



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

# Theft TORQUE

National Motor Vehicle  
Theft Reduction Council –  
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## Stratplan 2005: Driving Down the 18,000

Stratplan, the NMVTRC's 2005 strategic planning sessions have wrapped up for another year. The outcomes of the annual workshops held in state and territory capitals and attended by senior representatives of the NMVTRC's stakeholder organisations will contribute to the development of the next round of strategies for vehicle theft reform.

This year Stratplan focussed on the continuing determination of organised, economically motivated criminals to ply their 'trade'.

Unprecedented vehicle theft reforms have been implemented nationally and significant improvements in public and organisational awareness of vehicle theft issues has occurred over the last five years. The biggest gains to date have been in reducing the incidence of short term theft of lower value, older vehicles and while the interventions targeting this type of theft will continue, a new strategic focus on economically motivated theft will be pursued to build on modest gains already made in this area.

Workshop participants were asked to focus on identifying the remaining gaps that economically motivated thieves exploit and new deficiencies that have been exposed by emerging criminal methodologies. To do this, participants examined an analysis of the 18,600 vehicles which were stolen last year and are now permanently 'missing'. These vehicles equate to one in five thefts and are estimated to cost the community more than \$500 million per annum.

Motorcycles and heavy vehicles comprised just over one-quarter of the missing vehicles with the remainder being passenger cars and light commercial (PLC) vehicles.

Based on the make, model and years of manufacture of the missing PLC vehicles, the NMVTRC estimates that about 6,000 vehicles were the targets of economically motivated criminals. The remainder were predominantly low value, older vehicles which were likely to have been burnt out or dumped in bushland or waterways.

Workshop participants agreed that re-birthing or cloning of whole vehicles and the dismantling of stolen vehicles for parts accounted for the bulk of the illicit trade in PLC vehicles last year. Around

5,500 missing PLC vehicles are thought to have been subject to these methods of conversion to cash.

Depending on their level of sophistication, criminals are finding the use of identifiers from crash-damaged written-off vehicles bought through auction more difficult and are turning instead to the manufacture of false identity plates to replicate existing vehicles. These vehicles are sold whole to unsuspecting buyers. Thieves using these methodologies take advantage of the remaining gaps in national arrangements for managing written off vehicles, and the absence of adequate manufacturer-applied means of identification on most vehicles.

As re-birthing or cloning becomes more difficult through improved compliance and better whole vehicle identification, the illicit vehicle parts market becomes a more attractive and less risky option for economic criminals. There are many pathways for illicit parts to enter the market and the development of comprehensive identification systems for vehicle components to effectively combat this trade remains a long term challenge.

Other methodologies used by criminals to convert stolen vehicles into cash include the export of some specific vehicle types that have a global market and are stolen to order, and fraudulent insurance claims where the reported vehicle may or may not have actually existed.

The NMVTRC's 2005-06 Strategic Plan will be released in September.



# Best Practice in Identification Inspections



- processes to optimise police responses to suspicious vehicles detected in the inspection process.

While the newly refined four tier inspection hierarchy provides some definition of the basic competencies required of inspection personnel at each level, the workshop concluded that more work was required to further define competencies for those performing the highest level inspections. The NMVTRC will undertake a project to address this and other issues involving the national coordination of inspections and a proposed audit framework.

Endorsement of the workshop outcomes and the refined BPP was received from Austroads Registration and Licensing Task Force at its Perth meeting in late May. A summary of the BPP will be published by the NMVTRC in July.

Key policy and vehicle inspection personnel from the nation's registration authorities met in Melbourne in mid-February to review state and territory written-off vehicle (WOV) arrangements and refine a set of national best practice principles (BPP) for identity inspections.

The workshop was part of the continuing NMVTRC facilitated process of improved national information exchange and vehicle identity inspections.

Participants at the February workshop reached consensus on a range of major issues including:

- a new four-level hierarchy of vehicle identity inspections (ranging from basic cross-checking of vehicle particulars against identity documents to specialist police examination);
- a risk management strategy (that includes targeting high risk vehicles); and

## Human Toll of Theft Documented

Vehicle theft is often perceived as a 'victimless' crime. The NMVTRC's Human Toll of Vehicle Theft report however uses the stories of those impacted by vehicle theft – the individuals behind the statistics – to refute this myth.

