



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

# Theft WATCH

National Motor Vehicle  
Theft Reduction Council –  
No.17 November 2005

## Lower Theft Rates Reveal a Change in Theft Trends

Table 1: Australia, theft snapshot

12 months to September 2005	
Number of thefts	81,150
% change from previous 12 months	-6%
% of thefts recovered	75%
September 2005 Quarter	
Number of thefts	19,000
% change from last quarter	-6%
% change from same quarter previous year	-9%
% of thefts recovered in quarter	69%
Expected % of thefts recovered <sup>1</sup>	74%
Theft rate per 1,000 population	0.9
Theft rate per 1,000 registrations	1.3
Total value of stolen PLC vehicles <sup>2</sup>	\$137m
Total value of unrecovered PLC vehicles	\$44m
Number of motorcycle thefts	1,610
% change from last quarter	-5%
% change from same quarter previous year	11%
% of motorcycles recovered	27%
Number of claims <sup>3</sup>	8,670
Average claim cost	\$8,700
Median claim cost	\$4,250
Average agreed value claim cost	\$10,590
Total claim costs	\$75.4m

### Top Opportunistic Targets, September Quarter

	Number Stolen
Holden Commodore VL, VN and VK	2,035
Ford Falcon EA & XF	720
Toyota Hilux	300
Toyota Corolla	290
Hyundai Excel X3	255

### Top Professional Targets, September Quarter<sup>1</sup>

	Number Missing
Holden Commodore VT, VX, VS & VY	200
Ford Falcon AU, BA & EL	90
Mitsubishi Lancer CE	35
Toyota Hilux	35
Toyota Landcruiser 70 Series	30

- Some vehicles stolen in the quarter will be recovered in subsequent quarters.
- Passenger and light commercial (PLC) vehicles comprised 87 per cent of total thefts. Values calculated using pricing data contributed by Glass's Information Services.
- Excludes 325 claims finalised without cost.
- Includes only PLC vehicles <10 years old.

Theft numbers fell by almost 1,200 during the September quarter delivering the third consecutive quarterly reduction for the year. This 6 per cent reduction exceeds both the March and June falls which were 4 and 2 per cent respectively.

All States recorded lower theft numbers for the quarter however both Territories defied the continuing national downward trend. Small populations in the Territories result in wide statistical variances from a relatively small number of thefts. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) recorded its second consecutive increase with 200 more thefts, an increase of 44 per cent. The Northern Territory reported an additional nine thefts, translating to a 6 per cent increase.

The largest percentage reductions were recorded in Tasmania, down 16 per cent or 93 fewer vehicles, and South Australia which fell by 14 per cent or 319 vehicles. New South Wales is the key driver of national theft numbers with almost 600 fewer thefts, a reduction of 8 per cent. Reductions of 5 per cent in Queensland and 1 per cent in Victoria also contributed to the national fall.

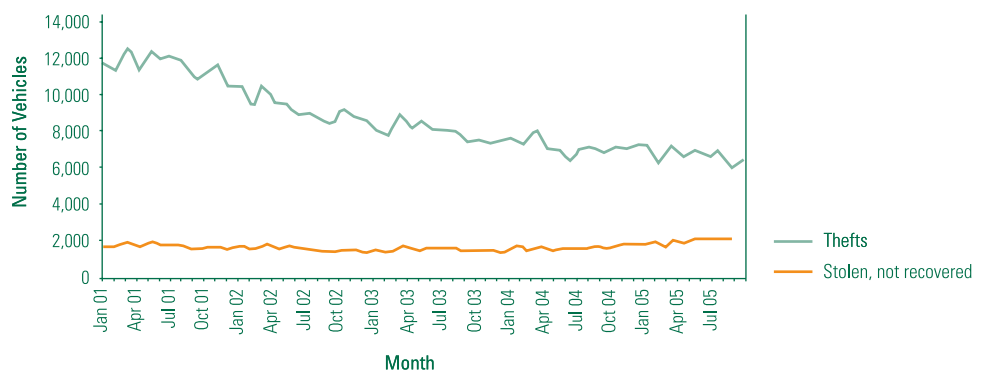
Vehicles stolen in the September quarter had a retail value of more than \$137 million of which an estimated \$44 million remain missing.

While motorcycle thefts fell by 5 per cent the long term trend for these vehicles has been increasing numbers. Almost 600 more motorcycles were stolen in the 12 months to September than in the previous 12 months.

The average cost for insurers to finalise a theft claim in the September quarter fell slightly to \$8,700. Agreed value claims accounted for 56 per cent of claims but 66 per cent of total costs. More than half of the finalised claims cost less than \$5,000 and only 3 per cent exceeded \$40,000.

The changing theft patterns over the past five years can be characterised as: dramatically lower overall theft numbers; increasing motorcycle theft; rising average claim costs driven by greater reductions in low value claims; and an almost static numbers of vehicles which remain missing each quarter. Missing vehicle theft patterns are also changing and are examined in more detail over the page.

