Chronology 2021

22 years of reducing crime
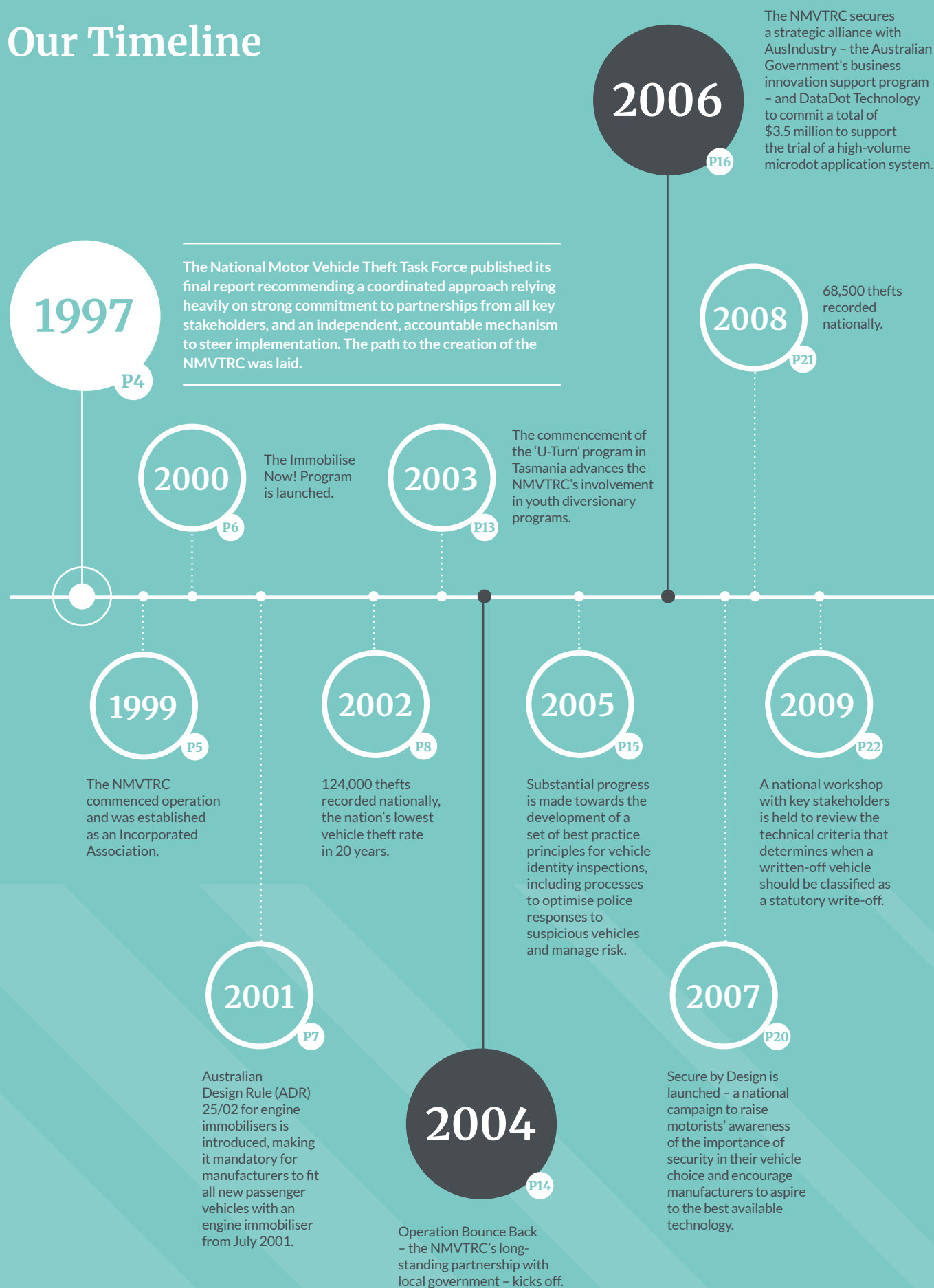
An initiative of Australian governments and the insurance industry
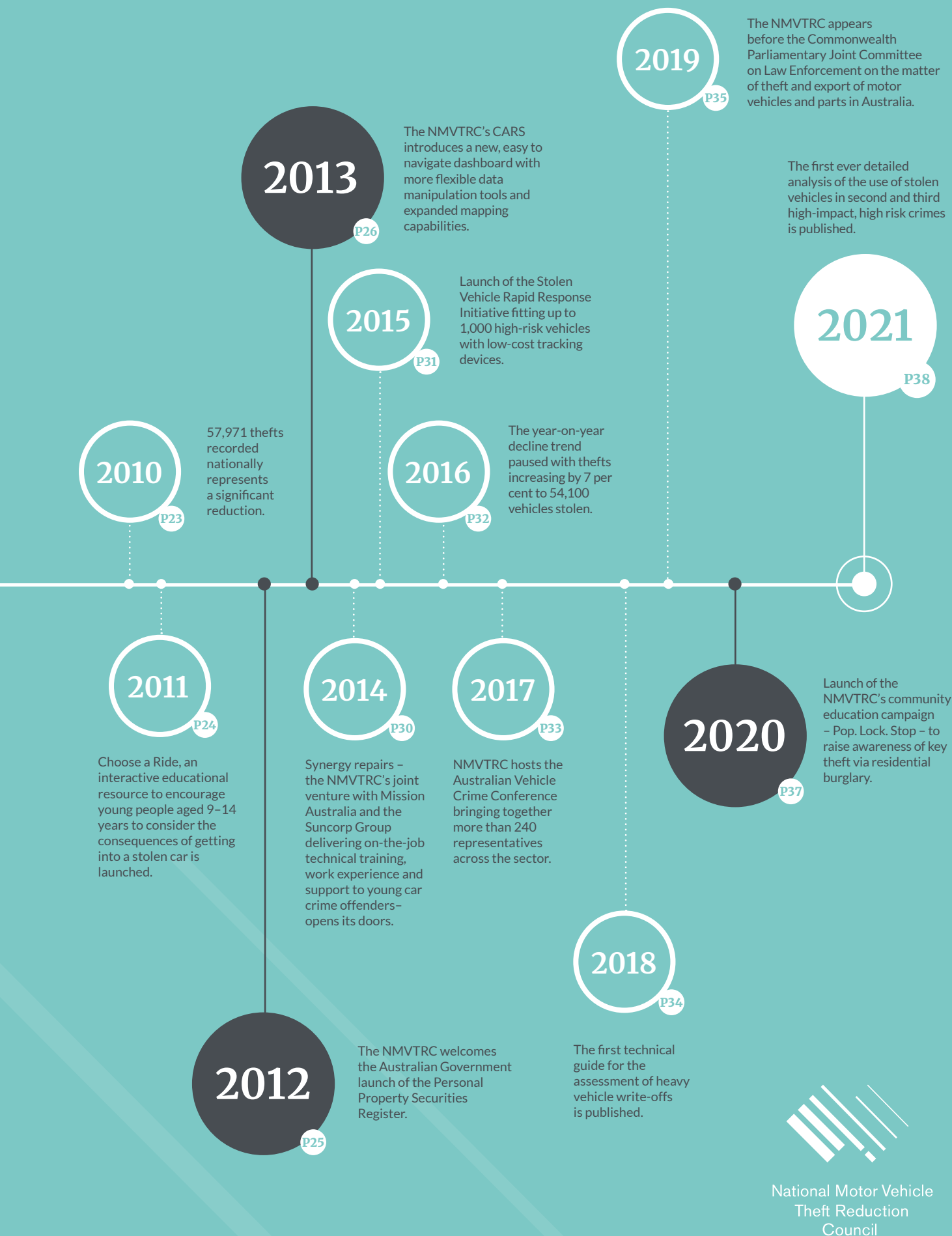
National Motor Vehicle
Theft Reduction
Council

Our Timeline

1997 P4

The National Motor Vehicle Theft Task Force published its final report recommending a coordinated approach relying heavily on strong commitment to partnerships from all key stakeholders, and an independent, accountable mechanism to steer implementation. The path to the creation of the NMVTRC was laid.

