



National Motor Vehicle
Theft Reduction Council
driving down vehicle theft

Theft TORQUE

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Theft Reduction Council –
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Contents

[StratPlan 2006 – Theft-Proofing
Australia's Vehicle Fleet by 2010](#)

[U-turn Targa Tasmania](#)

[Operation Bounce Back 2006](#)

[Introducing Our Councillors](#)

[National Parts Code](#)

[Western Australia Police Establish
Specialist Motor Squad](#)

StratPlan 2006 – Theft-Proofing Australia's Vehicle Fleet by 2010



The NMVTRC's strategic planning meetings have been taking place across Australia over the last two months, and have been by far the best attended to date. These annual workshops are attended by senior stakeholder representatives in each state, and assist the NMVTRC in understanding the issues faced by those organisations in implementing reforms. This year's forums resulted in a general consensus that, despite the good news that theft numbers continue to drop, there is still lots more to be done.

Emerging from the meetings were a number of issues relating to challenges for vehicle manufacturers, insurers, transport agencies, motor trades, justice agencies, and police. For manufacturers, the development of entry and immobiliser systems that minimise the risk of unauthorised use of keys is particularly important, as is the challenge of improving vehicle identification.

One particular focus of the StratPlan meetings was Australia's stolen and not recovered level. A multi-dimensional analysis of the seemingly static unrecovered rate has revealed that the age and value profiles of non-recoveries are going through some changes. The impact of

the Written-Off Vehicles Registry has been most effective for newest vehicles, which is particularly good news for stakeholders. There is a sense amongst many of our representatives that there is now qualitative support for a fresh look at the possibility of a statutory ban for all repairable write-offs (RWOs), subject to a clear demonstration of financial benefits.

The ease with which components are absorbed by the black market combined with the difficulty of detecting vehicles constructed of illicit parts poses a particularly challenging issue for transport agencies and those in the motor trades. If a statutory ban on RWOs is not introduced, there needs to be some procedural and technical improvements to give vehicle inspectors the resources to detect suspicious vehicles.

Whilst the unrecovered rate continues to be a challenge for stakeholders, opportunistic theft still presents an issue, particularly for smaller jurisdictions. The need to address the remaining proportion of older, unsecured vehicles remains a priority, with many commentators noting that we need to get the attention of an apathetic public by highlighting the human cost of vehicle theft. Sizeable fluctuations

StratPlan 2006 – Theft-Proofing Australia’s Vehicle Fleet by 2010 continued

in recovery rates across some of our smaller states have brought the issue of mandatory immobilisation back into question. It may now be time to re-do a statistical analysis of the economic viability of a mandatory immobilisation scheme for those states.

A theoretical understanding of opportunistic theft is also central to understanding recovered vehicle levels. The traditional conceptualisation of young joyriders and professional thieves as forming two distinct and mutually exclusive groups of offenders has been questioned as anecdotal evidence suggests that this distinction may not be as clear as what was once thought. It has been suggested that it may now be more accurate to conceptualise vehicle theft along a continuum of offending where some young joyriders do end up being recruited by organised car thieves. Another phenomenon that many would like to see included in the analysis is



the use of stolen cars as a mechanism to commit other crimes, such as armed robberies and ‘smash and grabs’.

To successfully address these younger offenders and deter them from continuing on to adulthood deviance there needs to be improved access to effective diversionary programs and coordination of these programs between various agencies.

For law enforcement, a number of issues were raised as to how to most efficiently address vehicle theft. There is now strong interest in the NMVTRC reviewing the use of automatic number plate recognition systems (ANPR) in Australia, such as those currently in operation New South Wales, towards the goal of improving law enforcement agencies’ ability to detect stolen vehicles out on the roads.

In order to combat the issue of reform fatigue and continue to keep vehicle theft as a priority for police, the challenge lies in maintaining resource levels and improving the collation and dissemination of intelligence. Efficient use of stakeholder communication networks will ensure that our combined vehicle theft reform efforts continue to drive down theft numbers across Australia.

U-turn Targa Tasmania

Another successful round of young participants have now completed their 10-week automotive training course as part of the *U-turn* Tasmania program. With record attendance and completion rates, the group of eight young car enthusiasts finished their course on April 20th as the 13th group of *U-turn* Tasmania graduates since the program’s commencement in February 2003. Four previous *U-turn* graduates came back to act as mentors for the four new participants, and were given an extra two weeks training beforehand to prepare them for the challenging mentoring roles.

On Monday April 24th, the *U-turn* crew began their race week as part of the 2006 Targa touring class. The touring class is a non-competitive part of the Targa race, with participating cars driving at normal road speeds over closed Targa stages. Following nine solid weeks of preparing their vehicle for the race, staff and participants piled into the 1976 Triumph Dolomite Sprint ahead of hundreds of competitors eager to start the race. The bright yellow Triumph, which had been stripped and restored by staff and participants for the race, attracted by far the most applause from spectators throughout the

race as it soldiered through 17 hour days with the staff and kids. Navigated by participants and driven by staff, the classic vehicle crossed the line just before 6pm on Sunday April 30th.

