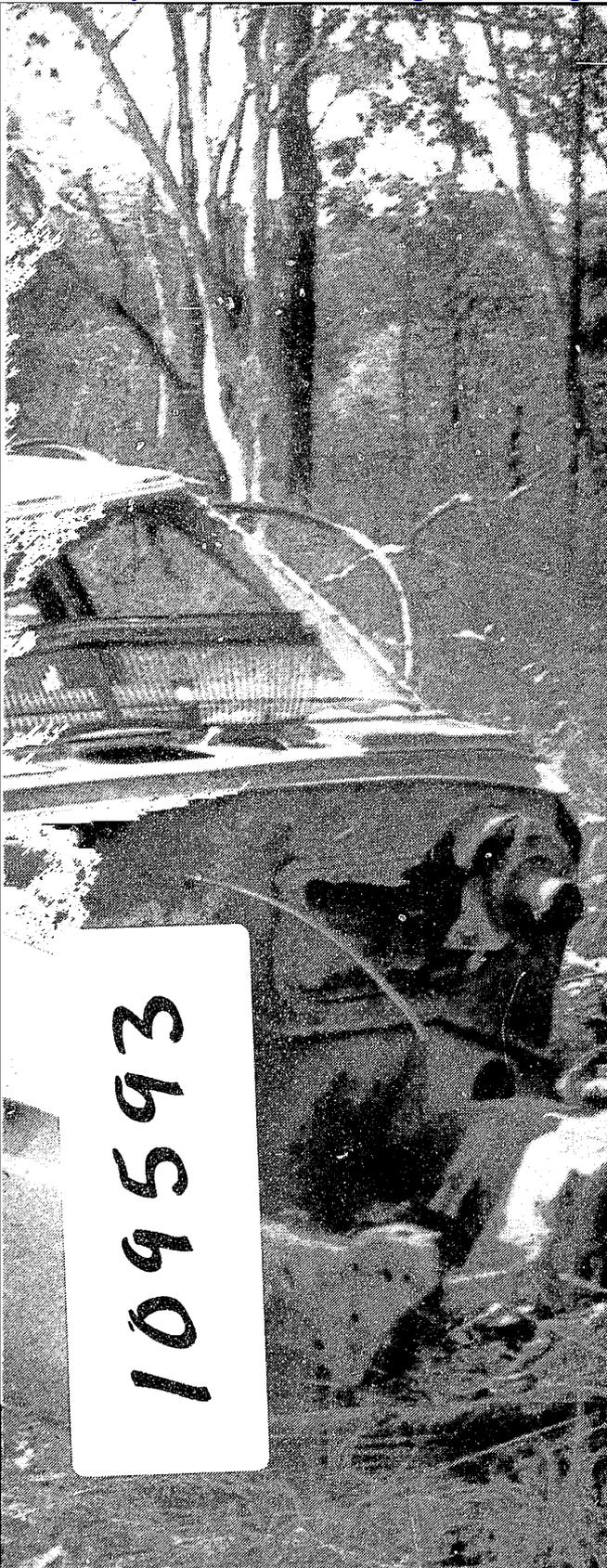


*CR Unit 6-9-88*

# CAR THEFT



**PUTTING ON  
THE BRAKES**



Proceedings of a seminar  
organised by the  
National Roads and  
Motorists' Association  
(NRMA) and the Australian  
Institute of Criminology

May, 1987

# Car Theft: Putting on the Brakes

Proceedings of Seminar  
on car theft  
May 21, 1987

Chairmen: Mr David Biles,  
Acting Director, Australian Institute of Criminology

Mr Ray Willing,  
Assistant General Manager (Finance) NRMA



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# Introduction

- More than 66,000 cars were reported stolen to N.S.W. Police in 1986.
- The cost to the N.S.W. community was over \$140 million.

The NRMA launched a major, long-term campaign against car theft on 20 May 1987. The campaign, with the theme "MAKE LIFE HELL FOR CAR THIEVES", was designed to significantly increase public awareness of the problem and to encourage various authorities and the public to act on a community-wide basis to deal with the complex issues involved.

An important part of the campaign was a seminar held on 21 May 1987, conducted in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Criminology, which sought to explore car theft in the hope of finding fresh insights into the problem.

The papers reproduced in this volume (with minor editorial changes), were either read or presented at the seminar.

This is not intended to be a definitive document on car theft, but rather we hope that the information will be used wherever possible, to strengthen the resolve of community leaders and others to find strategies for reducing car theft.

The NRMA and Australian Institute of Criminology are indebted to all those who arranged and took part in the seminar, and to those who assisted in production of this publication.

Elizabeth Shaw,  
Assistant Manager, Media Relations, NRMA

Laurie Monaghan,  
Investigations Manager, NRMA

# Opening Remarks & Welcome

## Mr George James Chief Executive, NRMA

The seminar, "Car Theft — Putting on the Brakes", was sponsored by the NRMA and the Australian Institute of Criminology. The speakers were welcomed by the chief executive of the NRMA, Mr George James. They included Professor Ron Clarke from Temple University in Philadelphia. The morning session was chaired by Mr David Biles, the Acting Director of the Australian Institute of Criminology, and Mr Ray Willing, the Assistant General Manager (Finance) of the NRMA was Chairman for the afternoon session.

During his opening address, Mr James said:

"As a mutual organisation, the NRMA has become more and more concerned that car theft has grown during the last 10 years and, because we operate an insurance company for our members, we've felt the shock and the resentment which many feel at having to pay higher premiums. And this of course is resulting from car theft.

Of course it's not only theft which is sending insurance premiums up. But when the average cost of theft to every member insuring a car in Sydney is already \$90 a year and Statewide \$57 a year, it's a very expensive burden on the community. We've realised that, despite quite a lot of publicity given to car theft from time to time, most members do not appreciate just how bad car theft has become, and how they're having to pay for it; and I guess that's the important factor.

So that's why we embarked yesterday on a long term campaign to educate our members and the public, and to try and replace the traditional feelings of helplessness amongst the victims of car theft. And we're trying to instill a rule to beat car thieves one way or another. We are also having to break down the tolerance and the misguided acceptance of car theft which leaves otherwise law-abiding citizens to say 'insurance will pay for it'.

We believe that we can only control and reduce car theft by a long-term, widespread community effort. It requires the ordinary car owner to do whatever he can do to keep his car safe, just as government needs to put more resources into combatting a crime, which was once relatively minor but which today in New South Wales is a black market racket of great significance.