2000 P6

The Immobilise Now! Program is launched.

2003 P13

The commencement of the 'U-Turn' program in Tasmania advances the NMVTRC's involvement in youth diversionary programs.

2006 P16

The NMVTRC secures a strategic alliance with AusIndustry – the Australian Government's business innovation support program – and DataDot Technology to commit a total of $3.5 million to support the trial of a high-volume microdot application system.

2008 P21

68,500 thefts recorded nationally.

1999 P5

The NMVTRC commenced operation and was established as an Incorporated Association.

2002 P8

124,000 thefts recorded nationally, the nation's lowest vehicle theft rate in 20 years.

2005 P15

Substantial progress is made towards the development of a set of best practice principles for vehicle identity inspections, including processes to optimise police responses to suspicious vehicles and manage risk.

2009 P22

A national workshop with key stakeholders is held to review the technical criteria that determines when a written-off vehicle should be classified as a statutory write-off.

2001 P7

Australian Design Rule (ADR) 25/02 for engine immobilisers is introduced, making it mandatory for manufacturers to fit all new passenger vehicles with an engine immobiliser from July 2001.

2004 P14

Operation Bounce Back – the NMVTRC's long-standing partnership with local government – kicks off.

2007 P20

Secure by Design is launched – a national campaign to raise motorists' awareness of the importance of security in their vehicle choice and encourage manufacturers to aspire to the best available technology.

2019 P35

The NMVTRC appears before the Commonwealth Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement on the matter of theft and export of motor vehicles and parts in Australia.

2013 P26

The NMVTRC's CARS introduces a new, easy to navigate dashboard with more flexible data manipulation tools and expanded mapping capabilities.

The first ever detailed analysis of the use of stolen vehicles in second and third high-impact, high risk crimes is published.

2015 P31

Launch of the Stolen Vehicle Rapid Response Initiative fitting up to 1,000 high-risk vehicles with low-cost tracking devices.

2021 P38

2010 P23

57,971 thefts recorded nationally represents a significant reduction.

2016 P32

The year-on-year decline trend paused with thefts increasing by 7 per cent to 54,100 vehicles stolen.

2011 P24

Choose a Ride, an interactive educational resource to encourage young people aged 9–14 years to consider the consequences of getting into a stolen car is launched.

2014 P30

Synergy repairs – the NMVTRC's joint venture with Mission Australia and the Suncorp Group delivering on-the-job technical training, work experience and support to young car crime offenders– opens its doors.

2017 P33

NMVTRC hosts the Australian Vehicle Crime Conference bringing together more than 240 representatives across the sector.

2020 P37

Launch of the NMVTRC's community education campaign – Pop. Lock. Stop – to raise awareness of key theft via residential burglary.

2012 P25

The NMVTRC welcomes the Australian Government launch of the Personal Property Securities Register.

2018 P34

The first technical guide for the assessment of heavy vehicle write-offs is published.

National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council

The Beginning

For the last 22 years the NMVTRC has been devoted to delivering a culture of continuous and sustainable vehicle theft reduction by advancing reform and cooperation between industry, government and community stakeholders.

The NMVTRC has collaborated with representatives from policing and law enforcement, crime prevention, academia, general insurance, motor trades, transport agencies, local government and community sectors to review the national and local strategic and operational responses to vehicle crime.

Communication, consultation and negotiation are hallmarks of the NMVTRC's operating philosophy which underpinned all its activities.

This document takes a look back at the NMVTRC's overall commitment towards combating vehicle crime throughout its operation including key projects, reform activity, stakeholder collaboration and industry consultation.

1997

The National Motor Vehicle Theft Task Force was convened in September 1996 as a project of the National Anti-Crime Strategy in response to increasing concerns regarding a lack of national coordination of motor vehicle theft prevention effort.

The Task Force consisted of senior representatives drawn from the motor vehicle and insurance industries, and from police, registration, and other government authorities nationally.

The Task Force's final report (published in 1997) recommended a coordinated approach relying heavily on strong commitment to partnerships from all key stakeholders, and an independent, accountable mechanism to steer implementation. The path to creation of the NMVTRC was laid.

The NMVTRC was to be responsible for coordination, implementation and evaluation of the recommendations and to represent all key stakeholders. Its activities were to be funded by cooperative service provider agreements with the insurance industry; State and territory governments; and vehicle related industries.

1999

Total thefts:
131,600

The NMVTRC commenced informal operation in February 1999 and in March, was established as an Incorporated Association.

Recommendations from the Task Force concluded that effective exchange of information on stolen and written-off vehicles between all states and territories would be a key strategy in combating professional motor vehicle theft.

In its first year, the NMVTRC held the inaugural National Workshop on the Management of Written-off vehicles, and in April Transport Ministers agreed in principal to link registration databases nationally and to expedite the development of compulsory written-off vehicle registers in all jurisdictions.

The NMVTRC committed to assist in the development of a state-of-the-art research and a statistical database to ensure government and non-government stakeholders had access to the best available data in developing more effective and efficient strategies to combat motor vehicle theft. In order to do this, the NMVTRC engaged South Australia's Attorney-General's Department to further develop its state-based system to become the national Comprehensive Auto-theft Research System (CARS).

CARS integrated more than 150 data items from insurance claims and police reports adding vehicle registration data from all states and territories, enabling more meaningful and statistically powerful analyses to be undertaken.

The NMVTRC also published its first national survey on Community Attitudes towards vehicle security to serve as a baseline for years to come.

2000

Total thefts:
145,000 ↑

Many positive outcomes were achieved by the NMVTRC and its stakeholders in 2000. However, the results were to some extent overshadowed by a 9 per cent increase in vehicle theft across Australia resulting in 145,000 vehicles being stolen for the year.

The NMVTRC commissioned a study to identify the feasibility of improving consumer access to a range of vehicle status information, including whether the vehicle's description is consistent with that recorded on the registration data base and whether it had been recorded as written-off or stolen. The final report was published in May and recommended that:

- Austroads' National Exchange of Vehicle and Driver Information System (NEVDIS) was the best system to exchange registration, stolen and written-off status information nationally; and

- the then REVs network operated by fair trading departments (or the registration agency in some jurisdictions) as the logical 'shop front' for public access to the information via an interface to NEVDIS.

The report's intended use was to promote the establishment of appropriate arrangements nationally between the respective offices of fair trading and registration authorities.

Under its CAR-SAFE branding the NMVTRC established a pilot voluntary immobiliser installation program, Immobilise Now! The program was designed to raise public awareness of the effectiveness of engine immobilisers and increase the number of after-market immobilisers fitted to existing vehicle fleets. The program launched as a three-month trial in Tasmania and Victoria. Early evaluation indicated the program had been very well received by the motoring public and the vehicle security industry.

The NMVTRC facilitated significant progress towards the implementation of a nationally consistent WOVR with a national policy agreed to in principle with state and territory road agencies.

The NMVTRC co-hosted the Reducing Car Theft: How long can we go? conference with the Australian Institute of Criminology. The conference brought together the insurance industry, the motor trades, government representatives, criminal justice agencies and academics to discuss the nature and extent of car theft in Australia and internationally.