Many motorists who have experienced the theft of their vehicle report that the crime placed significant stress, inconvenience and financial burden on them. More than 83,000 Australians reported a vehicle stolen in the 12 months to March 2005.

This equates to one in every 170 persons aged 18 or over impacted by this crime annually.

One in five stolen vehicles are not recovered and the NMVTRC estimates that more than 5,000 'missing' vehicles end up back on the market to be sold to unsuspecting buyers as whole vehicles or parts each year. Those who have unknowingly bought a stolen vehicle are at risk of it being confiscated. These victims report high levels of stress, frustration and disruption associated with the loss of their vehicle and the significant amounts of money they paid for it.

The most extreme impact of vehicle theft is the loss of life. On average, 22 stolen vehicles each year will be involved in collisions which will result in the loss of around 25 lives. Four of the fatalities, on average, will be innocent road users: pedestrians or occupants of other vehicles. These incidents also cause scores of injuries and have long term impacts on victims, families and communities.

The Human Toll of Vehicle Theft report is available from the publications page of our website – [www.carsafe.com.au](http://www.carsafe.com.au)

## Local OBB Projects Join Forces with *U-turn*

The NMVTRC-funded Operation Bounce Back (OBB) projects in the Cities of Logan (Queensland) and Glenorchy (Tasmania) joined forces with their local *U-turn* programs recently to target the issue of vehicle theft.

*U-turn* is a program for young vehicle theft offenders, which is based on the NMVTRC's best practice program model. *U-turn* Queensland is currently funded by the NMVTRC and the Australian Government's National Crime Prevention program. *U-turn* Tasmania was also initially funded by this partnership and due to the program's success has received extended funding from the Tasmanian Government.

In April, Logan City Council contributed to the *U-turn* restorative justice goal by donating an immobiliser from their OBB program. The immobiliser was installed in a vehicle being restored by *U-turn* participants for donation to Helen, a victim of theft. As part of the program's graduation ceremony, *U-turn* participants come face to face with theft victims to hear, first-hand, the personal impact of the crime. Helen's car was stolen from a hospital car park while she was inside meeting her new grandchild.

In May, a group of Tasmanian young people at the Glenorchy City Council's OBB youth seminar also heard first hand from a victim of theft. Kay told seminar participants – teenagers at risk of involvement in theft and those from five local schools – how the theft of her vehicle had left her family stranded and her business inoperable. Other speakers at the seminar included Matt, a graduate from the Tasmanian *U-turn* program, and former Australian Football League player, Glen Mantone.



Left to right: Inspector Paul Ziebarth (Queensland Police), Helen (theft victim), Mr Andrew Laming MP (Member for Bowman), and The Hon Judy Spence (Minister for Police and Corrective Services).

## International Trade Examined

In April, the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) and the NMVTRC jointly represented Australian law enforcement and industry stakeholders at the International Vehicle Rebirthing Crime Programme hosted by Interpol's Vehicle Crime Sub-Directorate in London.

The Vehicle Crime Programme's working group consisted of law enforcement representatives from a range of European Community members with Japan and the ACC and NMVTRC representing the Asia Pacific region.

On the working group's agenda was the examination of strategies to map the world trade in stolen vehicles, including the strong connection between ethnic crime groups and the identified trade routes for stolen vehicles. It was acknowledged that there was a need for greater understanding of the potential trade routes operating in the Asia Pacific region and the impact of theft for export on Australian and Japanese vehicle crime.

Other global trends under scrutiny included the organised international trade in stolen plant and

equipment and the significance of the global non-recovery rates for stolen motorcycles as a major international crime issue.

Australia's achievements through its sustained government and industry partnership under the umbrella of the NMVTRC were recognised as among world's best practice, particularly the advances made in vehicle identification. Interpol's Vehicle Crime Sub – Directorate will use the NMVTRC's on-going evaluation of the deterrence and investigative outcomes of VIN-based microdots as a lever for arguing the case for improved identification with European vehicle manufacturers.

