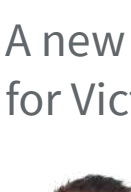


EXCLUSIVE

Pilot program for new AI cameras that detect telltale shoplifting signs available to Victorian businesses

A new AI-powered camera system that detects suspicious behaviour and alerts staff before a theft occurs could be a lifeline for Victorian retailers struggling with a surge in shoplifting.



Regan Hodge Crime reporter

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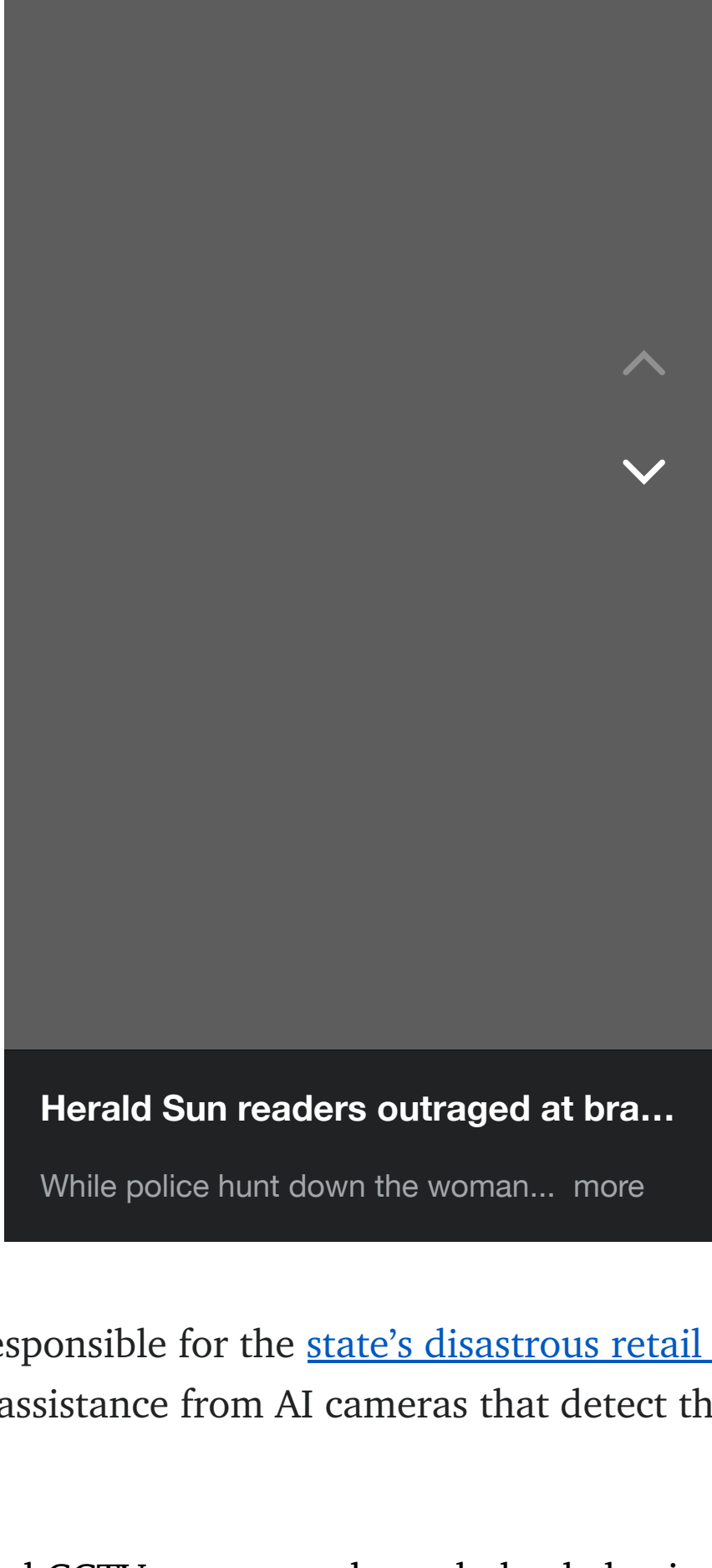
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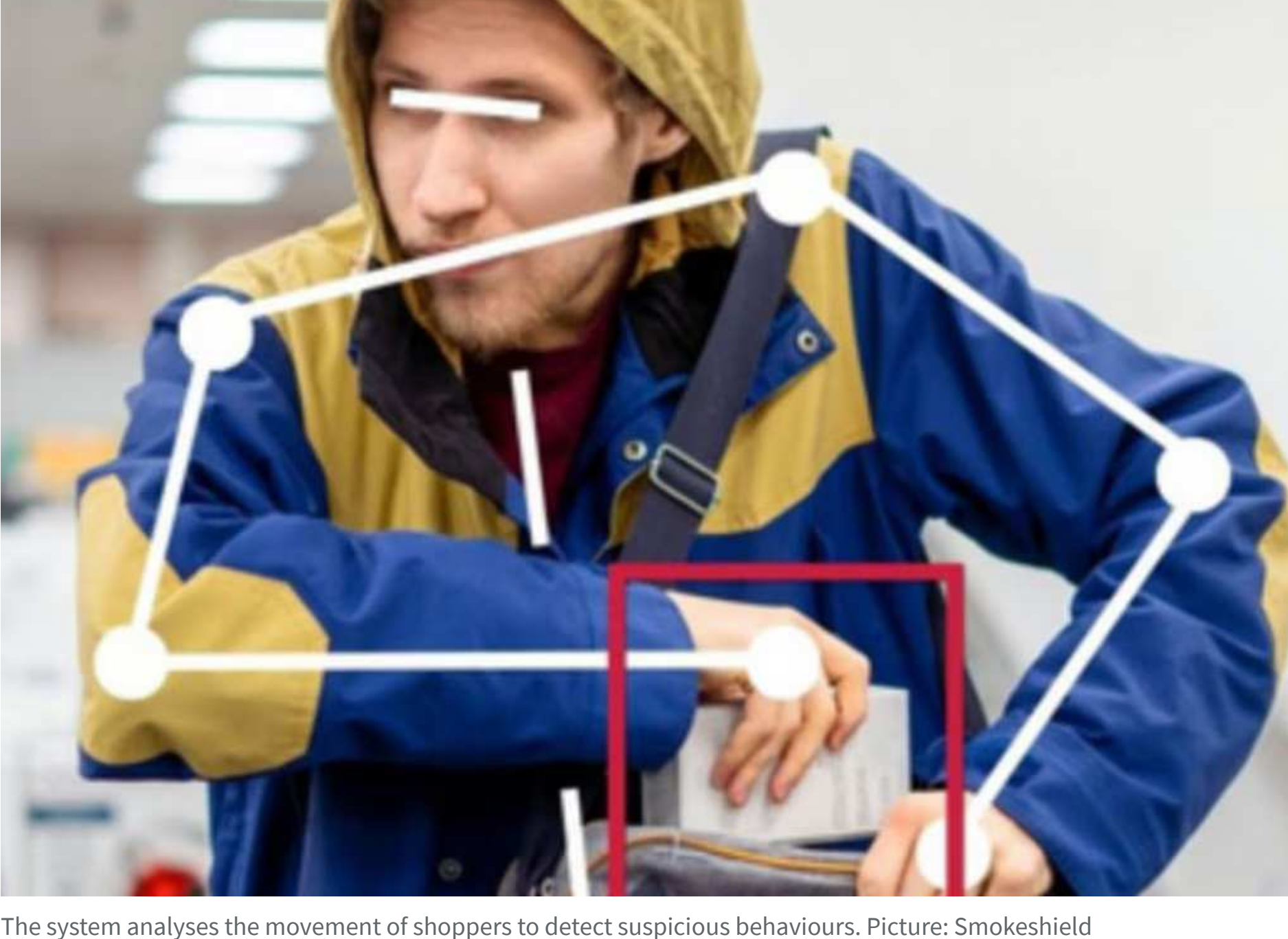
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Criminals responsible for the [state's disastrous retail crime wave](#) could be stopped in their tracks with assistance from AI cameras that detect the suspicious movements of would-be shoplifters.