2001

Total thefts:
138,572 ↓

Vehicle theft remained a significant social and economic problem with almost 139,000 vehicles stolen in 2001, a decrease of 4 per cent in real terms over the previous year.

The year saw the NMVTRC affirm what was to become a long-term commitment to the development of vehicle theft related juvenile crime prevention programs, with a review of Street Legal (a South Australian young offender program). Published in April, the review highlighted Street Legal's methodology as an appropriate basis on which to develop a best practice program model to tackle juvenile offending.

The NMVTRC commenced its pursuit of improving vehicle identification standards in earnest with a significant breakthrough with the Australian Transport Safety Bureau agreeing to allow counterfeit protected and tamper evident (security) labels to replace metal compliance plates used to that point. The NMVTRC also convened a joint working group with the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) to assess the compatibility of candidate secure label technologies with vehicle manufacturing requirements and infrastructure costs.

The Secure Compliance Labels Assessment of Options report was published and concluded that secure adhesive labels could be introduced at a modest cost.

The NMVTRC secured transport agency chief executives' support for the national implementation of best practice principles for the management of written- off vehicles.

The year also saw:

- CARS reach optimal capacity, adding more detailed data from Victoria, Western Australia, and New South Wales and officially providing the most comprehensive, accessible, and up to date vehicle theft data in the world;

- the introduction of Australian Design Rule (ADR) 25/02 for engine immobilisers, making it mandatory for manufacturers to fit all new passenger vehicles with an engine immobiliser from July 2001; and

- the adoption of a state-of-the-art world-first vehicle identification technology on selected vehicles by BMW, Australia, Ford Australia, Holden Special Vehicles, Mitsubishi/Ralliart and Porsche Australia in the form of VIN-based microdots applied as an OEM (Original Equipment Manufacture) feature.

2002

Total thefts:
124,600 ↓

The 2002 period delivered a significant decrease in vehicle theft resulting in the nation's lowest vehicle theft rate in 20 years. Data pointed to an improvement in opportunistic theft rates (more so than professional theft), which was considered to be the result of heightened public awareness of the problem and increased police activity.

The NMVTRC launched its first guide for communities wishing to undertake local theft reduction initiatives to further promote community awareness of motor vehicle theft and extended this message to young people through the 'Spur of the Moment' comic and Educators' Kit (with NRMA). The kit included communication packages for use in schools and youth centres focusing on the legal and life consequences of car theft.

Immobilise Now! saw engine immobiliser installations pass 120,000 vehicles nationally.

A review of Western Australia's mandatory retrofitting requirements on vehicle transfer concluded that it delivered an immobilisation rate of more than 70 per cent and significant theft reductions for the State.

The NMVTRC published an analysis of Insurance Practices and Vehicle Related Fraud. The review found that the disposal of written-off vehicles via public auction had significantly contributed to the ease with which professional thieves launder re-identified stolen vehicles through the registration system.

Victoria became the first jurisdiction to implement the national WOVR policy as an attempt to prevent the practice of vehicle rebirthing.

The NMVTRC's Best Practice Model for Young Offender Programs was published, with the first program based on the model to commence in Hobart by 2003.

Other highlights for the year included:

- all mainland police services and registration authorities being able to share key vehicle information in real time and a renewed focus on theft investigation nationally, with most police services establishing dedicated 'centres of expertise' within their organised crime departments to support regional investigations;

- NMVTRC publishing technical specifications for VIN-based microdot systems as a guide for prospective technology suppliers. Approximately 30,000 new vehicles bearing VIN-based microdots as original equipment were sold across seven brands in Australia; and

- increased interest in the NMVTRC's operations, evidenced by the more than 500,000 hits made on the CAR-SAFE web site for the year and the 4,000 data requests processed via the CARS Analyser on-line enquiry tool.

Wish you'd secured your car?, the NMVTRC's 2009 public education campaign, utilised humour to draw attention to the inconveniences and costs of having a car stolen and encourage motorists to take simple steps such as parking wisely and installing an immobiliser.

2003

Total thefts:
100,946 ↓

The year delivered an unprecedented reduction in vehicle theft nationally that saw theft volumes fall below 101,000 for the first time since 1982.

The NMVTRC continued to advance its involvement in youth offending with the commencement of the 'U-Turn' program in Tasmania. Operated by Mission Australia under contract to the Department of Police and Public Safety, U-turn specifically targeted young recidivist offenders by capitalising on their interest in motor vehicles.

The NMVTRC's commitment to improving the standard of vehicle identification continued with the development of a specification for a new single purpose vehicle security label. The high-tech, low-cost label was designed to supplement other vehicle identifiers and would enable registration authorities and police to confirm the identity of legitimate vehicles and easily detect fake or altered labels by simple visual inspection. The same label was also capable of providing a secure compliance label in place of the existing aluminium plate.

After stakeholders consistently ranked the management of written-off vehicles as a number one issue on the vehicle theft reform agenda, the NMVTRC held a national workshop to review WOV inspection arrangements. Attendees from more than 40 organisations identified 11 key issues where consistency in practice (or additional clarification) was needed.

NMVTRC also held a national workshop to review of the implementation of written-off vehicle registers in participating jurisdictions and Western Australia completed the national system with its introduction of complying arrangements.

Other highlights included:

- the sale of more than 80,000 new vehicles bearing state-of-the-art VIN-based microdot identification technology; and
- Immobilise Now! engine installations passing 250,000 vehicles.

2004

Total thefts:
88,023   ↓

Some 88,000 vehicles were stolen in 2004, marking the third successive year of significant theft reductions – with Australia enjoying its lowest theft rates for more than three decades.

The Australian Capital Territory completed the implementation of NEVDIS on mainland Australia with the registration agencies and police able to enquire directly on up-to-the-minute status information on more than 20 million of Australia's 20.8 million vehicle and driver records.

This year saw the NMVTRC establish the National Parts Code. The voluntary code which was overseen by an independent and incorporated association sought to promote good practice in inventory controls and processes in auto-recycling to minimise the likelihood of stolen parts entering the legitimate industry.

The Tasmanian government committed to investing an additional $1.5 million to extend the NMVTRC's successful young offenders' program U-turn through to 2007. A second U-turn site opened in Western Australia with the support of the Australian Government's Attorney-General's Department.

The NMVTRC launched its Operation Bounce Back program (OBB). OBB partnered with local government in vehicle theft hot spots to promote awareness of vehicle security issues and help theft victims get on with life.

Other highlights included:

- the nation's leading independent theft risk rating system for new vehicles, developed by Insurance Australia Group (IAG) incorporated the NMVTRC's specification for a secure compliance label to its vehicle assessment system;

- VIN-based microdots sales accounting for more than 15 per cent of new vehicle sales; and

- Australia's immobilisation rate increasing to 46 per cent.

2005

Total thefts:
81,410 ↓

2005 was another watershed year for vehicle theft reform in Australia. With record low rates of theft (around 120,000 fewer vehicles stolen since the NMVTRC's inception in 1999), it was estimated that investment in theft reform during this time saved the Australian community up to $1.43 billion.

The year saw substantial progress towards the development of a set of best practice principles for vehicle identity inspections, including processes to optimise police responses to suspicious vehicles and manage risk.

The NMVTRC introduced its 'Australia's Most Wanted (AMW)' campaign to raise public awareness of vehicle security issues. The campaign aimed to focus community attention on the prevailing theft targets and provide clear advice to vehicle owners and buyers about how to minimise their risk of becoming a victim.