Figure 1: Vehicles stolen by month, January 2001 – September 2005



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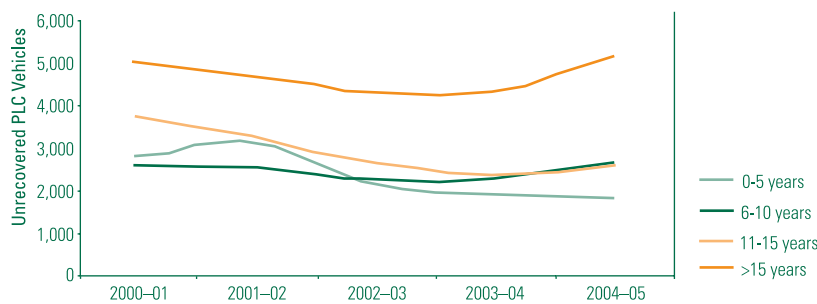
The NMVTRC is an initiative of all Australian Governments and the Insurance Industry

Table 2: State and territory theft snapshot

	Thefts, September quarter	% change over last quarter	Thefts not recovered <sup>5</sup>	% of thefts recovered	Thefts per 1,000 population	Thefts rate per 1,000 registrations	Thefts for 12 months to September 2005	% change over previous 12 months
ACT	564	14	101	82	1.7	2.5	1,864	-1
NSW	6,839	-8	2,463	64	1.0	1.6	29,913	-9
NT	159	6	48	70	0.8	1.4	642	-9
QLD	2,738	-5	750	73	0.7	0.9	11,584	-4
SA	1,986	-14	381	81	1.3	1.7	8,984	-4
TAS	488	-16	37	92	1.0	1.3	1,898	10
VIC	4,456	-1	1,335	70	0.9	1.2	18,505	-6
WA	1,773	-4	705	60	0.9	1.1	7,758	-6
Australia	19,003	-6	5,820	69	0.9	1.3	81,148	-6

5. Thefts not recovered in September quarter.

Figure 2. Unrecovered PLC vehicles by vehicle age, over time<sup>6</sup>



6. Excludes Western Australia.

Table 3: Stolen vehicles not recovered, 2000-05

	Not recovered	Motorcycle thefts not recovered	PLC thefts not recovered
2000-01	20,294	3,942	15,398
2001-02	19,574	3,779	14,821
2002-03	17,395	3,587	12,835
2003-04	17,728	4,084	12,643
2004-05	18,998	4,420	13,301

## Unrecovered Vehicle Ages Point to New Theft Patterns

The NMVTRC acknowledges all police services, registration authorities, participating insurers, the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, Glass's Information Services and Insurance Australia Group for their supply of the data. Theft incident data may be subject to later revision by the data providers.

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National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council Inc

50-52 Howard Street  
North Melbourne Victoria 3051  
Australia

Telephone (03) 9348 9600  
Facsimile (03) 9348 9988  
Email [info@carsafe.com.au](mailto:info@carsafe.com.au)

Compared to 2000-01, 56,300 fewer vehicles were stolen in the 12 months to June 2005: a reduction of 40 per cent. Unrecovered vehicles have only dropped by 1,300 or 6 per cent however. The largest reduction has clearly been in recovered (traditionally considered as 'opportunistic') theft.

The greatest decline in unrecovered vehicles occurred in 2002-03 and in each of the last two years the number of unrecovered vehicles has increased. Examination of vehicle types and ages shows dramatic changes in the nature of unrecovered vehicles however.

A major change in the age distribution of unrecovered passenger and light commercial (PLC) vehicles has occurred since 2000-01 (refer Figure 2).<sup>1</sup> The number of unrecovered newer vehicles (<six years old) has steadily fallen by 37 per cent, from 2,760 to 1,740 vehicles. After an initial decline, vehicles older than 15 years increased by 18 per cent from 4,340 in 2003-04 to 5,110 last year. Numbers of 6 to 14 year old unrecovered vehicles fell by 31 per cent over the four years although increased in number by almost 200 last year.

Table 3 shows that although the number of unrecovered motorcycles increased by 17 per cent

over the four year period, PLC vehicles still account for seven in every ten missing vehicles with 13,300 'lost' in 2004-05.

The shift towards older PLC vehicles may be an indication that the national written-off vehicle system, progressively introduced from 2002, has severely limited opportunities for thieves to launder VINs from damaged late model vehicles. It may also reflect the remaining availability of VINs from vehicles written-off prior to the system's introduction, a strong demand for replacement parts for vehicles nearing their end of life, and in the case of 15 years and older vehicles, an emerging trend of 'theft for scrap'.

To gain a better understanding of the changing dynamics of vehicle theft in Australia, the NMVTRC is undertaking a detailed analysis of the fate of unrecovered vehicles under the guidance of an expert reference group comprising analysts from police services and the insurance industry. Findings will be reported in the first half of 2006.

1. Unrecovered vehicles from Western Australia have been excluded due to concerns over the accuracy of recovery reporting in that State.