I'd like to thank the Australian Institute of Criminology for its agreement to co-sponsor this seminar. The Institute's guidance and participation in putting together the program has been invaluable and I hope this pooling of knowledge about car theft will guide the whole New South Wales community towards the solutions that we all hope for".

# Crime Prevention — Car Theft Strategies

**Professor Ron Clarke**  
**Professor of Criminal Justice**  
**Temple University**  
**Philadelphia, U.S.A.**

## PRACTICALITIES OF PREVENTING CAR THEFT: A CRIMINOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

As will become clear, too little serious attention has been paid to the problem of car theft. With one or two honourable exceptions, including our chairman this morning (cf Biles, 1974; 1977), criminologists have not analysed the problem in any depth and it has also been neglected by governments. It is right therefore to begin by congratulating the Australian Institute of Criminology and the NRMA for convening this seminar. It is particularly encouraging to see the private sector, as represented by the NRMA, making a serious and determined crime prevention effort. This is evidenced not only by this seminar but by the NRMA car theft prevention campaign and its excellent research report on the problem of car theft in New South Wales just produced by NRMA Insurance Ltd.

It is a truism that crime has many causes and that there are many ways of seeking to prevent it. Less frequently recognised is that any one kind of crime has its own unique constellation of causes and that the most effective means of prevention will depend greatly on the nature of the crime. Effective prevention therefore demands a general understanding of the causes of the crime in question and a commonsense appreciation of the scope for intervention in respect of each cause.

My purpose in this paper is to review ways of preventing car theft and to discuss the difficulties and limitations of even the most promising options. In other words, I will be undertaking what civil servants would describe as policy analysis. This analysis will be constrained by imperfect knowledge of car theft in Australia, which of necessity I have assumed is similar in important respects to the problem in the United States and Britain. I will be arguing that there is no single solution to the problem. What is required is a package of measures, most of which, I think, should be aimed at increasing the difficulty of car theft. In the long term, the most effective measures may relate to the design and manufacture of more secure vehicles, but more immediate benefits may be obtained through a variety of measures aimed at tightening up insurance and registration procedures and regulating the smash repair trade.

It is important to be clear about the definition of "prevention". It does not mean **elimination** of car thefts, since this would be wholly unrealistic. It simply means a **reduction**, which might be measured against present levels of car theft or future levels estimated on the basis of current trends in theft or in car ownership. This implies that while car theft may be reduced it will never be defeated and that dealing with it requires an open-ended commitment into the future.

Car theft comprises two important categories of crime — "theft of the vehicle" and "theft from the vehicle". Differently motivated groups of offenders may be involved in each category and each may require different skills and resources. For example, theft from the vehicle may require the offender to have the means of gaining access only to the passenger compartment, the boot or the engine. This form of theft may therefore be easier to prevent. It may also demand less in the way of preventive effort since it is generally less costly for victims (NRMA Insurance Ltd, 1987). So I will concentrate on theft of cars, which can be further subdivided into several sub-categories of offence, including:

- Joyriding.
- Theft for temporary use.
- Theft for retention.
- Theft for resale with a new identity.
- Theft for "stripping".
- Thefts more properly considered as insurance fraud.

To a certain extent, each of these categories of car theft will require different solutions, though there may be some overlap (cf. NRMA Insurance Ltd, undated, Appendix B) and in any attempt to define a strategy for dealing with car theft it would be important to make some estimate of the contribution made by each component category of car theft to the total problem (cf. NRMA Insurance Ltd, 1987).

### Explanatory factors and the scope for intervention

As mentioned, the first step in analysing the scope for prevention of car theft requires some understanding of the factors contributing to the scale of the problem. Any list of such factors has to include:

- The pool of potential offenders.
- The number of cars on the road.
- The "demand" for stolen cars (either for temporary use or for retention).
- The "costs" of car theft in terms of risk and consequences of detection.
- The ease or difficulty of car theft in terms of security.

Preventive efforts might be focused on any of these variables, but it is important to make some preliminary estimate of the chances of success before embarking on any particular course of action.

Preventive efforts to reduce the pool of criminal offenders would require deeper knowledge of the kinds of individuals involved in car theft and of the psychological and social factors involved. As only very few car thieves are apprehended, this information would be difficult to obtain, though it seems likely that many of the individuals involved will differ little from the "average" property offender: young male, city dweller, socially and psychologically disadvantaged. Despite several decades of research and sustained efforts by a wide range of social and welfare agencies, we seem no nearer to finding "cures" for criminality of this kind. Some of the variables are inherently difficult to manipulate. How can parents be made more loving or be encouraged to exercise more consistent discipline? What can be done to reduce school failure or marriage breakdown? How can children be made more intelligent or their conditionability be improved? Is it likely that youth unemployment could be reduced in the interests of achieving some hypothetical reduction in car theft?

There seems to be even less preventive potential relating to the number of vehicles on the road. Statistics show that as the numbers of cars increase so do the number of thefts, though closer analysis suggest that the relationship is not a direct one. In fact, the risk for any individual vehicle of being stolen declines as the total number of vehicles increases. Thus the present risk of any particular car being stolen in the United States is about half of what it was in the 1930s (700 per 100,000 as compared with 1,100 per 100,000). The most likely interpretation of this — called the "deprivation hypothesis" by David Biles (1977) — is that the more commonplace an object, the less attractive it is to thieves. This may help to explain why the risk of car theft (per numbers of available cars) in the United States is only about half that in England and Wales and about a quarter of that in Israel. But these facts have little relevance for prevention; the numbers of cars could hardly be reduced to diminish the opportunity for theft; nor could they be made more commonplace simply in order to make them less attractive to thieves.

Reducing the "demand" for stolen cars would also be very difficult. This demand is partly a function of the costs of cars relative to wages. (The fact that cars and spare parts have become relatively more costly in the United States during the past decade may account for the fact that many more stolen cars are now stripped of parts or "chopped"). Another factor is the availability of alternative forms of transport. While cars might become

cheaper to rent and to buy, and public transport might be made more widely available, these measures could hardly be promoted simply in the interests of crime prevention. There may be a case, however, for experimenting with the provision of additional trains or buses at high risk times for car theft, such as Friday or Saturday nights.