Other highlights for the year included:

- the first issue of the NMVTRC's Early Warning Bulletin, providing road agencies with pre-warning of vehicles that posed a rebirthing risk;

- NMVTRC and Austroads co-hosting a national Vehicle Identification Symposium;

- the outstanding early performance of the newly established, Brisbane-based U-turn program for young vehicle theft offenders, which set new benchmarks for retention, graduations, and work placement rates; and

- expansion and continued strong performance of VIN-based microdot technology as a whole-vehicle identifier in assisting in the investigation of vehicle theft and improving in the theft/recovered performance of high-risk vehicles.

2006

Total thefts: 74,973 ↓

The NMVTRC's eighth year of operation delivered Australia its fifth consecutive year of significantly reduced vehicle theft.

The year saw further progress in key elements of the NMVTRC's reform agenda through securing a strategic alliance with AusIndustry – the Australian Government's business innovation support program – and DataDot Technology to commit a total of $3.5 million to support the trial of a high-volume microdot application system that could address the logistical issues associated with applying the technology in just-in-time manufacturing environments.

Positive outcomes were also seen with the NMVTRC's youth offending strategy with the continued outstanding performance of the NMVTRC's young offender program U-turn in Queensland and Tasmania to turn young lives around to deliver positives outcomes for both the young people concerned and the broader community. U-Turn Queensland won the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators (IAATI) award for outstanding achievement in theft reduction.

The NMVTRC's CARS took a significant step by securing monthly downloads of incidence data (formerly quarterly) from the Queensland and South Australian Police services. The introduction of customised quarterly data reports for law enforcement meant that incident data for more than 80 per cent of all thefts was captured in the system within 30 days.

The development of the best practice principles for vehicle identity inspections was completed, to ensure a high level of performance for vehicle identity inspections regardless of the method of service delivery.

Additionally, in 2006 the NMVTRC reported an emerging view amongst police and other stakeholders that the 'traditional' line between the opportunistic theft of vehicles by juveniles and more organised criminal activity was becoming increasingly blurred.

This suggested that treating the two forms of offending as almost mutually exclusive was outmoded and that all theft should instead be viewed as occurring within a continuum which has short-term use at one end (so called joy riding, vandalism, and transport) and profit-motivated theft (fraud, large scale re-birthing, separated parts and exports) at the other.

That principle was adopted in laying out the NMVTRC's forward program and applied to future reform activities.

Other highlights from the year included:

- reaching agreement with transport agencies on a process to ensure the transparent monitoring of the effectiveness of state and territory registration systems in minimising opportunities for criminals to launder stolen vehicles;

- with the assistance of Austroads – making substantial progress towards establishing a means for insurers to validate client vehicle data from vehicle registration systems that would both improve customer service and mitigate against fraudulent claims;

- strong support of Australia's major insurers for the NMVTRC's National Parts Code initiative which sought to significantly reduce the number of stolen vehicle parts entering the legitimate recycling supply chain; and

- theft rates falling in all participating Operation Bounce Back municipalities at a faster rate than the respective host State average.

Car security begins at home, the NMVTRC's 2015 campaign focused on the importance of safeguarding keys and transponders from would-be home burglars in response to rising numbers of car key thefts via home burglaries. The humorous adverts give a nod to three famous 'heist' scenes from high-profile movie blockbusters Mission Impossible, Indiana Jones and Entrapment.

2007

Total thefts: 71,108 ↓

2007 delivered Australia its sixth consecutive, significant reduction in stolen vehicle numbers. The 5 per cent reduction for the year saved the community more than $24 million.

The NMVTRC and Victoria Police co-hosted the inaugural Melbourne International Vehicle Crime Conference (MIVCC) bringing together more than 250 national and international guests to examine emerging national and international car crime issues including youth issues, new policing strategies, balancing privacy in information exchange, immobilising older vehicles, community programs and the use of new technology.

An agreement was reached with the Motor Trades' Association of Australia (MTAA) on improving the interaction between its members and the NMVTRC's National Parts Code.

The NMVTRC launched its Secure by Design program aimed at raising motorists' awareness of the importance of security in their vehicle choice and encouraging manufacturers to aspire to the best available technology.

The NMVTRC also made ssubstantial progress towards establishing a service for insurers to validate key, non-personal data from vehicle registration systems in partnership with Austroads.

The year also saw:

- the NMVTRC play a central role in the establishment of an International Expert Group under the Chairmanship of AVc (the Netherlands' Foundation for Tackling Vehicle Crime) to advance the development of microdot-based vehicle identification standards across the European Union; and

- the NMVTRC and the Australian Crime Commission agree to a joint work program to tackle vehicle crime.

2008

Total thefts:

67,338 ↓

The year delivered Australia another significant reduction in stolen vehicle numbers with the 68,500 thefts recorded nationally representing a 5 per cent fall over the previous year and saving the community more than $25 million.

In August 2008 more than 50 representatives of motorcycle manufacturers and importers, retailers, insurers, transport agencies and rider groups met to develop an action plan to address deficiencies in current industry and regulatory practices that continued to allow motorcycle theft to occur.

The historically poor standard to which a vehicle's key identifiers were applied in the manufacturing process greatly contributed to the ease with which thieves were able to disguise a stolen vehicle's true identity. The year delivered a major breakthrough with volume importers Hyundai and

Nissan joining local specialist high performance manufacturer HSV as the first to adopt a new, high-tech secure compliance label developed by Melbourne's Identitek Systems based on the NMVTRC's high-tech specifications.

Unfortunately, the year saw Queensland's very successful U-Turn program close its doors after it was unable to secure ongoing funding from the Queensland government.

Other highlights from 2008 included:

- the ACT launching a free immobiliser scheme for owners of older, at-risk vehicles;
- the NMVTRC's development of a 'Decision Tree' model with academic, insurance and police experts to determine likely end fate of missing vehicles;
- the NMVTRC publishing the Preliminary Report on the Review of the Management of Written-Off Vehicles;
- a framework for monitoring registration system performance being agreed to by Austroads; and
- the NMVTRC hosting a national Plant and Equipment Theft Summit.

2009

Total thefts:
61,313 ↓

2009 brought about another significant reduction in stolen vehicle numbers, with the 51,300 passenger and light commercial vehicle thefts recorded nationally representing a 10.5 per cent fall from 2008. Pleasingly, the year also saw a drop in motorcycle theft of 4 per cent – the first reduction in this vehicle class for some time. The reduction in theft numbers for the year saved the community an estimated $76 million.

The year saw Chrysler, Isuzu, and Mercedes Benz join the list of vehicles manufacturers using the NMVTRC's endorsed, high-tech compliance label developed by Melbourne's Identitek Systems.

Unfortunately, the National Parts Code was officially wound up after the NMVTRC was unable to reach an agreement with participating recyclers and insurers on a package of meaningful incentives.

To further progress the written-off vehicle reform program, the NMVTRC held a national workshop with key stakeholders to review the technical criteria that determines when a WOV should be classified as a SWO. The group resolved that the current criteria needed urgent updating to better reflect contemporary vehicle design and fabrication techniques and to make the system more impervious to manipulation by criminal networks and fraudsters.

In late 2009 the NMVTRC engaged forensic vehicle engineers Delta V Experts (DVE) to work with affected parties to develop new draft criteria to meet the WOVR system's current and future needs. DVE was assisted by an Expert Reference Group (ERG) of affected parties.

The year saw the 26th group of young Tasmanians graduate from Hobart's young offender program, U-turn.