The workshop has paved the way for the ACC to fast-track the inclusion of Australian stolen vehicle data on Interpol's Stolen Motor Vehicle Database. This database, which is accessible through Interpol's international liaison officer network, receives stolen vehicle data from 85 participating countries and will provide an important intelligence resource for tracking Australia's stolen vehicle export routes.

## NMVTRC Under Review

The second term review of the NMVTRC is underway to inform decisions on the future of the organisation.

Under the terms of its inter-government/insurance industry Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the evaluation will form the basis of a recommendation to State and Territory Ministers and the Insurance Council of Australia as to whether the NMVTRC has a continuing role in vehicle theft reduction.

The NMVTRC was established in 1999 with an initial term of five years and was extended for a further three years following a review of its operations in 2002–03. The organisation represents a unique model of public and private collaboration in crime prevention and the review process provides an opportunity to objectively assess the NMVTRC's operational performance and value for its funding partners.

The review is being conducted in two parts: a study of the economic and social benefits attributed to the NMVTRC's work and an analysis of stakeholder views of the NMVTRC's performance.

The review will be completed in August and will inform recommendations to the NMVTRC's funding bodies on the organisation's future.

## Subaru Wins Outstanding Achievement Award

Congratulations to Subaru Australia for receiving the 2005 Outstanding Achievement award from the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators (IAATI).

The award, presented in Sydney in March at the annual IAATI conference, recognised the manufacturer's investment in theft prevention technology. Security enhancements on Subaru's vehicles have included the introduction of key pad immobiliser systems to Impreza WRX and WRX STI models and the application of VIN-based microdots across their entire vehicle range.

Congratulations also to other award winners including Victoria Police for its Operation COUPE investigation into the theft of Holden Commodore wheels and luxury vehicles valued at \$4 million.

# Multi-lingual Brochures Now Available

With the help of our Operation Bounce Back program the NMVTRC is getting its vehicle security messages out to non-English speaking motorists.

Our popular Car Safe Tips brochure is now available in Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Arabic and Greek, as well as in English.

The brochure was translated by Canterbury City Council in New South Wales as part of their Operation Bounce Back project. The project directed information about vehicle security to previous victims of theft and the owners of high risk, pre-1990 cars. To achieve this, the Council identified the five most popular languages, besides English, spoken in their local community.

The new brochures complement the NMVTRC's large range of public education materials which are available to stakeholders to support their local theft prevention campaigns.



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# Ride It Like It's Stolen

The NMVTRC recently launched a new public education campaign about motorcycle identification that targets the owners and buyers of off-road motorcycles. Less than one in five off-road motorcycles stolen in the last 12 months was recovered.

The campaign includes advertising in the June and July editions of Australasian Dirt Bike Magazine to highlight the absence of adequate identification on motorcycles or their components.

Motorcycles account for around 7 per cent of thefts in Australia.

**Ride it like it's stolen... it just might be.**

Car theft is at a 30 year low but motorbikes, especially off-road models, are lacking the trend.

More bikes than ever are being stolen and only 1 in 10 will be recovered. The rest end up on the black market, or stripped and sold as spares.

Creaks are laughing - it's so easy to remove or alter a bike's basic identifiers. One minute it's your pride and joy - the next, you (or the police) can't prove it ever was.

Bike manufacturers can do something to stop it but they aren't listening to us. So, next time you're farking out your hard earned on a service or a new bike ask the dealer what that brand is doing to keep your investment out of the hands of criminals.

[www.carsafe.com.au](http://www.carsafe.com.au)

National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council  
Stronger driver, safer vehicle, safer

**Why aren't bike manufacturers listening to their customers?**

Bike manufacturers know that your bike is as easy to steal as a TV or stereo. They know how simple it is for a creak to remove or alter your bike's basic identifiers and sell it.

Our customers aren't interested in that stuff, they say. But you've told us you are.

You've told us that keeping your bike out of creaks' hands is important to you. You've told us that if it's stolen you want a good chance of getting it back. Most of you have even said you'd put your money where your mouth is to get these things.

So why aren't bike manufacturers listening to you?

You don't want to be riding around on someone else's (stolen) pride and joy and you sure don't want someone else riding around on yours.

Next time you're farking out your hard earned on a service or a new bike ask the dealer what that brand is doing to keep your investment out of the hands of criminals.

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