It is also difficult to see how the "costs" of car theft could be increased. Arrests are very difficult to make since car thefts can be accomplished quite speedily in most cases in less than a minute and are rarely witnessed. By the time theft is reported, the car might have been abandoned or it might have been dismantled or given a new identity. The police have nothing to go on. Their success rate might be improved if they concentrated surveillance upon such "hot spots" as station car parks (NRMA Insurance Ltd, 1987). When arrested, most car thieves are treated as petty offenders, even though the monetary losses for the victims of car theft are much greater than for many other crimes, including burglary. This can be seen from Table 1 which compares net losses (i.e. after insurance pay-outs) for car thefts and burglaries in Britain. However, monetary losses are only one of the consequences of crime and the courts tend to reserve the more severe penalties for offences of violence or burglary which more usually result in emotional trauma for victims.

**TABLE 1**  
**NET LOSSES FROM CAR THEFT AND BURGLARY**  
**(BRITISH CRIME SURVEY - 1984)**

| BRITISH POUNDS | CAR THEFT<br>% | BURGLARY<br>% |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 500+           | 31             | 10            |
| 250-499        | 23             | 13            |
| 100-249        | 18             | 12            |
| 25-99          | 16             | 18            |
| less than 25   | 12             | 47            |

Source: Hough & Mayhew (1985)

We are therefore left with the option of making car theft more difficult. There seem to be five main ways of doing this:

- Encouraging better security habits among car owners.
- Designing and constructing more secure cars.
- Improving vehicle identification and registration procedures (perhaps adopting, for example, the U.S. VIN system).
- Tightening-up insurance practices (e.g. through cross-referencing of claimants or use of credit reference bureaus).
- Regulating the smash repair/rebuilding trade.

I will now look at some general issues relating mainly to the first two of these options. This does not mean the other three have less crime prevention potential — in fact, I believe that they might achieve a more immediate impact upon the problem than design measures which for the most part can only have an effect in the longer term. They might also have greater scope in relation to certain fast-increasing forms of car theft, such as insurance fraud and theft for chopping. Indeed, a recent U.S. Department of Justice report makes much of their potential in these regards (Lee and Rikoski, 1984) and a very recent Home Office Crime Prevention Unit study (Smith and Burrows, 1986) claims a considerable reduction in the problem of imported stolen vehicles following the introduction of an inexpensive new system of documentation. My concentration on the first two options reflects the fact that it is these that have been the subject of most research and discussion.

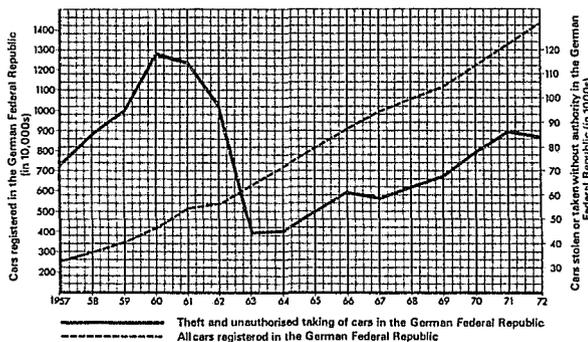
### Displacement

The first general issue is displacement — the common criticism that making crime more difficult through improved security will "displace" the offender's attention elsewhere. The root of this idea is the assumption that "criminality" is akin to a motivation, or what psychologists call a drive. Since such drives demand their expression in action, it is believed that the most predictable result of making a particular crime, or kind of crime,

more difficult would simply be to increase the likelihood of some other crime being committed. Many criminologists now disagree with the drive theory because it ignores evidence that criminal behaviour depends largely on immediate situational opportunities and inducements. It may therefore be more realistic to see crime, not as behaviour which people are inexorably driven to perform, but as acts which they choose to commit. This "economic" or "rational choice" theory of crime sees people as choosing to commit crime when the benefits outweigh the perceived effort and risks (cf. Cornish and Clarke, 1986). Thus, increased security might sometimes result in displacement, and sometimes not, depending upon the "costs" incurred by the offender in turning his attention elsewhere.

These points are illustrated by the introduction of steering column locks in West Germany and Britain. In West Germany, these locks were introduced in 1963 to all cars, new and old and there was an immediate 60 per cent decline in car thefts (see Figure 1). In Britain, the locks were introduced in 1971, but only on new cars. The result was that car thieves (most of whom stole vehicles for temporary use) displaced their attention from newer to older cars and there was no immediate decline in overall levels of car theft (Mayhew et al, 1976). Increased security can therefore bring about an overall decline in car theft, but only where the "costs" of displacement in terms of increased risks or effort are sufficiently great. The most predictable result of the piecemeal adoption of increased security is that theft will be displaced to more vulnerable targets.

**FIGURE 1**  
THEFT AND UNAUTHORISED TAKING OF CARS IN THE GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC, AND NUMBERS OF CARS REGISTERED, 1957-1972



**Protecting individual owners vs reducing the overall numbers of thefts**

The issue of displacement relates to a fundamental distinction concerning the objectives of prevention — whether one is seeking to reduce the overall scale of the problem or simply seeking to assist individual car owners in protecting themselves from theft. The latter is a much more realisable objective. For example, advice can be disseminated about locking cars, parking in driveways or garages rather than on the street (see Table 2), avoiding "hot spots" for theft such as those in the Sydney Metropolitan Area identified by the NRMA study (cf. NRMA Insurance Ltd, 1987), and avoiding cars that are attractive to thieves. In both Australia and the United States, such cars are the more "sporty" vehicles; in the US these include the Chevrolet Corvette and Camaro and the Ford Mustang and Thunderbird, while in Australia the most stolen makes, according to NRMA research, include the Mazda RX7, the Starion, and the Cordia, Charade, and Pulsar Turbos.

**TABLE 2**  
CAR THEFT BY NORMAL PLACE OF PARKING  
(1982 BRITISH CRIME SURVEY DATA)

| Normal place of parking | % Owners Victimised |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| ON STREET               | 23%                 |
| DRIVEWAY                | 14%                 |
| GARAGE                  | 6%                  |

Source: Gottfredson (1984)

But to assist individual owners is not necessarily to reduce the overall scale of the problem. The benefits achieved will often (perhaps usually) be obtained at the expense of increased risks to other owners. Some of these will be the more careless, but some will be those with less choice about where to park or what car to buy.

From a public policy perspective these are results of doubtful value.