2010

Total thefts:
57,611 ↓

The 2010 period again delivered Australia a significant reduction in stolen vehicles with the 57,971 thefts recorded nationally representing a 7 per cent fall for the year. Theft rates had fallen 23 per cent since 2005. The reduction in theft numbers for the year saved the community an estimated $60 million.

The NMVTRC's work program continued to place a primary focus on combating the major structural weaknesses in government and industry practices and policies that allowed profit-motivated thieves to continue to ply their trade.

An NMVTRC study into metal recycling practices was undertaken, concluding that a switch to a form of a continuous registration coupled with a requirement for the issue of certificate of destruction by an authorised treatment facility would offer the most cost- efficient means of controlling ELVs from a theft perspective.

An Inter-agency Taskforce into the Separated Parts market was established in co-operation with New South Wales Police – one of only two Australian jurisdictions that license or register both smash repairers and parts recyclers. The ITF conducted a comprehensive program of business premises inspections and found widespread non-compliance.

In parallel with the DVE project undertaken in 2009, the NMVTRC commissioned an independent audit of a sample of more than 400 WOVs sold at auction in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth to assess the consistency with which the current criteria were being applied.

The year also saw the NMVTRC make some key changes to the way it analysed and presented theft trend data. The shift to reporting short-term and profit-motivated theft categories separately was intended to provide a more detailed picture of the drivers of motor vehicle theft.

Other highlights for the year included:

- the continued success of the NMVTRC's partnership with local government to deliver targeted theft prevention messages to those communities most at risk via Operation Bounce Back;
- U-turn Hobart celebrating the graduation of its 30th group of young Tasmanians; and
- the number of records flowing into the CARS system from all sources (police, insurers, registration agencies and commercial auto intelligence services) totalling almost 30 million for the year.

2011

Total thefts:
56,779 ↓

Just under 57,000 vehicles were stolen in 2011 representing a 3 per cent fall over the previous year.

The NMVTRC continued to see success in reform activity for the year. A highlight included the results of the NMVTRC funded Inter-agency Task Force into the separated parts market in New South Wales, which provided great insight into the state of the illicit market and heavily influenced the NMVTRC's work program for 2011/12.

Final agreement was reached with Austroads on a new set of damage assessment criteria for the classification of written-off vehicles which would ensure that vehicles which present a structural repair risk are declared statutory write-offs and ineligible for re-registration.

The NMVTRC developed a new interactive educational resource, Choose a Ride, to encourage young people aged 9–14 years to consider the consequences of getting into a stolen car.

The NMVTRC also engaged UK-based security consultancy SBD to consult with a select group of vehicle manufacturers, representing each tier of prevailing technologies to identify the relative utility of existing and emerging technologies and systems to deter and detect vehicle crime.

2012

Total thefts:
58,805 ↑

The year marked the point at which the significant reductions of the past decade came to a halt in the face of a more challenging economic outlook, with increased theft activity in both short-term and profit-motivated theft across all vehicle age groups.

It also saw a clear shift in short-term theft offending. With the increasing penetration of engine immobilisers in the vehicle fleet, finding unsecured vehicles that could be stolen from the street with simple tools was becoming increasingly difficult. Thieves had adapted, and more than half of passenger/light commercial vehicles stolen for short-term use were fitted with an Australian-standards approved immobiliser – meaning they were most likely stolen by the thief gaining access to the keys.

In June the NMVTRC hosted a national forum on the management of end-of-life vehicles. The forum brought together more than 50 representatives of the insurance and automotive industries/trades, environment agencies, scrap processors, police, and registration authorities to define the common issues of concern and explore options for achieving improved end-of-life outcomes. Participants overwhelmingly validated the NMVTRC's 'twin stream' approach of pursuing a range of short-term and longer-term reforms.

The year saw more than more than 1,000 insurance assessors, claims staff, auction house and transport agency personnel, and specialist police nationally receive expert training in the use of the new engineering-based criteria for the assessment of WOVs.

The NMVTRC welcomed the Australian Government's launch of the Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR) – establishing a national one-stop shop for vehicle encumbrance, stolen and written-off status for consumers and the motor trades. The NMVTRC heavily promoted the PPSR in a print marketing program of the 'winter editions' of motoring clubs' journals nationally.

The NMVTRC continued to work with stakeholders towards better approaches to youth offending reaching in-principle agreement with Mission Australia and the Suncorp Group on a social-enterprise based collision repair business to develop trade skills for young people leaving the juvenile detention system with a view to assisting them to secure full-time employment in the repair sector.

2013

Total thefts:
55,701 ↓

The year redressed the increase of the previous 12 months – returning the nation's theft volumes to pre-2009 levels.

For passenger and light commercial vehicles, the 45,764 thefts recorded for the year was the lowest in a twelve-month period since the 1970s. Profit-motivated theft decreased by 3 per cent.

While vehicle immobilisation had made a major contribution in reducing vehicle crime there was now clear evidence of a shift in offenders' methods towards residential burglaries to access the keys of 'secure vehicles' – with vehicle keys being the only property stolen in up to one in four reported burglaries in which a vehicle was taken. Offenders were also becoming more brazen, entering even occupied premises and in a small number of cases, resorting to violence.

In response the NMVTRC convened a national stakeholder workshop to develop of a set of consistent, appropriate messages to raise awareness of key theft and the importance of home security. The outcomes of the workshop would be used to inform a new suite of NMVTRC community educational materials.

The NMVTRC finalised negotiations with Victoria Police and other local agencies on the establishment of an inter-agency task force into illicit export activity and non-compliance with local laws.

Other reform activity included the successful implementation of new, engineering-based assessment criteria for written-off vehicles – which would decrease the pool of vehicles assessed to be repairable by 30 per cent and further reduce the ability of profit-motivated thieves to manipulate related re-registration processes.

The NMVTRC joined Breakfast Torque, a joint motorcycle safety initiative of the Sutherland Shire Council (New South Wales) and the Australia Motorcycle Riders' Association. The event attracted over 1,000 motorcycle riders and enthusiasts and brought together volunteer, charitable, private and government organisations to promote safety within the motorcycling community.

The NMVTRC used the event to launch its bike-specific online resource for motorcyclists, protectyourbike.com.au, providing motorcyclists with a range of information including theft prevention tips, reports and statistics on motorcycle theft.

The year also saw significant enhancement of the data services available to users of the NMVTRC's CARS in the form of a new, easy to navigate dashboard, more flexible data manipulation tools and expanded mapping capabilities.

The *Pop. Lock. Stop* campaign (2020) employs simple and direct messaging to draw attention to the high percentage of motor vehicle thefts that occur through offenders entering homes to steal car keys ('sneak theft') and presents straightforward prevention measures: *Pop* keys out of sight, *Lock* all doors and windows and ensure everyone in the home is doing the same, *Stop* sneak theft.

2014

Total thefts:
53,450 ↓

The year saw total thefts fall by 6 per cent to settle at 53,450 – a new low benchmark delivering Australia a net community saving of more than $53 million.

It also marked a significant milestone in youth diversion, with the opening of Synergy Auto Repairs, a joint venture between the NMVTRC, Mission Australia and the Suncorp Group. Synergy represented a world first – a 'social enterprise' based, commercial business which offered non-structural smash repair services, while providing on-the-job training, work experience and support to young car crime offenders. The six-month placement was designed to equip graduates with the skills to commence a smash repair apprenticeship.

The final report of the Victorian Inter-Agency Task Force (ITF) into compliance with Local Laws and Illicit Export Activity report was published. The report clearly demonstrated that the existing law, in respect of the

management of separated vehicle parts and vehicle-related scrap, needed major reform. The ITF represented the most comprehensive compliance audit of the auto recycling and scrap metal sectors ever undertaken in Australia.

