Forensic experts mount new case to exhume body of Somerton Man to establish his identity

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IT IS a cold case that has stumped detectives and scientists but the state Attorney-General might hold the key to proving the identity of a body found on Somerton Beach 67 years ago.

The so-called Somerton Man has puzzled police and researchers ever since walkers spotted the fully-clothed body lying in sand on December 1, 1948.

A post-mortem concluded he died of poisoning but an extensive police and Coroner’s investigation failed to identify the man, aged about 45.

Several theories have since emerged amid Cold War speculation of mystery women, links to Communist spies, military intelligence and a secret code scribbled on a paper, found hidden on the body.

Exhaustive searches since by scientists, journalists and retired police officers could not solve the mystery but Adelaide University Professor Derek Abbott says advances in DNA testing can solve the riddle.
The unidentified man found on Somerton Beach.

That is, if Attorney-General John Rau agrees to exhume the remains, buried at West Tce Cemetery.

In October, 2011, Mr Rau refused an exhumation because the motive did not transcend “public curiosity or broad scientific interest”.

Prof Abbott said there was “a good chance” of identifying the remains if exhumed.

“Even with a body of that age, I think we will be able to get something,” he said.

Somerton man bust scan1:03

The finished reconstruction of the bust of the Somerton Man, made using DAVID LaserScanner software. Courtesy Adelaide University Professor Derek Abbott

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- 30 October 2013
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