### Limitations of publicity campaigns

These points are relevant to any consideration of the value of "lock-your-car" publicity campaigns. In fact, there is little evidence from careful evaluations undertaken in Canada and Britain (Riley and Mayhew, 1980) that such campaigns are successful in improving security behaviour. During the time I spent in the Home Office Research and Planning Unit, I was associated with the evaluation of two such campaigns, one a national campaign involving TV and national newspaper advertising, and the other a local police-directed campaign relying upon the distribution of leaflets and free publicity from the local media. Both campaigns were evaluated in respect of levels of reported thefts and of the proportions of cars found secure in spot checks by the police. Neither campaign had any demonstrable effect in terms of these measures. (To illustrate this, Table 3 gives the proportions of vehicles found secure at different stages of the local campaign).

**TABLE 3**  
**PROPORTION OF VEHICLES FOUND SECURE AT**  
**DIFFERENT STAGES IN A LOCAL CRIME PREVENTION CAMPAIGN**

|                     | % Vehicles Secure |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| BEFORE CAMPAIGN     | 81%               |
| DURING CAMPAIGN (1) | 79%               |
| DURING CAMPAIGN (2) | 78%               |
| AFTER CAMPAIGN      | 81%               |

Source: Burrows et al. (1979)

One possible reason for the failure of these campaigns is that we may already be close to the optimum level of compliance possible without central or automatic locking systems on all cars, or without legislation — as exists in some countries — making it a punishable offence to leave a car unlocked. After all, despite the aggregate scale of the problem, the risks of car theft are comparatively low (for example, one individual owner in the United States has only a one in 140 chance of having his car stolen in any one year), which means that day-after-day, year-after-year the behaviour of some careless owners is being repeatedly reinforced. This fact, combined with a pervasive "it can't happen to me" mentality will make it hard to change ingrained habits. There are also, of course, a small group of individuals, perhaps those with company cars and those who can see some insurance benefits in having their cars stolen, who have little incentive to be careful.

A publicity campaign may have certain other benefits which can justify the expenditure: it may demonstrate concern about car theft and raise its profile as a crime problem. But if a change in security behaviour is sought, something more than simple exhortation or raising levels of anxiety will have to be tried. My own opinion is that the approach being pursued by the NRMA is worthwhile: their campaign attempts to disseminate detailed information to owners about the particular risks they run depending on where they live, where they park their cars and what kind of vehicles they own. Anyone who wants to be helped, certainly should be helped by this information.

### Design solutions — and resistance to change

Designing-in improved security, or designing-out vulnerability seems in the long run to be more useful than trying to change people's habits. (It has similarly been concluded that safety devices, such as the air-bag, which do not rely upon action taken by the driver or passengers, have greater life-saving potential than seat-belts which do rely upon such action). A whole range of design improvements are currently being advocated, including the following taken from a recent Home Office Crime Prevention Unit report (Southall and Ekblom, 1985):

- Well-installed, high security locks on all doors and boot.
- No protruding sill buttons.

- A high security, well-installed steering column lock.
- Laminated (or equivalent) side and rear window glass.
- Protected bonnet release catches.
- Shielded internal door latching components.
- An audible reminder to remove the keys from the ignition.
- Catches of rear tipping seats housed in the boot and not in the passenger compartment.
- The boot-well of hatchbacks protected by a steel cover incorporating a lock.

And for more expensive models:

- Alarms,
- Central locking, and
- Immobilisation of the engine through its electronic management system.

The last suggestion, signals that the future will undoubtedly hold a whole new generation of security measures linked to the car's inboard computer.

Once again, the gradual introduction of any new measures will displace the attention of thieves to older, unprotected models. Their gradual introduction may also afford the opportunity to find ways of defeating the new measures. (This may be the reason why the overall level of car theft in Britain has declined very little, even though most cars now on the road are post-1970 models with steering locks. It is reported that many of these locks are now worn and inefficient and that thieves have found ways to break them.) However, the great attraction of designing-in security is that because of the limited life-span of vehicles, the security of the total vehicle population could be dramatically improved within the space of a decade or so. This holds the promise of achieving reductions in car theft in the long — if not the short-term, so long as sufficiently well-designed and well-built devices are produced.

Unfortunately, the motor industry is generally not so enthusiastic about building-in better security. Some sociologists (Karmen, 1981; Brill, 1982) have argued that is a result of manufacturer's vested interests: theft is good for sales because some owners of stolen cars will buy new replacement vehicles. The same sociologists also make the point that car theft has many other benefits: it makes cars available to people who could not otherwise afford them; it relieves some owners (who can be re-imbursed through insurance) of unsellable cars; it permits higher premiums to be charged by the insurance industry who can therefore make a greater profit; and it provides considerable employment for the police. This seems to me unduly cynical. Resistance to any kind of change is commonplace and can easily be accounted for by ordinary inertia and conservatism. The latter seems particularly to characterise the motor industry. Compare the comparatively modest development of the car during the course of this century with the amazing improvements in aircraft. Manufacturers also seem to believe that new security measures will inconvenience the public (though surely not as much as having their car stolen) and they also sometimes argue that deterring crime is not the role of industry, but that of the police.

The greater source of resistance, however, is concern about costs, with the industry claiming that people are unwilling to pay more for security. This is not consistent, however, with the results of (an admittedly small) study recently undertaken for the Home Office which concluded that people would be willing to pay up to 50% more on the cost of a new car for effective security — and that many improvements in security would cost far less (Southall and Ekblom, 1985). The industry's resistance may well stem from economists' projections relating the price of cars to probable sales which may indicate significant decrements in sales for each additional unit of cost.

However, this is not the same as saying that people are unwilling to pay for more security. They may be if given the choice. And they may well be more willing to pay for greater security than for improvements in cosmetics or comfort. In any case, the industry has a public duty to provide secure cars, just as it does to provide safe, non-polluting and energy-efficient ones. The costs of insecure cars are borne not just by the unlucky victims of crime, but by all of us in increased insurance premiums and in police and court time. Some, myself included, would further argue that opportunities for crime foster criminality, and that the car industry is therefore a significant contributor to the crime problem.

Fortunately, some manufacturers are now showing signs of a greater interest in security, perhaps prompted by the stirrings of consumer demand. More voluntary agreements among them to improve design may result but it is worth noting that the United States government introduced legislation in 1984 compelling manufacturers to improve the security of their most vulnerable models. These models will be identified on a yearly basis through continuous monitoring of theft statistics.

#### Summing-up

- 1) Car theft is a collection of separate but related problems, requiring a comprehensive range of preventive measures, both short and long-term.
- 2) Because of displacement, it is much easier to assist individual owners than to reduce the overall scale of the problem.
- 3) The most effective measures are those which increase the difficulty of car theft. In the long-term, design improvements may bring the greatest rewards, but more immediate gains might be achieved by tightening-up identification, registration and insurance practices, and by regulation of the smash repair trade.
- 4) Given criminal ingenuity (no different, in fact, from ordinary human ingenuity) and the many rewards of car theft, there is no final solution to the problem. Rather, it demands continued effort from a broad range of interested parties. It may never be possible to eliminate car theft, but without such efforts the problem will certainly get worse.