The advanced CCTV system analyses dodgy behaviours of shoppers — including their “nervous scanning of surroundings” — before alerting staff to the potential theft before it occurs.

It has driven retail crime by almost 30 per cent in some stores across the US and has been floated as a possible solution to Victoria's shocking number of retail crimes.

Thefts from Victorian retailers [rose a further 42 per cent over the past year](#) to mark another disastrous state record.



The system analyses the movement of shoppers to detect suspicious behaviours. Picture: Smokesield

One Melbourne company introducing the landmark technology to Australia says it could be the answer for the state's under-siege and struggling retailers if authorities fail to change.

“Theft Prevention AI doesn't rely on facial recognition,” Smokesield's head of growth Mike Abbott said.

“Instead, it analyses body movement, gait and behavioural cues — things like nervous scanning of surroundings, known as ‘prairie dogging’.

“By focusing on behaviour rather than facial features, it alerts staff to potential theft before it happens, while still complying with Australia's privacy laws.”



Victorian businesses say they are suffering as retail crime reaches record heights across the state

Organised shoplifting syndicates and [cost of living pressures](#) are largely responsible for the state's appalling retail crime rate which soared to record levels over the past 12 months.

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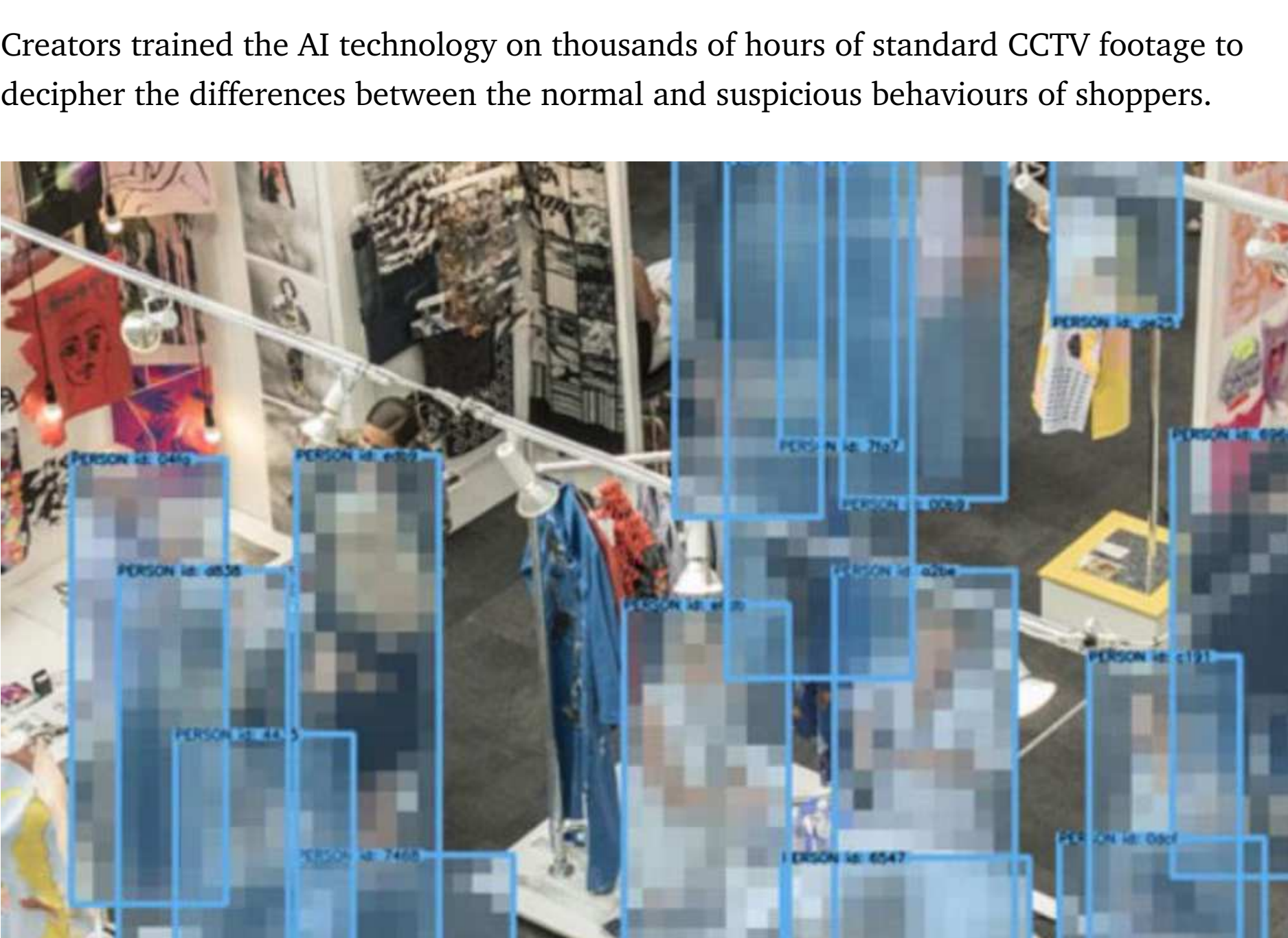
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Red meat, cosmetics, alcohol and designer clothing are some of the most commonly stolen items from stores and chains including Coles, who say they are experiencing 40 per cent more retail crime incidents when compared to their stores in New South Wales.

