



National Motor Vehicle  
Theft Reduction Council  
*driving down vehicle theft*

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**The NMVTRC is an initiative of all Australian Governments and the Insurance Industry**

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# theft torque

## Tackling plant and equipment theft



*South East Excavations Operations Manager, Jon Gibson applying Datadots. Image courtesy of Construction Contractor.*

There were over 14,000 construction and mining machines sold in Australia last year, worth more than a trillion dollars. In 2007/08, 551 pieces of plant and equipment (P & E) were stolen representing 4 per cent of total thefts.

P & E theft has a much lower profile than passenger vehicle theft and consequently there is a lack of understanding of the dynamics, frequency and cost, which mainly impact small business operators.

To address the problem a Construction Machinery Theft Summit was hosted in October in Sydney by the Construction and Mining Equipment Industry Group (CMEIG) and the Civil Contractors' Federation (CCF) with the support of the NMVTRC and DataDot Technology Ltd. The forum was well attended by a cross section of industry bodies, equipment importers, insurance and finance companies and law enforcement agencies.

The factors most contributing to the problem were identified as the lack of security surrounding P & E storage, the bulk of P & E operating outside of the registration system (making it difficult for police to adequately record stolen P & E and facilitating easy disposal via the second hand and black markets), identification challenges posed by the absence of a universal numbering system and

central system for prospective purchasers to check the machine's authenticity.

Overall, it was agreed that current law enforcement and industry responses present little risk to thieves. The adoption of DataDotDNA by a proportion of the industry's importers and wholesalers was seen as a major positive step. Other options deemed feasible to further reduce theft risk included:

- the need to improve the level and accuracy of reporting;
- improving the accessibility of information on stolen plant to vehicle buyers and hire companies;
- providing the retail, insurance and finance industries with protection against inadvertently facilitating theft and fraud; and
- providing police and other agencies with an avenue to cost effectively improve their investigations.

While there is no 'silver bullet' solution the focus for reform should be on weaving a variety of initiatives together to provide a systematic barrier to theft whilst not disrupting business practices unnecessarily. The NMVTRC will next facilitate a round of industry meetings to develop a more refined strategic approach.

# Annual Report in brief

The 2007/08 NMVTRC Annual Report is now available online. If you would like to request a hard copy, please contact us at [info@carsafe.com.au](mailto:info@carsafe.com.au). Here is summary of the report, highlighting the outcomes for the year.

## Motor vehicle theft in Australia, 2007/08

The downward trend pleasingly continued in 2007/08, with Australia experiencing a seventh consecutive overall fall in theft numbers and rates. The volume of unrecovered vehicles remained stable, however, the proportion has increased to one in five stolen vehicles not recovered. The reduction in theft numbers for the year has saved the community an estimated \$25 million to \$49 million<sup>1</sup>.

## Reform activity

The reforms implemented in 2007/08 are summarised below according to the four countermeasures of education, engineering, enforcement and encouragement.

### Education

We continued to carry out community-targeted information projects to assist motorists to reduce their theft risk, including the fifth year of *Operation Bounce Back*, aimed at promoting community awareness and securing older vehicles, as well as maintaining the *Immobilise Now!* program. A nationwide motorists' survey was also conducted to better understand how the community perceives vehicle theft as a crime – the responses of which will influence the content of the Car-Safe public education material.

### Engineering

We continued to implement systematic responses to vehicle crime with projects aimed at improving vehicle and component identification continuing in 2007/08. In this field Hyundai and Nissan became the first volume importers to adopt the secure compliance label, and the full commissioning of the world-first Robotic Microdot Applicator became a reality at Melbourne's Prix Car import preparation centre for brands including Audi, Lexus, Lotus and Porsche. Growing concerns for repairable write-offs being repaired with stolen parts was addressed with a review to identify options for further tightening of related practices.

Audits of registration authorities' conformance with agreed best practice principles for reducing fraudulent registration transactions were completed this year with the overall picture indicating high levels of general compliance. Required corrective



NMVTRC 2008 Annual Report cover.

actions identified through the audit will continue to be monitored. The Australian Government's ongoing development of the National Personal Property Securities Law Reform also goes towards the continued aim of improving consumer access to vehicle information.