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# **“Car Theft” The Size of the Problem: An Australian View**

**Dr Satyanshu K. Mukherjee**  
**Australian Institute of Criminology**

Since 1965 the number of motor vehicles stolen in Australia has increased by about 400 per cent (from 24,285 in 1965 to 120,857 in 1985-86). Approximately 50 per cent of the vehicles stolen in Australia in 1965, and a similar proportion in 1985-86, were reported in New South Wales. According to the most conservative estimate, the value of stolen cars has jumped from about \$25 million in 1965 to an astonishing \$400 million dollars in 1985-86, a fifteen-fold increase. This is not accounting for economic and psychological hardships caused to the victim. Even after allowing for inflation this represents a very substantial increase indeed.

Yet when one wishes to examine even the very basic elements of motor vehicle theft, the pitiful nature of our knowledge soon becomes apparent. Criminological literature lacks detailed research studies of many specific forms of criminal behaviour. This is as if to suggest that offences like assault, robbery, burglary, car theft, etc. have emerged suddenly as problems facing most Western democracies. Policy decisions, including changes in laws, therefore, continue to be taken on the basis of inadequate and probably biased information.

Let us examine the problem of motor vehicle theft in Australia and New South Wales. Since 1965 the number of such thefts reported or becoming known to police has increased steadily. In order to maintain comparability with the rate of increase in other offences, let us consider the number of vehicles stolen per 100,000 population. During the 21 year period the rate of car theft in Australia has increased by 272 per cent (from 206 to 765 thefts per 100,000 population). Among the eight Australian jurisdictions, Northern Territory showed the maximum increase of 545 per cent and Tasmania the lowest increase of less than 127 per cent. Throughout these 21 years, however, New South Wales encountered the highest rate of motor vehicle theft, reaching a peak of 1,108 such thefts per 100,000 population.

Increases of a much greater magnitude than observed for motor vehicle thefts, occurred for other property motivated offences. For example, between 1965 and 1985-86 the reported rate of robbery in Australia per 100,000 population increased by a staggering 630 per cent; the burglary rate increased by over 353 per cent; and fraud by 300 per cent; among violent offences, serious assault jumped by 242 per cent; and homicide by 67 per cent.

**TABLE 1**  
**PERCENT INCREASE IN THE REPORTED RATE OF OFFENCE**  
**PER 100,000 POPULATION, 1965 - 1985-86**

| Offence                    | N.S.W. | VIC.   | QLD    | W.A.   | S.A.   | TAS.   | N.T.   | A.C.T. | AUST.  |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Robbery</b>             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 1965                       | 5.6    | 9.2    | 3.7    | 2.3    | 2.6    | 2.2    | 3.6    | 1.2    | 5.7    |
| 1985-86                    | 60.9   | 40.2   | 20.3   | 23.8   | 40.4   | 8.1    | 46.1   | 21.3   | 41.6   |
| % Change                   | 987.5  | 337.0  | 449.0  | 935.0  | 1457.0 | 268.1  | 1180.6 | 1675.0 | 630.0  |
| <b>Burglary</b>            |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 1965                       | 228.5  | 538.8  | 332.0  | 370.2  | 442.3  | 520.7  | 281.1  | 351.8  | 370.6  |
| 1985-86                    | 1561.0 | 1849.6 | 1247.6 | 2082.1 | 2267.9 | 1105.8 | 2283.4 | 1087.5 | 1679.7 |
| % Change                   | 583.2  | 243.2  | 275.8  | 462.4  | 412.8  | 112.4  | 712.3  | 209.1  | 353.2  |
| <b>Fraud</b>               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 1965                       | 160.2  | 130.4  | 189.2  | 129.0  | 172.3  | 79.6   | 135.8  | 197.6  | 152.5  |
| 1985-86                    | 294.3  | 955.7  | 789.4  | 684.3  | 550.7  | 323.7  | 697.5  | 402.7  | 610.7  |
| % Change                   | 83.7   | 633.0  | 317.2  | 430.5  | 219.6  | 306.7  | 413.6  | 103.8  | 300.5  |
| <b>Serious Assault</b>     |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 1965                       | 11.6   | 40.1   | 3.4    | 2.8    | 4.8    | 9.8    | 30.2   | 16.5   | 17.2   |
| 1985-86                    | 37.6   | 61.2   | 88.0   | 64.0   | 61.4   | 11.2   | 360.2  | 58.5   | 58.8   |
| % Change                   | 224.1  | 52.6   | 2488.2 | 2185.7 | 1179.1 | 14.3   | 1092.7 | 254.6  | 241.9  |
| <b>Motor Vehicle Theft</b> |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| 1965                       | 278.9  | 224.0  | 106.0  | 121.1  | 126.2  | 103.0  | 128.3  | 170.6  | 205.8  |
| 1985-86                    | 1108.0 | 637.5  | 380.4  | 702.7  | 789.6  | 233.8  | 827.7  | 390.5  | 764.8  |
| % Change                   | 297.3  | 184.6  | 258.9  | 480.3  | 525.7  | 127.0  | 545.1  | 128.9  | 271.6  |