The NMVTRC launched its 'Car Security Begins at Home' campaign including a range of new resources to raise community awareness of the importance of safeguarding keys and transponders from would-be home burglars.

Other highlights for the year included:

- national heavy vehicle laws establishing a head of power for reporting of heavy vehicle write-offs;

- secure compliance labels passing 3.3 million vehicles and VIN-based microdots passing 250,000 vehicles protected;

- the establishment of the Vehicle Crime Managers' Network to facilitate the regular sharing of expert knowledge and intelligence at senior levels between law enforcement agencies; and

- the development of customised CARS dashboards for the exclusive use of law enforcement agencies.

2015

Total thefts:
51,551   ↓

In the NMVTRC's sixteenth year of operation there were overall theft reductions across all three vehicle categories (cars, motorcycles, and heavy vehicles) for the first time since the NMVTRC's inception. Despite the encouraging numbers, there remained considerable evidence that professional car criminals were continuing to adapt their methodologies to find new gaps in the system.

The NMVTRC launched a world-first trial of a low-cost, vehicle tracking device and smart phone app in collaboration with RAC Insurance and the Western Australia Police Force. The Stolen Vehicle Rapid Response Initiative aimed to fit devices in up to 1,000 vehicles identified as being at the highest risk of theft by key in the greater Perth area.

The Northern Territory became the final jurisdiction to adopt the NMVTRC's revised damage assessment criteria.

In May, Transport Ministers asked the National Transport Commission (NTC) and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) to develop a business case for the early implementation of a HV written-off register ahead of other elements of a registration scheme.

2015 also saw the NMVTRC implement a number of additional community awareness initiatives including partnering with Crimestoppers South Australia to run a Phone-in Day targeting profit-motivated theft and a campaign with TIO in the Northern Territory to specifically address vehicle crime in the Territory using the 'Car Security Begins at Home' messaging.

Other highlights for the year included:

- the NMVTRC's CARS conducting a survey of close to 200 motorcycle theft victims in South Australia to better understand motorcyclists' perception of theft and their familiarity with physical and other options to minimise their risk;

- the public release of the results of the most comprehensive compliance audit of the management of separated vehicle parts and vehicle-related scrap, clearly demonstrating the need for major reform;

- the number of vehicles bearing the NMVTRC endorsed secure compliance label passing the 4 million mark; and

- almost 13 million vehicle status checks being made via the Personal Property Securities Register and Vehicle Information Request System for the year.

2016

Total thefts:
54,094   ↑

In 2016 the year-on-year decline trend paused with thefts increasing by 7 per cent to 54,100 vehicles stolen. Despite this reversal, not all jurisdictions were affected and national volumes were still down 8 per cent from five years prior.

The year saw the release of the final report of the Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC) inquiry into the infiltration of organised crime into lawful occupations. It found that there was a growing movement around the world towards redesigning regulatory regimes to position them as key tools for disrupting organised crime as an alternative to traditional criminal law approaches.

The NMVTRC reached agreement with Austroads, the Australian Financial Security Authority and police services nationally to improve the interpretation of key written-off vehicle data stored in the PPSR by realigning it with the nationally agreed set of incident types, damage location and severity codes.

The NMVTRC's CARS suite of online, interactive data tools expanded with the introduction of:

- a 'Market Segment Profile' tool to explore passenger and light commercial (PLC) market segments together with Glass's Guide estimated vehicle values and top theft targets;

- customised expert data systems for use by Queensland and Western Australia Police Services and the upgrade of the New South Wales Police system to weekly data; and

- enhanced 'Quick Stats' information to provide a quick, interactive summary of top level motor vehicle theft statistics for Australia.

This saw stakeholder use of the NMVTRC's interactive online tools rise by 15 per cent overall and a 26 per cent increase in respect of law enforcement 'restricted access' data.

2017

Total thefts:
56,184 ↑

2017 saw significant progress in the reform of the separated parts market, with the New South Wales (NSW) Government introducing Australian-first crime prevention laws aimed at curbing the illicit trade in scrap metal and end-of-life vehicles. The *Scrap Metal Industry Act 2016* commenced operation in NSW in March 2017 and required persons dealing in scrap metal to register with New South Wales Police, banned cash transactions and imposed a range of obligations on participants to maintain certain records and report suspicious activity.

Following this the Victorian Government also announced that it would amend its second-hand dealing laws to adopt key elements of the New South Wales approach, including a ban on cash payments and trading in de-identified vehicles.

In April, the NMVTRC hosted the Australian Vehicle Crime Conference (AVCC) in conjunction with Victoria Police, IAATI and RACV. The Conference brought together more than 240 representatives from policing and law enforcement, crime prevention, academia, general insurance, motor trades, transport agencies, local government, and community sectors to review current national and local strategic and operational responses to vehicle crime.

The NMVTRC also launched its re-imagined on-line version of the previously successful Australia's Most Wanted campaign, aimed at raising community awareness of the makes and models of vehicles most commonly targeted for short-term and profit-motivated theft.

Synergy Auto Repairs was awarded IAATI's President's Award for the outstanding contribution by an individual or a team in the reduction or deterrence of motor vehicle theft in Australia.

Other highlights included:

- the NMVTRC review of how the WOV landscape has changed over the past five years in the face of the new criteria and New South Wales total ban on repairable write-offs;
- the Transport and Infrastructure (Ministerial) Council agreeing to establish a National Written-Off Heavy Vehicle Register as a priority; and
- the NMVTRC's low-cost, vehicle tracking trial, the Stolen Vehicle Rapid Response Initiative, extended to include Victoria.

2018

Total thefts:
52,722 ↓

Overall theft volumes in 2018 fell by 6 per cent with the nation's total of 52,700 thefts representing a return to 2013 theft levels after a period of volatility in some jurisdictions. The NMVTRC's collaboration returned to full national engagement with the Queensland Government re-joining the partnership for the first time since 2012.

The year saw the continued success of the Synergy Auto Repairs youth diversion social enterprise, which effected its 1,400th complete repair while setting the lives of another 20 former offenders on a positive pathway via trade employment or further education.

Austroads released the report of its joint NMVTRC project on how the national vehicle registration framework could better support the management of end-of-life vehicles to track the whole vehicle lifecycle from manufacture to destruction.

The NMVTRC and Austroads published the first technical guide for the assessment of heavy vehicle write-offs to assist insurance personnel and other notifiers who are required to classify heavy vehicle write-offs for regulatory purposes with the classification task.

The Vehicle Information Request System established by Austroads (with assistance from vehicle manufacturers and the NMVTRC) was redeveloped as part of a range of new commercial applications now approved by Austroads to access non-personal registration data.

The NMVTRC hosted a national workshop of stakeholder subject matter experts and communications specialists to examine prevailing issues and contribute to the development of a set of consistent, appropriate key public education messages that would be suitable for use across all partner organisations' communications with motorists and the broader community.

The NMVTRC engaged Swinburne University to conduct research into identifying the factors that have led to the propensity for violence amongst some youth offenders.

Other highlights for the year included:

- the completion of the first ever 'deep analysis' of vehicle crime trends in the Northern Territory to help local police and community safety planners to refine their respective vehicle crime strategies and improve community safety;

- together with Victoria Police, Crimestoppers, Neighbourhood Watch and the Victorian government the NMVTRC launched the Consideration is Key campaign promoting the importance of key security; and

- the introduction of reduced search fees for a Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR) vehicle status check to just $2.

