recognised a few years ago," he said.

Also at the conference, AFP Computer Forensic team leader Darrell Betts said that the agency could keep up with its current workloads but that its officers were in danger of "de-skilling" themselves without additional resources.

AFP computer examiner Matthew Thomson said that additional resources would help improve the unit's planning. "Research and development would allow us to do things like have a look at the newer technologies and plan for the future," Mr Thomson said.

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