

Detect and Trace — DCCEEW's AI X-Ray Pilot for Catching Wildlife Smugglers at Sydney's International Mail Gateway

AI in the Public Sector · Good practice · Australia

Quality score: 40/100

Evidence strength: Observational / pre–post

Summary

DCCEEW-backed researchers trialled a 3D X-ray CT scanner and machine-learning classifier on real seized mail at Sydney's international gateway; across 18 consignments (48 parcels, 116 reptiles and crustaceans) the best algorithm flagged concealed wildlife 56% of the time.

Key dimensions

Dimension	Score
Evidence of impact / measured public value	1/3
Transparency, fairness & accountability	2/3
Transferability / demonstrated replication	1/3
Scalability beyond pilot	1/3
Governance, capability & sustainability	1/3

Evaluated by C-NAPSE

Data sources

C-NAPSE web research — accessed 2026-08-15

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) Wildlife Crime Special Investigators — accessed 2026-08-15

MDPI (Animals journal): Detect and Trace field-trial study — accessed 2026-08-15

Mongabay: record sentence for reptile smuggler (Feb 2026) — accessed 2026-08-15

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