On the back of the recent state election, the Tasmanian government has committed itself to fund *U-turn* Tasmania through until 2010. *U-turn* Tasmania’s successes in the past are expected to continue to help address the problem of opportunistic theft across the state, with young offenders accounting for the vast majority of vehicle thefts. The goal of *U-turn* is to arm these young offenders with the skills and support to direct their lives towards more productive outcomes and ultimately reduce the number of high-rate recidivists in Tasmania.

In other *U-turn* developments, we are delighted to report that the Queensland government has now confirmed that it will fund a further 12 months of the program independently. The NMVTRC is confident that *U-turn* Queensland will continue its great work throughout 2006 and 2007.



The *U-turn* Tasmania Triumph Dolomite Sprint cruises along the Targa course in April.

Operation Bounce Back 2006

Operation Bounce Back (OBB) is now successfully underway for 2006, with more than 20 councils across Australia taking up grants of between \$15,000 and \$35,000 each to put towards vehicle theft reduction strategies and immobiliser give-aways. The last six months has seen our OBB councils really get things underway for each of their programs, which will start wrapping up over the coming months.

The focus of Bounce Back is to educate car-owners about the risks and costs of car theft, and counteract the environment of complacency that currently surrounds the issue of vehicle theft. With a particular focus on victims of car theft and owners of older model vehicles, OBB aims to arm owners with knowledge relating to effective security practices and measures in order to drive down theft numbers in vehicle theft hot spots.

Over the next few months, participating councils will also offer more than 1,800 car owners the opportunity to receive a fully installed, Australian Standards approved engine immobiliser at no cost. Participating Councils for the current Bounce Back program are:

- ACT, through the Department of Justice and Community Safety
- Bankstown (NSW)
- Blacktown (NSW)
- Canterbury (NSW)
- Fairfield (NSW)
- Penrith (NSW)
- Logan (QLD)
- Redland (QLD)
- Toowoomba (QLD)
- Adelaide (SA)
- Tea Tree Gully (SA)
- Clarence (TAS)
- Glenorchy (TAS)
- Brimbank (VIC)
- Casey (VIC)
- Darebin, through the Victoria Police, Region 3 (VIC)
- Greater Geelong (VIC)
- Canning (WA)
- Gosnells (WA)
- Joondalup (WA)
- Stirling (WA)

A number of these councils have gone to a huge amount of effort and come up with innovative and creative initiatives to help educate the public and spread the messages of OBB. Working together with the WIN TV network, Glenorchy and Clarence Councils have produced three fantastic advertisements to be aired on the WIN Network across Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia, and South Australia from June this year. The ads were produced with the help of a group of young people participating in the Pulse Youth Health Centre multimedia program.

Other councils have produced magnets, coffee mugs, t-shirts, security information bags, and educational film clips to increase exposure and educate their local residents. The NMVTRC has been particularly impressed with efforts so far,

and looks forward to another successful Bounce Back program to be wrapped up by the end of July.

The selection process for Operation Bounce Back involves a basic statistical analysis of local government areas in each state to establish which areas have the most serious vehicle theft problems. The criteria for determining this relates not only to overall theft numbers, but also to the proportion of older cars registered in the area. These older cars are most at-risk with respect to opportunistic theft. For the 2006/07 selection process, the NMVTRC will be including an additional factor – theft rate per 1,000 vehicles registered. This is expected to give a more representative picture of the theft environment in each state. Offers for Operation Bounce Back 2006/07 will be made in September.



A freeze frame from one of the three fantastic TV advertisements produced by Glenorchy and Clarence Councils, and WIN TV.



Geoff Hughes, Mayor Adriana Taylor, Commander Fiona Leutier, and vehicle theft victim Kay at the launch of the Glenorchy and Clarence TV ads.

Introducing Our Councillors



Council member Terry Purton.

The NMVTRC is pleased to introduce two new members who joined the NMVTRC towards the end of 2005. Terry Purton and James Armitage join the board of experts who represent the peak industry and agency bodies that contribute to vehicle theft reductions across Australia. Terry Purton is our representative from the Australasian Police Ministers' Council and James Armitage represents the Crime Prevention Senior Officers Group.

Commander Terry Purton is attached to the Victoria Police Crime Department and has 34 years operational policing experience. He is currently



Council member James Armitage.

managing the implementation of Project Clarendon which involves the establishment of 31 Crime Desks staffed by 320 Crime Scene Officers across Victoria.

James Armitage has been working with the South Australian Attorney General's Crime Prevention Unit since 1999. He is currently Director of the Unit and has performed various roles within the Unit. Previous to joining the AG's Department, James worked at Cavan Training Centre for six years as a youth worker, Senior Youth Practitioner, and Program Manager.

National Parts Code



At the June 2006 meeting, the NMVTRC resolved to continue to support the operation of the National Parts Code for the next three years. The National Parts Code is expected to put a dent in illegal parts recycling and the demand for stolen parts across Australia, and support from businesses and the insurance industry is steadily increasing.

Western Australia Police Establish Specialist Motor Squad

In theft reform news, the Western Australia Police are establishing a Motor Squad under the Specialist Crime Portfolio. The squad will investigate serious motor vehicle theft committed by established

criminal networks and will also investigate the sophisticated re-identification of stolen motor vehicles. This specialist squad will provide a central liaison point for industry, law enforcement,

licensing and partner agencies. The NMVTRC looks forward to working closely with the Western Australia Motor Squad to address vehicle theft across the state.



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