Minimising opportunities for insurance fraud was also a priority by allowing the verification of non-personal vehicle information for insurers via national registration data and the NMVTRC's continuing participation in the Insurance Council of Australia's Economic Crime Working Group.

Our world-leading Comprehensive Auto-theft Research System again provided stakeholders and the media with fast and easy access to the most comprehensive and up-to-date vehicle theft data available.

### Enforcement

A new low-cost, but highly accurate Automatic Number Plate Recognition system was trialled with the cooperation of New South Wales and Victoria to further develop the NMVTRC's goal of encouraging improved strategic police responses.

### Encouragement

Projects aimed at promoting actions and behaviours to reduce the risk or impact of theft for the community and young offenders remained a priority. Support for project *U-turn* to divert young offenders away from the justice system and encourage them to get

their lives going the way they really wish, remained strong in Tasmania. However, unfortunately this year saw the demise of Queensland's *U-turn* after not being able to secure on-going state government funding. The NMVTRC's flagship media program *Secure by Design* continued to raise consumer awareness of good design in vehicle security systems in late 2007.

The National Parts Code established to encourage best practice in parts recycling wound up this year after the NMVTRC was unable to secure tangible insurance incentives for participating recyclers. Alternative regulatory options will be examined to improve stock control practices in the recycling industry.

Collaborative projects with Victoria and New South Wales Police also commenced in order to target rising numbers of unrecovered vehicles, with a focus on encouraging improved local government protocols for the removal of abandoned vehicles as well as targeting both identification of unrecovered vehicles and environmental issues in the case of the retrieval and identification of stolen vehicles dumped in the Georges River in Sydney.

## Performance indicators

Australia once again improved its position on the vehicle theft 'league table,' now standing in fifth spot, equal with the United Kingdom.

Car theft remained a strong focus in electronic and print media this year and the NMVTRC again featured prominently across both mediums, with *Operation Bounce Back* and *Secure by Design* gaining strong coverage.

In-depth telephone interviews revealed strong stakeholder support for the NMVTRC's performance over the year. Overall awareness of the reforms and programs of the NMVTRC was strong nationally and excellent ratings were achieved for the quality and dissemination of vehicle theft information and consultation with stakeholders.

For more details, see the full version of the NMVTRC's Annual Report in the publications section of our website, [www.carsafe.com.au](http://www.carsafe.com.au)

1. Based on an independent economic analysis conducted by MM Stars Pty Ltd for the NMVTRC (September 2005) which estimated victims' costs per incident to be in the range of \$6,230 to \$11,920 depending on a range of personal and other factors.

## Two 'flights' of OBB for 2009

The selection process is currently underway for the 2008/09 *Operation Bounce Back* (OBB) program. It is expected that an increased number of around 25 grants will be offered to new and continuing local councils across Australia in order to raise community awareness and tackle older vehicle thefts in areas where it is most needed.

The fifth year of the program will see a change in the project's administration, with participating councils split into two separate rounds of OBB depending on the peak period of risk. Administering the program at these times of frequent offending will help to ensure the messages of OBB are realised by the community at the most appropriate times of the year, with hopefully the most effective results.

The first round of OBB is expected to follow the time line of previous years and commence in early 2009. Local councils involved in the second 'flight' will launch their projects around August and there will be an evaluation undertaken at the completion of both rounds. It is expected that the new format will freshen the program and bring about even greater positive results for the communities involved.

## Re-design of Car-Safe material

Earlier in the year we commissioned a telephone survey of 1,200 motorists across Australia to determine community awareness and attitudes to vehicle theft. Pleasingly, the survey results indicated that community understanding of the reality of vehicle theft and the importance of securing vehicles continues to improve. However, it became clear that despite widespread awareness of the risk of theft, there remains a lack of motivation to take extra precautions, such as installing an engine immobiliser, to reduce this risk.