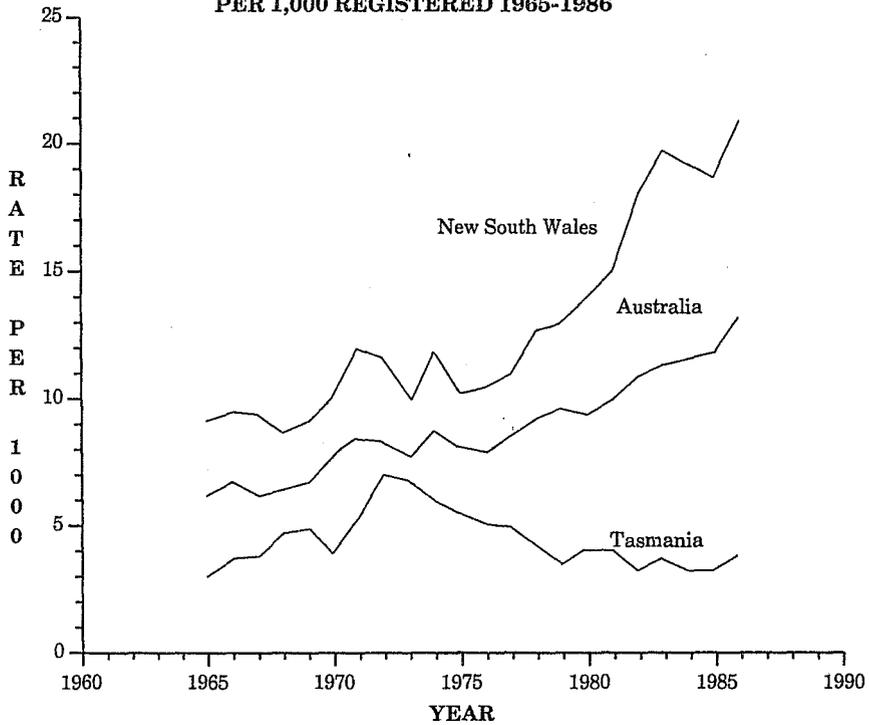
Note: Some of the changes are very dramatic and it is likely that changes in the definitions and counting rules might have contributed to this difference. A case in point is 'Per Cent Change' in Serious Assault rate for Queensland.

Also some drastic changes might have occurred because of small number effect. However, such high increases have not occurred suddenly between 2 years but gradually over the last 21 years.

It is apparent that of the six offences cited, motor vehicle theft showed the third lowest increase. While this is true, the significance of car theft and its impact on the community becomes clear when we compare with other property offences, e.g. burglary. The incidence of burglary was over twice as frequent as motor vehicle theft in Australia in 1985-86. Yet the total value of property loss on account of burglary was much lower than the loss as a result of motor vehicle theft. That is because whereas over 80 per cent of burglary incidents involved loss of property well under \$1,000, almost all incidents of motor vehicle theft involved property loss of well over \$1,000. The average theft claim lodged with the NRMA in 1986 amounted to over \$3,000.

Let me now present the motor vehicle theft data in relation to the number of vehicles on the road. During the period 1965 to 1985-86, the number of car thefts increased by 400 per cent but the number of vehicles registered increased by only 135 per cent. Nationally, 6.3 cars were stolen per 1,000 registered in 1965; in 1985-86 the ratio was 13.4 to 1,000. Among the states, New South Wales appears to show the highest vehicle theft to vehicle registered ratio. In 1985-86, for every 48 vehicles registered in the state, one was stolen. Tasmania presents the lowest ratio, one theft for every 261 vehicles registered.

**FIGURE 1  
NUMBER OF MOTOR VEHICLES STOLEN  
PER 1,000 REGISTERED 1965-1986**



**TABLE 2  
NUMBER OF MOTOR VEHICLES STOLEN PER 1,000 REGISTERED  
1965-1986**

|      | N.S.W. | VIC.  | QLD  | W.A.  | S.A.  | TAS. | N.T.  | A.C.T. | AUST. |
|------|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1965 | 9.16   | 6.90  | 3.32 | 3.55  | 3.49  | 3.20 | 4.86  | 5.00   | 6.33  |
| 1966 | 9.50   | 7.64  | 3.22 | 4.66  | 3.66  | 3.79 | 6.13  | 6.30   | 6.71  |
| 1967 | 9.43   | 8.08  | 2.84 | 4.87  | 3.54  | 3.79 | 5.94  | 6.25   | 6.34  |
| 1968 | 8.80   | 7.57  | 2.52 | 5.78  | 4.37  | 4.89 | 8.89  | 4.98   | 6.56  |
| 1969 | 9.30   | 7.59  | 3.03 | 5.56  | 3.99  | 5.05 | 9.48  | 4.11   | 6.85  |
| 1970 | 10.30  | 8.03  | 3.77 | 5.55  | 4.18  | 3.85 | 10.42 | 5.34   | 7.78  |
| 1971 | 12.02  | 8.94  | 5.18 | 7.94  | 4.81  | 5.38 | 16.19 | 6.47   | 8.66  |
| 1972 | 11.62  | 8.77  | 6.06 | 8.76  | 5.86  | 7.32 | 11.87 | 5.37   | 8.54  |
| 1973 | 9.96   | 7.48  | 5.91 | 9.09  | 6.31  | 6.71 | 17.97 | 5.80   | 7.63  |
| 1974 | 11.95  | 6.98  | 5.50 | 9.98  | 7.32  | 5.91 | 21.46 | 7.63   | 8.80  |
| 1975 | 10.25  | 6.58  | 5.63 | 9.94  | 7.81  | 5.50 | 23.99 | 6.38   | 8.15  |
| 1976 | 10.63  | 6.80  | 5.09 | 8.34  | 7.71  | 5.16 | 17.73 | 5.40   | 8.03  |
| 1977 | 11.12  | 8.23  | 4.82 | 8.81  | 6.87  | 5.05 | 19.09 | 4.94   | 8.49  |
| 1978 | 12.74  | 8.25  | 5.09 | 9.71  | 8.25  | 4.29 | 17.14 | 5.88   | 9.27  |
| 1979 | 13.28  | 8.60  | 5.05 | 9.15  | 9.53  | 3.49 | 17.21 | 5.14   | 9.56  |
| 1980 | 14.01  | 8.38  | 4.76 | 7.39  | 8.40  | 4.19 | 16.56 | 4.26   | 9.42  |
| 1981 | 15.27  | 8.74  | 4.63 | 7.43  | 8.13  | 4.23 | 19.84 | NA     | 9.98  |
| 1982 | 17.90  | 9.41  | 4.75 | 7.25  | 7.64  | 3.48 | 17.22 | 5.14   | 10.86 |
| 1983 | 19.70  | 9.16  | 5.38 | 8.07  | 7.49  | 3.80 | 16.88 | 6.21   | 11.57 |
| 1984 | 19.23  | 9.72  | 5.52 | 8.54  | 8.14  | 3.32 | 13.95 | 4.82   | 11.63 |
| 1985 | 18.63  | 9.94  | 5.97 | 9.30  | 9.18  | 3.28 | 15.15 | 6.60   | 11.76 |
| 1986 | 20.85  | 10.99 | 6.56 | 11.09 | 12.57 | 3.83 | 16.69 | 7.75   | 13.39 |

The above are aggregate figures and such data are not of much assistance in devising measures to respond to increasing incidents of car theft. Although the police routinely record detailed information on each reported incident, none of these details are ever made public. For instance, are thefts more common in some districts as against others? Are vehicles more likely to be stolen from shopping centre car lots/office building car parks or from other premises? Is car stealing more common during busy trading hours or after hours? etc.

