



National Motor Vehicle
Theft Reduction Council
driving down vehicle theft

Theft TORQUE

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Theft Reduction Council –
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Investigators' Forum

More than 30 key investigators from law enforcement agencies across Australia met at the 2004 Police Investigators' Forum in Sydney in early December.

The Forum, hosted by the NMVTRC with assistance from New South Wales Police, provided an opportunity for investigators to exchange information on the latest criminal techniques and work towards resolving a range of complex issues about car crime that were identified as hampering effective investigations.

The Police Investigators' Forum is one element of a comprehensive strategy – which also includes the publication of criminal methodology case studies, a program of regular liaison between the jurisdictions and a joint work program with the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) – to improve investigative responses to vehicle theft nationally.

The NMVTRC is committed to enhancing inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional coordination and cooperation to assist cross border investigations and intelligence sharing. In opening the Forum, NSW Police Assistant Commissioner Graham Morgan stressed the immeasurable value of such a gathering in fostering cross-border working relationships and urged the investigators to use the Forum to produce a tangible, outcome-oriented work program.

A significant outcome for the two day gathering was a commitment by the ACC to work with the NMVTRC in the development of a joint work program and the commitment of investigators to support the ACC in that work. Professional vehicle theft is a priority crime for the ACC and the organisation is developing a central repository of intelligence and expertise, and will manage, promote and facilitate the sharing of these resources on behalf of law enforcement agencies nationally.

The joint NMVTRC/ACC work plan is currently under development and it includes specific actions to implement the recommendations reached by the Forum.

The Forum also provided the opportunity for the investigators to discuss new and emerging criminal methodologies. A series of case studies presented by investigators from a number of the jurisdictions demonstrated the increasing complexity of car crime and the value of 'centres of expertise' within each police service to support local, intrastate and interstate investigations.

The joint NMVTRC and ACC work plan to improve investigative responses to vehicle theft will be finalised in February with work to implement its actions expected to begin immediately.

Microdots Expose 'Cyber' Thieves

VIN based microdots gave NSW Police the lead they needed to thwart an online stolen wheel racket recently.

Police investigating an older model Subaru Liberty called in a field technician from DataDot Technology, the supplier of the VIN-based microdot system used by Subaru, to verify the identity of the car's spare wheel.

Scraping a dot from the wheel and placing it on the back of his business card, the technician was able to read the VIN from the dot to police. The VIN-based microdot system covers the vehicle and its major components with around 10,000 microscopic dots, each bearing the vehicle's original VIN.

The VIN confirmed that the wheel was reported stolen. Dots were scraped from the other wheels and two more checked out as reported stolen.



The remaining wheels on the vehicle were not reported stolen because the owners had not noticed their spare wheel missing until they were contacted by police who had traced them via the VIN read from the microdot.

Within a matter of minutes of the microdot being scraped from the first wheel, police were able to trace the stolen wheels to their source vehicles. The owner of the Subaru Liberty had unwittingly bought the stolen wheels online and police were able to trace the not-so-clever wheel thief via the website's administrator.

NPC Open for Business

National Parts Code (NPC), the independent organisation established by the NMVTRC to implement and administer its voluntary Code of Practice for automotive parts recyclers, is up and running. Some 80 recyclers joined the Code in the first few weeks and the NPC recently advertised nationally for an independent recycler to join its Management Committee.

The role of the Management Committee is to provide strategic and business advice to the NPC Director. Committee membership is honorary and includes representatives of the Motor Trades Association of Australia, the Auto Parts Recyclers Association of Australia (APRAA), the NMVTRC and state and territory offices of fair trading.

NPC Director, Nick Koerbin, says that the organisation is looking to appoint a recycler with extensive experience and a strong commitment to improving industry standards of competence and reputation. The successful candidate will join APRAA's Michael Beasley as the 'front-line' voices of recyclers on the Management Committee.



The NMVTRC is underwriting the NPC's operations for the first 12 months and recycling businesses that meet the Code's criteria are invited to take advantage of the fee-free period to join.

Further details about the NPC and eligibility requirements for membership are available at the NPC website www.partscode.com.au or by contacting Nick Koerbin on telephone (03) 9840 1002.

Local Communities Bounce Back

Operation Bounce Back (OBB) is up and running with the Cities of Glenorchy (Tasmania) and Gosnells (Western Australia) being the first councils to launch projects under the NMVTRC's local government partnership.