In order to address these issues we are in the process of updating the Car-Safe educational brochures. The brochures will have a fresh, new design and an increased focus on the inconveniences to personal, work and family lives that having a vehicle stolen can cause. The new material is expected to be available in early 2009.



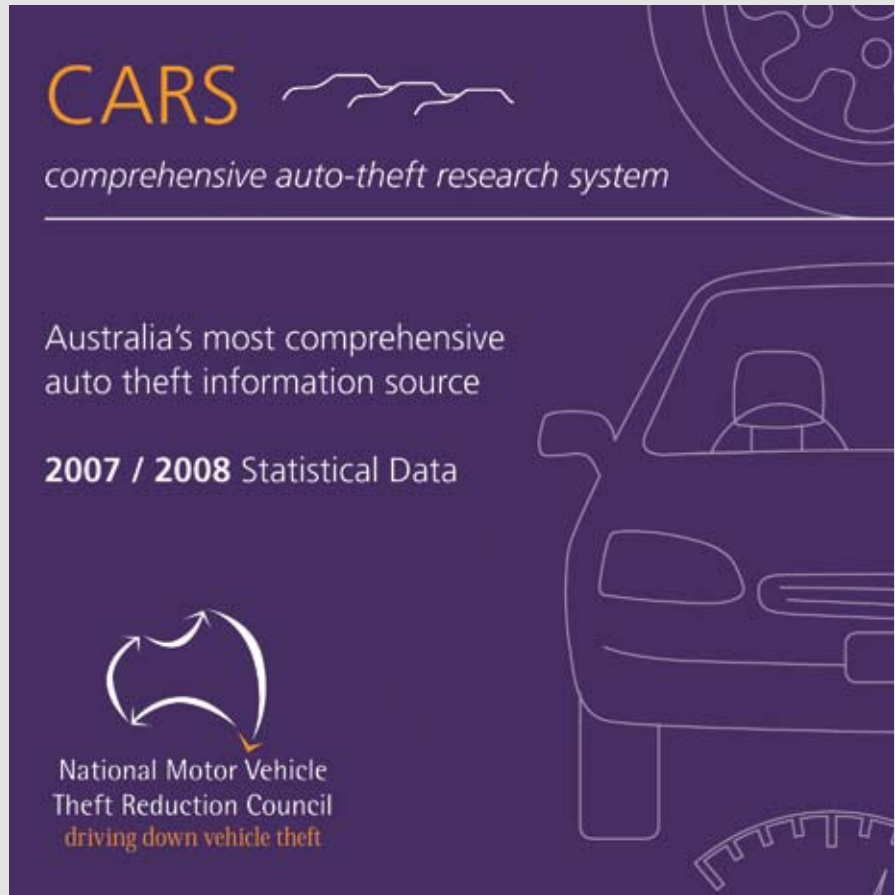
Examples of current Car-Safe education brochures.

## Statistics available!

Recent in-depth surveys with executives from stakeholder organisations indicated that some felt that the level of statistical analysis provided by the NMVTRC stakeholder access could be improved. Did you know that quarterly theft reports providing a range of temporal, vehicle type, geographical and insurance statistical data and Quick Stats reports are updated each quarter and made available on our website? Stakeholders can also access more detailed statistics and conduct self-searches on a range of motor vehicle theft data online using the CARS Analyser. You can access all quarterly and Quick Stats reports, and access and request a password for the Analyser by going to <http://ncars.on.net/analyse.asp>

The CARS 2007/08 annual statistical data CD is also now available. The CD presents an overview of national trends and detailed profiles for each state and territory and allows simple navigation of the most comprehensive statistics (temporal, vehicle type, geographical and insurance). To request a copy of the CD please email [ncars@ncars.on.net](mailto:ncars@ncars.on.net)

If there are particular analyses you would like to see added to our standard suite of statistical material please drop us a line.



CARS 2007/08 Annual CD cover.



## Christmas message

NMVTRC Councillors and staff would like to wish all our readers and stakeholders a happy Christmas and a safe new year. We thank you for your continued cooperation and support over the year in driving down vehicle theft in Australia!