Staff are virtually powerless to prevent the theft and are often told not to confront or pursue shoplifters — allowing them to nab thousands of dollars worth of goods with little effort.

Smokesield, who specialise in security resources for businesses across Melbourne, are launching the AI camera systems — dubbed ‘Dragonfruit AI’ — into Australia.

Creators trained the AI technology on thousands of hours of standard CCTV footage to decipher the differences between the normal and suspicious behaviours of shoppers.



The new AI cameras use movement pattern detection to identify potential shoplifters. Picture: Smokesield

It can detect shoppers looking over their shoulder, scanning the aisles for staff and even placing items in bags or pockets before a real-time phone notification is sent to employees.

Retail chains in the US say the technology has led to a 30 per cent reduction in the number of items stolen and have reported a 70 per cent reduction in time spent trawling through standard CCTV footage.

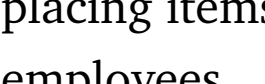
Smokesield chief executive Natalie Vogel said Victorian businesses were crying out for a solution to the state's retail crime crisis.

“Retailers are facing unprecedented pressure from organised crime and opportunistic theft,” she said.

“That's why we're introducing this technology to Australia now — to give retailers a fighting chance against theft while ensuring staff and customers feel safe.”

The pilot program is now available to Victorian businesses.

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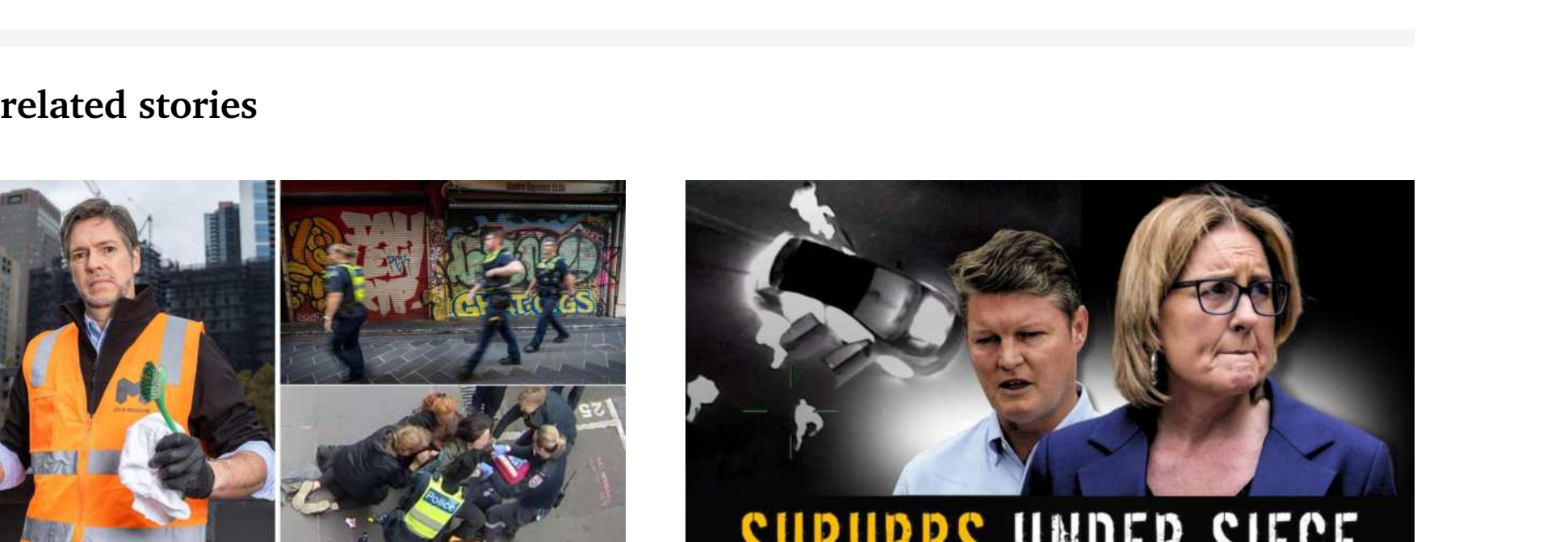
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