Similarly, details of cars stolen are equally important. What proportion of the cars were unlocked at the time of stealing? Are cars of particular year/make more vulnerable to theft than others? So that the effectiveness of car security systems can be assessed adequately it is essential to know how often a particular system is successfully manipulated. It is possible that no foolproof system, without substantially increasing the cost of vehicles, is likely to be invented in the near future. It might, in that case, be productive to examine other alternatives.

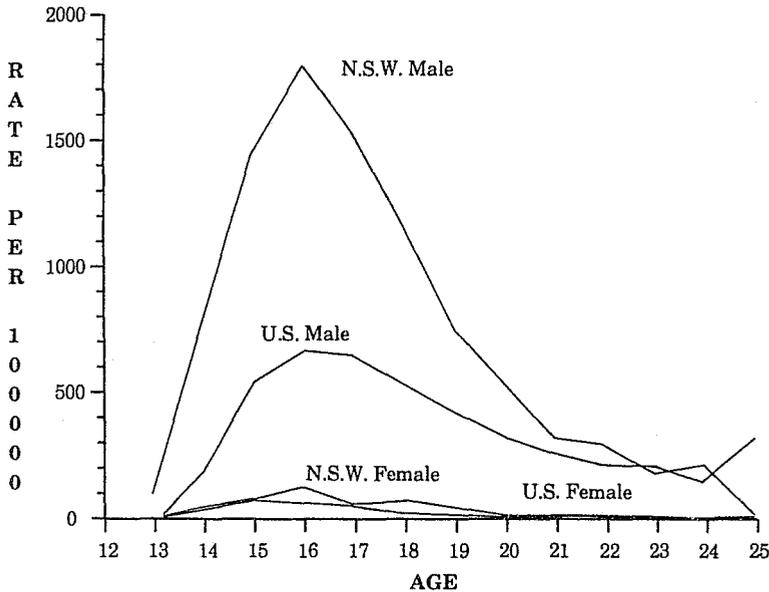
The special report on car theft in New South Wales, prepared by the NRMA Insurance, provides some very useful information. Keeping in mind that the figures are based only on claims lodged with the NRMA, the top eight suburbs of Sydney remained the same for the last three years in terms of number of cars stolen, some have moved a few ranks up or down within the top eight. The report also offers details of where and when thefts occur and pinpoints suburbs by degree of risk. The report describes year/make of stolen cars and the cost of claims.

There is even less information on the offender and his/her lifestyle, operational methods and motivations. If a large majority of the offences are cleared by arrest, one may be permitted to assume that the age/sex, occupation distribution of arrestees are representative of all offenders, including those not caught. When we are faced with an appallingly low clearance rate, such an assumption becomes extremely risky. In 1985-86, 60,831 motor vehicles were stolen in New South Wales, of these only 3.6 per cent or 2,193 were cleared by arrest. The Police Department's annual report indicates that 55 per cent of the arrests involved persons under the age of 18 and over 94 per cent of the arrests involved males. We cannot deduce from these statistics that the perpetrators of over 96 per cent of car thefts which were never cleared, also presented characteristics similar to those apprehended.

We may concede that the mid-teens to early twenties represent the most active period of criminality. Evidence from overseas, however, indicates that arrest figures probably exaggerate the fear of being a victim of youth crime in several ways. Because juveniles tend to commit crimes in groups, the official arrest rates may not necessarily be an exaggeration. But because several youngsters may be arrested for one offence, members of the community may feel threatened by the misinformed notion of increasing youth crime. Evidence also demonstrates that their crimes are less serious than those committed by adults, both in terms of property loss/damage and injury to the victim.

Having made these cautionary remarks, let me now turn to the statistics. The age (for individual age years) and sex distribution of arrests for motor vehicle theft for 1984 was made available by the N.S.W. Police Department. Since no other jurisdiction in Australia could provide such statistics, I have collected readily available statistics from the United States of America.

**FIGURE 2**  
**ARREST RATE PER 100,000 RELEVANT POPULATION**  
**FOR MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT BY AGE AND SEX,**  
**N.S.W. AND U.S.A. 1984**



We must use extreme caution in comparing the two sets of statistics. Statistics on arrest rate per 100,000 relevant population by individual age years for males and females reveal some very important differences between New South Wales and the United States. Although the peak arrest age in both the United States and New South Wales is sixteen years, in the latter the arrest rate for males of this age is approximately three times that of the United States. According to the data, on an average, one in 60 sixteen year old males was arrested for motor vehicle theft in New South Wales in 1984. Secondly, the New South Wales data show both the dramatic rises in rate from age 13 to 16 years and a meteoric fall from age 17 to 21 years; the arrest rate movement in the United States is gradual.

But the data beg us to investigate some of the latent elements in the pattern. If we are able to gather such data for a few years, if the arrest figures could be broken down by motives of car theft, (joyriding, professional, fraud etc.) and if the background of arrestees (employment, occupation, area of residence, etc.) can be ascertained, it may be possible to present a much more meaningful scenario. Individuals aged 16 and over are entitled to unemployment benefits (the May economic statement of the Federal Treasurer proposes to abolish such benefits for sixteen and seventeen year olds and substitute with a \$25 per week job search allowance). They thus have money and they have all the time in the world to do what they please. At this stage, I suggest the link between youth unemployment and car theft is a purely speculative one.

## Response to Increasing Crime

Criminological literature from Australia and overseas, particularly since the second world war, show increasing trends in property motivated crimes. Violent crimes, e.g. serious assault, rape, and robbery, also show increasing trends. But research reports and statistics make it very plain that sudden and sharp increases in any crime appear to be rare. And, even if such rare movements occur, they tend to dissipate quickly. Yet, at times an atmosphere of hysteria is created by the leaders of the community, the media, and groups with vested interests. A number of recent examples come to mind. During the campaign for two by-elections in New South Wales early this year, leaders of both the major political parties made crime a major issue. Yet the official crime statistics did not show any unusual increases in crime in recent months. The fact is that incidents of burglaries and other crimes have been rising at a more than average rate since the early 1980s. Similarly, the number of murders in New South Wales in 1987 has been making frequent headlines in newspapers. So far this year 41 murders have been reported in the state. Because no one cared to examine the number of murders in the first 19 weeks of 1986 or 1985, the information is not presented in an intelligent manner. During the years 1980 to 1986 the average number of murders each year has been 101, a minimum of 95 in 1980 and maximum of 108 in 1981. Admittedly, even one murder is one too many, the point is that the rate in 1987 is within the range observed in previous years.