2019

Total thefts:
55,300 ↑

Vehicle theft rose by 5 per cent for the year on the back of rises across all three vehicle classes. Despite this, the nation's theft total of 55,300 incidents remained 11 per cent lower than a decade ago, and more than 60 per cent lower than its peak in 2001.

It became clear in 2019 that the vehicle theft landscape was beginning to change. Increasingly, vehicle crime was not just a single crime but at the centre of a more complex mix of offending that may also involve significant road safety risks, other crimes against a person, subsequent property crimes and a wide variety of fraudulent activity in respect of personal identity, finance and staged collisions.

The year saw good advances in many areas of the NMVTRC's work program. The NMVTRC established an expert reference group in Western Australia to consider options for scrap metal reform in the State.

The NMVTRC also appeared before the Commonwealth Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement on the matter of theft and export of motor vehicles and parts in Australia. In its final report, the Committee adopted the NMVTRC's call for stolen vehicles to be expressly added to the prohibited exports list as its principal recommendation.

Synergy Auto Repairs celebrated its fifth anniversary with more than 3,000 customer repairs and more than 50 graduating participants in trade apprenticeships.

The NMVTRC completed a fresh review of the effectiveness of the NSW Government's Crimes Act which introduced new offences for knowingly facilitating a car rebirthing activity. The review found the new offences to be useful investigative and prosecutorial tools that have secured convictions that might have not otherwise been possible.

Together with Victoria Police and the local Department of Justice and Community Safety, the NMVTRC commissioned behavioural economics research to better understand motorists' attitudes and actions towards safeguarding keys and vehicle theft via home burglary and inform future community resources.

The year also saw the NMVTRC and Swinburne University conclude the first qualitative study of young people serving a custodial sentence for a violent vehicle crime incident. The research aimed to understand what drives violent youth offending and provide key insights for a wide cross-section of service planners across the justice, education, and health sectors.

2020

Total thefts:
56,321 ↑

The NMVTRC's 21st year of operation saw vehicle theft increase by 2 per cent for the year. The COVID-19 pandemic would herald a challenging time both socially and economically. With a long-established correlation between the performance of the economy and crime generally, the uplift in vehicle crime was expected to extend well into 2021.

A long-standing priority for the NMVTRC has been informing Australian motorists and raising community awareness of contemporary motor vehicle theft issues. The year saw the NMVTRC develop a new suite of community education resources under the Pop. Lock. Stop. (PLS) banner with the assistance of visual content creators and expert behavioural scientists. PLS employs simple and direct messaging to raise motorists' awareness of offenders entering homes to steal car keys and straightforward mitigation measures.

In response to increasing times in the recovery of stolen vehicles the NMVTRC reached agreement with the Queensland Police Service and Victoria Police on the design of joint analyses of stolen vehicle incidents to identify links to other high-harm, high-impact offending and the wider impacts on community safety.

The NMVTRC continued its collaborative alliance with IAG Research Centre on e-theft and cyber threats which delivered a preliminary analysis of the utility of stored vehicle data for police and insurance investigations.

Other highlights for year included:

- strong support from Western Australian-based stakeholders for the NMVTRC's call for reform of the State's scrap metal trade to bring it into line with like recent reforms in New South Wales and Victoria;

- continued and sustained success of the partnerships with local government to deliver community awareness programs in theft hot spots – with the best performing municipalities achieving local theft reductions of between 5 and 30 per cent in the face of upward trends nationally;

- CARS continued growth with the system now holding more than 715 million records of vehicle data sourced from police, registration, insurance, and automotive intelligence data providers; and

- use of the restricted law enforcement only services increasing by 20 per cent and the continued development of more interactive applications for users.

2021

Total thefts:
47,803 ↓

A total of 47,803 motor vehicles were stolen nationally in the 12 months to June 2021. This represented a 15 per cent decrease from the previous year and is the lowest theft volume on record.

In March the ICA announced that it would not be renewing its collaboration with the NMVTRC after July rendering the NMVTRC's future operation unviable. The ICA emphasised that its decision was in no way a reflection of the work or achievements of the NMVTRC, but that challenging business conditions and new threats meant that expenditure was being closely monitored at all levels. The NMVTRC Board resolved to proceed with an orderly winding up of operations by 30 September 2021.

The NMVTRC's focus for the rest of 2021 was on completing those high-priority projects that could reasonably be expected to deliver a tangible outcome or recommendations for reform in the time available.

Following on from its work with Western Australia stakeholders, the NMVTRC worked with expert reference groups of industry and government representatives in Queensland and South Australia and economic and public policy consultants to put forward options for reform of the scrap metal industry in both States.

The NMVTRC also worked with Victoria Police and relevant federal agencies (Australian Taxation Office, Austrac, Australian Border Force, and Home Affairs) to conduct joint agency intelligence operations to quantify stolen vehicle export risks and potential remedial actions. And the year saw the first ever detailed analysis of the use of stolen vehicles in second and third high-impact, high risk crimes published. The analysis provides sound evidence of the compounding nature of vehicle crime and the potential harm caused from a single vehicle theft incident.

Unfortunately, the year also saw the closure of the successful Synergy Auto Repairs (SAR) collaboration with Mission Australia and the Suncorp Group. Since 2014, SAR provided an opportunity for young people to turn their lives around. The enterprise completed more than 3,000 customer repairs and placed more than 50 graduates in trade apprenticeships and continually performed at a high level in respect of its therapeutic outcomes. We remain hopeful for the establishment of a like program in other jurisdictions.

Other reform highlights for the year included:

- use of the restricted law enforcement only services increasing by 20 per cent and the continued development of more intuitive, interactive applications for users;
- an estimated 232 million consumers exposed to media coverage relating to the NMVTRC including coverage of the NMVTRC's Pop. Lock. Stop campaign; and
- completion of a raft of collaborative projects with IAG Research Centre in respect of e-theft, cyber-security risks and connected vehicles.

Our Thanks

The NMVTRC is proud of its contribution to reducing the economic and social impacts of vehicle crime on the nation and that FY2021 saw the lowest vehicle crime volumes in more than 20 years.

We couldn't have achieved the many significant milestones of the past 22 years without the valued contribution of our many stakeholders. We sincerely thank them for helping to drive down vehicle crime. Thanks also to all the former staff and Council members listed opposite for their expert management of a very challenging and nationally important body of work.

The results are an enduring testament to the true value of collaboration.

From the team at ***National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council***

Motor vehicle theft volumes in Australia, 2000–2021
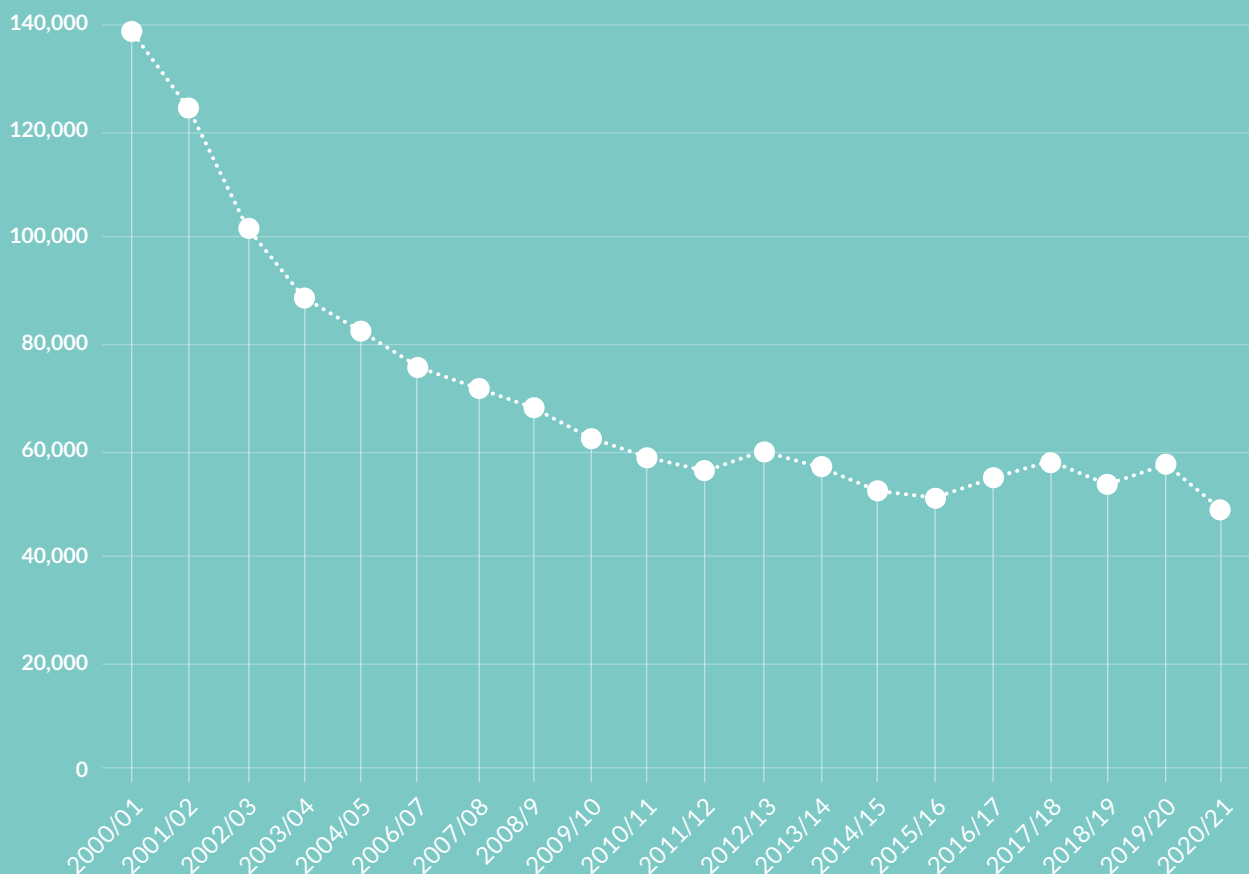
Chairmen

Leon Daphne

David M Morgan AO

Staff Members

Anna Saw
Project Officer

Antoinette Padovano
Administration Officer

Beryl Dukes
Administration Officer

Caitlin Hrambanis
Projects and Communication
Coordinator

Christine Pejic
Program Manager (f. Projects
and Communications
Coordinator)

Danielle Meagher
Accounts and
Administration Officer

Elbereth Knox
Administration Officer

Geoff Hughes
Chief Executive (f. Director –
Strategy and Programming)

Helen Papastathis
Project Officer

Kate Roadley
Administration Officer

Ray Carroll
Executive Director

Siobhan Sheridan
Research & Project Officer

Thea Carbines
Project Officer

Tiffany Podrug
Administration Officer

Zilpher Thompson
Administration Officer

CARS Members

Aggie Malkowska
Senior Research Officer

Amaya Gilson
Research Officer

Ankit Saksena
Database Manager

Emma Ziersch
Senior Research Officer

Graham Bath
Database Manager

Hedyeh Hedayati
Senior Research Officer

Kristen Zeeman
Research Officer

Laura Jackson
Research Officer

Paul Thomas
Manager

Peter Duldig
Database manager

Richard Yin
Senior Database
Administrator/Analyst

Robert Potter
Senior Research Officer

Sophie Ransom
Senior Research Officer

Council Members

Alan Tattersall
Insurance Council of Australia

Andrew Lee
Department of Transport
WA (Austroads)

Andrew Mahon
Department of Transport
and Main Roads, Queensland
(Austroads)

Anthony Coles
Australian Government's
Attorney-General's
Department

Ashley Sanders
Federal Chamber of
Automotive Industries

Bill McKendry
Department of Justice (Vic)
(Crime Prevention Ministerial
Forum)

Bob Hill APM
Victoria Police (Lead Ministers
for NMVTRC Business)
(Deputy Chair)

Chris McNally
VicRoads (Austroads)

David Hurford
RACV Insurance (Insurance
Council of Australia)
(Deputy Chair)

David Lang
Australian Automobile
Association

David Shelton
Vicroads (Austroads)

Dick Adams OAM APM
Australasian Police Ministers
Council (Deputy Chair)

Dr Dianne Heriot
Commonwealth Agencies

Dr Ian Carnell
Commonwealth Agencies

Geoff Gwilym
VACC (Motor Trades'
Association of Australia)

Geoff Shanks
Vicroads (Austroads)

Greig Newbery APM
NSW Police (Standing Council
on Police and Emergency
Management)

James Armitage
Department of Justice (Vic)
(National Crime Prevention
Officers' Group)

James Hurnall
Federal Chamber of
Automotive Industries

Jimmy Higgins
Suncorp Insurance (Insurance
Council of Australia)

John Chapman
Motor Trade Association
of SA (Motor Trades'
Association of Australia)

Karl Sullivan
Insurance Council of Australia

Keith Seyer
Federal Chamber of
Automotive Industries

Ken Lay AO APM
Victoria Police (Ministerial
Council for Police and
Emergency Management)

Margaret Crawford
Roads and Traffic Authority
(NSW) (Austroads)

Mark Borlace
Australian Automobile
Association

Mark McBurney
Department of Justice (Vic)
(Crime Prevention Ministerial
Forum)

Matthew Wilson
Zurich Insurance (Insurance
Council of Australia)

Michael Jones
Insurance Australia Group
(Insurance Council of
Australia)

Murray Chapman
NSW Police (Law, Crime and
Community Safety Council)

Nola Watson
Insurance Australia Group
(Insurance Council of
Australia)

Paul Anderson
Suncorp Insurance
(Insurance Council
of Australia)

Paul Tomic
Insurance Australia
Group (Insurance Council
of Australia)

Paula Bond
Suncorp Insurance (Insurance
Council of Australia)

Peter Fitzpatrick AO AM
Motor Trades' Association
of WA (Motor Trades'
Association of Australia)

Peter Sturrock
Federal Chamber of
Automotive Industries

Phil Allan
Federal Chamber of
Automotive Industries

Ray Rawlings
Queensland Transport
(Austroads)

Rex Scholar
Federal Chamber of
Automotive Industries

Richard Dudley
Australian Motor Industry
Federation/ Motor Trades
Association of Australia

Richard Gibson
National Transport Insurance
(Insurance Council of Australia)

Rob Bartlett
Suncorp Group (Insurance
Council of Australia)
(Deputy Chair)

Rob Whelan
Suncorp Insurance (Insurance
Council of Australia)

Robert McDonald
Insurance Australia Group
(Insurance Council of
Australia)/ Australian
Automobile Association

Ron Arnold
Insurance Australia Group
(Insurance Council of Australia)

Sue Millbank
SA Attorney-General's
Department (National
Anti-Crime Strategy)

Terry Purton
Victoria Police (Australasian
Police Ministers Council)

Tim Cartwright APM
Victoria Police (Ministerial
Council for Police and
Emergency Management)

Tony Selmes
Motor Trades' Association
of Australia

National Motor Vehicle
Theft Reduction
Council