The NMVTRC is providing 20 OBB grant packages of \$35,000 each to selected councils in 'theft hotspots'. The packages comprise public education resource materials, direct funding and immobiliser give-aways to carry key theft prevention messages to their local communities.

The consequences of vehicle theft impact strongly at the local level: damage to public and private property, injury to road users and the essential supporting role that vehicle theft plays in other crime. Vehicle theft and burglary particularly go hand in hand with stolen cars used to ferry stolen goods from neighbours' homes.

The OBB program encourages councils to develop locally specific projects to educate their public about theft prevention. The Cities of Glenorchy and Gosnells, at opposite ends of the country, have used their respective grants to implement very different responses.

Glenorchy City Council's program targeted local and state media by inviting Tasmania's Police Commissioner, Richard McCreadie, to join Mayor Terry Martin in launching the OBB project. The project has produced and distributed a theft prevention 'toolkit' for motorists and has joined

forces with *U-turn* Tasmania to develop an innovative series of school seminars.

In Western Australia, the City of Gosnells designed some eye catching newspaper advertising to promote the NMVTRC's theft prevention tips to motorists and alert owners of older vehicles to the free immobilisers available under its project.

Each OBB grant includes \$20,000 worth of fully installed engine immobiliser give-aways through the NMVTRC's CAR-SAFE network.

Upcoming OBB projects include the translation and reproduction of the Car Safe Tips brochure in five community languages (Canterbury, New South Wales), an audit of local public car parks followed up by police contact with the owners of high-risk cars (Greater Geelong, Victoria) and a competition run through a local radio station (Logan, Queensland).

The NMVTRC is continuing to work with the recipient councils to develop new projects and meet their resource needs. Councils which have not been offered OBB funding in 2004/05 can still access the NMVTRC's free public education materials to support their theft prevention projects.

All OBB projects are being evaluated to aid the development of future initiatives.

For more information on OBB, visit www.carsafe.com.au or contact Siobhan Sheridan on 1300 668 410.



NMVTRC Director of Strategy and Programming Geoff Hughes, Mayor of Glenorchy Terry Martin and Commissioner of Tasmania Police Richard McCreadie launch Glenorchy City Council's Operation Bounce Back project.



Assuring Best Practice in Vehicle ID Inspections

Key policy and vehicle inspection personnel from Australia's registration authorities will meet in Melbourne in mid-February to review state and territory written off vehicle inspection arrangements and develop a set of national best practice principles for identity inspections.

The workshop will complement the extensive work undertaken by the NMVTRC and stakeholders in 2004 to improve the consistency of written-off vehicle practices between jurisdictions.

UK Confirms Keys are Key

A study of more than 8,000 incidents of car theft over a three year period by the United Kingdom's Home Office has found that the theft of keys was the principal means of theft in 85 per cent of late model thefts (post-1997 registered cars). The most common method of obtaining the keys was through burglary (37 per cent) although in almost a fifth of cases (18 per cent) the keys were left in the car by the owner.

(Source: Findings: Emerging methods of car theft – theft of keys, Home Office, UK, 2004).

Australia's Most Wanted Motors On

The NMVTRC took its Australia's Most Wanted (AMW) media event to Northern Territory (NT) and Western Australia (WA) in late 2004 to draw attention to prevailing local theft targets and convey key vehicle security messages to the community.

The NT event was co-hosted by the Departments of Justice and Police with Paul Henderson, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, unveiling the cars most favoured by thieves in the Territory.

In WA, Police Minister Michelle Roberts highlighted the NMVTRC as an excellent example of how government and industry could work together to tackle a community problem and provided tips to motorists on protecting themselves against car crime. AMW in Perth was held in conjunction with the WA Office of Crime Prevention.

Victims of vehicle theft were on hand in both Darwin and Perth to provide personal accounts of how car theft had impacted on their lives. Murray Douglas told NT media of his shock when thieves stole the keys to his new Commodore from his home and then trashed the vehicle. Although insured, the theft left him \$5,000 out of pocket, without a car for five months and fearful of a repeat incident.

AMW events have been very well received by the NMVTRC's stakeholders and have generated significant local media coverage. The Darwin and Perth events cap off another 12 months of strong media interest in the NMVTRC strategies. Other AMW events will be held in South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and eastern States by mid-2005.



More Frequent Data Adds Further Value to CARS

New South Wales (NSW) stolen vehicle data is now updated monthly and is available online to stakeholders via the NMVTRC's CARS Analyser program. This is great news for stakeholders and the improved data arrangements between NSW Police and the NMVTRC also paves the way for the extension of the NMVTRC's electronic Early Warning System (EWS) to registration authorities in other jurisdictions.

An EWS based on monthly Victorian non-recovery data has been integrated into the business systems of that State's registration authority, Vicroads, for some months now. The system alerts registration authority personnel and vehicle inspectors to the vehicle types targeted each month by professional thieves and highlights those particularly at risk of

being presented for registration. Users of the system can drill right down to a full list of potentially suspicious vehicles by make, model, series and year.

The addition of NSW data to that of Victoria and Northern Territory means that the NMVTRC now receives details of 60 per cent of thefts within weeks of the event. The remaining jurisdictions continue to supply data on a quarterly basis.

While the EWS would benefit immeasurably from a monthly supply of data from all jurisdictions, the integration of NSW data into the EWS significantly enhances the value of the system for users and allows it to be usefully extended into other jurisdictions.

Kiwis Take Serious Stance Against Car Crime

The New Zealand (NZ) government has drawn heavily on the NMVTRC's expertise and strategies in formulating its tough new Vehicle Crime Reduction Programme. According to the NZ government, more than 20,000 vehicles were stolen in the country last year, accounting for 5 per cent of reported crime.

The Programme launched in January by NZ's Justice Minister, Phil Goff, follows extensive consultation with the NMVTRC over the past year.

Compulsory immobiliser installation and whole vehicle marking form the basis of NZ's strategies to crack down on car theft. The legislative framework and other pre-implementation tasks are expected to be in place by mid-2006.

Under the reforms, all imported new and used cars less than 15 years old (new and used imports

account for the majority of NZ's vehicle fleet) must be fitted with an immobiliser and marked throughout with the vehicle's unique VIN prior to sale. This equates to around 150,000 vehicles to be immobilised and 160,000 to be marked upon arrival in the country each year.

NZ is also considering the feasibility of contributing data to the NMVTRC for the development and delivery of a database modelled on the NMVTRC's Comprehensive Auto Theft Research System (CARS). Other strategies include a secure parking scheme and an enhanced deregistration system.

The NMVTRC will continue to provide advice to the NZ government where necessary as the reforms are rolled out. Implementation is to be monitored by a government/industry working party.

The Real Toll of Car Crime

Vehicle theft is sometimes portrayed as a victimless crime and often viewed by the community as inconvenient but not serious. However, the NMVTRC's Human Toll of Vehicle Theft study, which is documenting the experiences of victims of theft and incidents involving stolen vehicle related fatalities, will show a much darker picture of car crime. The project will quantify and cost the 'statistical lives' lost through stolen vehicle related incidents since 2000, establish an on-going tally of theft related fatalities and attempt to convey the impact on individuals of stolen vehicle related incidents.

The consequences of stolen vehicles on individuals and the community are widespread. At one extreme, victims of theft incur financial costs, inconvenience and the feeling of being violated. At the other, around 30 people are killed each year in Australia in incidents involving stolen vehicles, the impact of which extends well beyond the deceased to family members, friends, witnesses and medical and emergency services personnel.

Preliminary research for the study was undertaken as part of the NMVTRC's Student Consultancy program by Melbourne University honours student, Sarah Duran. The student consultancies provide the opportunity for Australia's next generation of crime prevention practitioners to apply their academic learning to a real world, outcome focussed project.

The preliminary research indicates that between January 2000 and April 2004 there were 86 stolen vehicle related fatalities at an economic cost to the community of \$144 million. At least 15 of those killed were pedestrians or occupants of other vehicles and more than one-third of the deceased were under 20 years of age.

U-turn Q Makes Bold Start

The third and final trial site of the NMVTRC's innovative young offender program, *U-turn*, has made a great start. The program, which is run by the YMCA from its huge Slacks Creek complex south of Brisbane under contract to Queensland Police, has set a high standard with eight of the 10 inaugural participants completing the 10-week program.

Six of the eight participants were also successful in attaining their nationally recognised TAFE Certificate 1 in Automotive Training and were presented with their certificates and commemorative socket sets at a private ceremony with their families, friends and referring agencies in mid December.

The two other participants are determined to graduate and have enrolled for the next student intake to try again for their Certificate.

Brisbane based NMVTRC Councillor Ray Rawlings attended the event and was impressed by the maturity of the young graduates. "We all know that tackling the involvement of young people in vehicle crime is absolutely crucial to combating vehicle theft. *U-turn* shows just how the insurance industry, the motor trades and government can work together to deliver practical solutions to help these young people get their lives going the way they really wish," he said.



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

www.carsafe.com.au

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