Such perceptions and publicity, often irrational, bias our judgement in designing responses to the crime problem. It is also possible that as a reaction to the hysteria, crime may be seriously politicised. In the recent past we have observed around Australia some measures which emerge frequently as responses to problems concerning crime and justice. Proposals to change laws, appointment of Task Forces/Royal Commissions, demand for more police and more power to police, reorganising police administration, etc. have become routine responses. Also, it is not uncommon to note one government department blaming another agency e.g. the police blame courts for being 'lenient', the courts blame politicians for inadequate legislation; and prisons blame the police for over crowding gaols. No one would deny that such responses have their merits, but often such responses appear to be desperate measures. One such desperate measure was proposed in New South Wales a few months back — penalise victims for leaving their cars unlocked, or unsecured.

I now wish to examine one type of response which was introduced in Australia about three years back — i.e. community crime prevention, commonly known as Neighbourhood Watch. In March 1984, Victoria initiated the first Neighbourhood Watch scheme, followed by New South Wales in October 1984. Since then all other jurisdictions have introduced Neighbourhood Watch schemes. It should be noted, however, that these schemes operate only in some areas. It is also useful to note that Neighbourhood Watch was introduced as a response to prevent increasing incidence of residential burglary. There is absolutely no doubt that the immediate impact of such schemes have been positive. Neighbourhoods with such schemes, at times, showed dramatic declines in residential burglary.

The disappointing news is that other crimes not only continue to increase but in some areas the rate of increase has been much higher than in previous years. In each of the 11 Melbourne metropolitan police districts, motor vehicle theft, other theft, and fraud increased. Even the decline in residential burglary in some districts has substantially slowed down. Eight of the 10 Sydney metropolitan police districts showed declines in property breakings, but in seven districts motor vehicle thefts increased in the Liverpool district by as much as 41 per cent. I do not in any way suggest that Neighbourhood Watch causes increase in other crime. But unless we systematically evaluate we will never know the true impact of Neighbourhood Watch.

**TABLE 3**  
**RATES REPORTED PER 100,000 POPULATION — MELBOURNE**  
**METROPOLITAN AREA BY POLICE DISTRICT AND OFFENCE**

| YEAR                           | A     | B    | H    | I    | M    | P    | Q    | U    | V    | Y    | Z    |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Break, Enter and Steal</b>  |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 1983                           |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Residential                    | 3106  | 2822 | 2160 | 3480 | 1306 | 920  | 1439 | 1345 | 1064 | 880  | 1010 |
| Non-Residential                | 3644  | 894  | 608  | 1401 | 968  | 774  | 545  | 827  | 579  | 630  | 642  |
| 1984-85                        |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Residential                    | 2392  | 2280 | 1830 | 3055 | 1671 | 973  | 1372 | 1283 | 1142 | 946  | 893  |
| Non-Residential                | 4048  | 988  | 593  | 1200 | 1050 | 633  | 531  | 838  | 594  | 714  | 768  |
| 1985-86                        |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Residential                    | 2487  | 2252 | 1562 | 3047 | 1642 | 913  | 1345 | 949  | 1177 | 990  | 1018 |
| Non-Residential                | 2920  | 833  | 677  | 1142 | 958  | 593  | 436  | 725  | 587  | 593  | 720  |
| <b>Other Property Offences</b> |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 1983                           |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Other Theft                    | 12142 | 2410 | 2254 | 4185 | 2503 | 1788 | 1590 | 2284 | 1493 | 1529 | 2044 |
| Motor Vehicle Theft            | 2971  | 932  | 503  | 1340 | 721  | 476  | 498  | 446  | 381  | 335  | 371  |
| 1984-85                        |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Other Theft                    | 13653 | 2523 | 2316 | 5262 | 2617 | 1856 | 1738 | 2325 | 1741 | 1741 | 2369 |
| Motor Vehicle Theft            | 2997  | 969  | 559  | 1406 | 931  | 616  | 634  | 474  | 463  | 475  | 422  |
| 1985-86                        |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Other Theft                    | 16936 | 2774 | 2317 | 5529 | 3168 | 1968 | 1705 | 2466 | 1893 | 2017 | 2521 |
| Motor Vehicle Theft            | 4226  | 1138 | 628  | 1531 | 1000 | 706  | 640  | 571  | 515  | 533  | 470  |

TABLE 4  
NUMBER OF OFFENCES RECORDED IN SYDNEY METROPOLITAN  
POLICE DISTRICTS 1984-85 to 1985-86

| DISTRICT   | OFFENCE             | OFFENCES RECORDED |         | % CHANGE |
|------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------|----------|
|            |                     | 1984/85           | 1985/86 |          |
| Bankstown  | Property Breakings  | 9534              | 7741    | -18.81   |
|            | Motor Vehicle Theft | 6279              | 6959    | 10.83    |
| Burwood    | Property Breakings  | 12783             | 9646    | -24.54   |
|            | Motor Vehicle Theft | 9271              | 9535    | 2.85     |
| Central    | Property Breakings  | 4948              | 4727    | -4.47    |
|            | Motor Vehicle Theft | 4412              | 4374    | -0.86    |
| Chatswood  | Property Breakings  | 6489              | 5162    | -20.45   |
|            | Motor Vehicle Theft | 2471              | 2471    | 0.00     |
| Dee Why    | Property Breakings  | 5534              | 4128    | -25.41   |
|            | Motor Vehicle Theft | 1750              | 2293    | 31.03    |
| Gosford    | Property Breakings  | 2061              | 1930    | -6.36    |
|            | Motor Vehicle Theft | 1290              | 1220    | -5.43    |
| Liverpool  | Property Breakings  | 7787              | 8130    | 4.40     |
|            | Motor Vehicle Theft | 5691              | 8038    | 41.24    |
| Maroubra   | Property Breakings  | 6624              | 6148    | -7.19    |
|            | Motor Vehicle Theft | 4952              | 5477    | 10.60    |
| Parramatta | Property Breakings  | 9149              | 8626    | -5.72    |
|            | Motor Vehicle Theft | 5613              | 6188    | 10.24    |
| Penrith    | Property Breakings  | 8716              | 9177    | 5.29     |
|            | Motor Vehicle Theft | 4686              | 6484    | 38.37    |

Logically, