



RELEASE NO. 74

23 August 2004

AUSTRALIA'S MOST WANTED—HOLDEN COMMODORE FAVOURITE OF YOUNG THIEVES AND PROFESSIONAL RE-BIRTHERS ALIKE

“If you’re complacent about vehicle theft, you could pay very dearly!” That’s the message from the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council (NMVTRC) as it launched a new community education initiative, *Australia’s Most Wanted* (AMW), in Hobart today.

The NMVTRC’S Executive Director, Ray Carroll, said “Despite recent record reductions in vehicle theft nationally, an entrenched culture of car crime in Australia means we still endure a theft rate up to four times that of some comparable nations.”

In the last 12 months one in every 70 Australian households had a vehicle stolen. In Tasmania more than 150 vehicles are stolen every month at a staggering cost to the community of more than \$1.3 million. A recent NMVTRC survey of theft victims found that expenses not covered by insurance averaged more than \$5000.

AMW focuses on the top older and late model targets of vehicle thieves at a state and national level—see attachment for vehicle details or Media Kit CD¹.

In unveiling Tasmania’s hottest theft targets, Mr Carroll said “Driver complacency is the car thief’s greatest friend. Many car owners cling onto long held myths like it will never happen to me, or no-one would ever want to steal my old bomb, or I’m insured—it doesn’t matter. The truth is that if you can’t afford to be thousands of out-of-pocket then it does matter. AMW is a great example of how governments and the insurance industry can work together to deliver practical advice to motorists on how to protect themselves from theft.”

Mr Carroll explained that different types of car thieves had very different motivations. “Opportunistic thieves, typically young males, are often looking for short-term transport. They target older vehicles they can break into and start using basic tools such as a wire coat hanger and screwdriver. You may get your car back, but it will have been thrashed to within an inch of its life and sustained substantial mechanical and body damage.

At the other end of the spectrum, thousands of people fall victim to criminal scams by unwittingly buying a re-identified stolen car only to later see it seized by police. Professional criminals steal late model cars to convert to cash by re-identifying them to on-sell or stripping them for parts. Carroll described Tasmania as a “net importer” of late model stolen vehicles meaning that criminal networks target the State to sell vehicles stolen in other parts of Australia to unsuspecting Tasmanian buyers.

¹ The CD in the Media Kit contains images of the AMW target vehicles, the latest detailed theft statistics for Tasmania, and a slide show depicting the life-cycle of vehicle theft.



National Motor Vehicle
Theft Reduction Council

“Take Holden’s VT Commodore for example,” Carroll said. “Last year alone 440 of these vehicles disappeared, netting criminals more than \$6.7 million.”

However, Mr Carroll said that despite these alarming statistics vehicle theft did not have to be inevitable and there are some simple and relatively low-cost solutions that can greatly minimise the risk of becoming a victim.

He said “The NMVTRC’s messages are very simple. If you own one of the older theft targets—fit an Australian Standards approved engine immobiliser to ensure you keep it safe from juvenile thieves. These sophisticated but low cost devices cannot be defeated by the roadside.

If you own one of the late model targets—look after your keys. Without access to the keys these more secure vehicles are very hard to steal.

And if you’re thinking of buying one of the top late model targets only buy from a commercial trader. If you buy privately and the car turns out to be stolen you will have done your money cold. If you buy from a commercial trader you’ll be protected by an industry guarantee fund. Remember, if the deal seems too good to be true—it nearly always will be!”

Carroll stressed that the NMVTRC was getting good co-operation from insurers, the motor trades and governments to make life much tougher for criminals. He said initiatives like the real-time exchange of vehicle status information by transport agencies nationally and new developments in vehicle identification technology were turning up the heat on criminal networks.

For information on engine immobilisers, and other car security tips you can contact the NMVTRC’s 24 hour CAR-SAFE Hotline on 1300 132 146 for the cost of a local call.

The NMVTRC is a joint initiative of all Australian governments and the insurance industry.

For Further Information Contact the NMVTRC’s:

- Executive Director, Ray Carroll, Tel: (03) 9348 9600 or 0408 379 349
- Director, Strategy & Programming, Geoff Hughes, (03) 9348 9600 or 0412 522 060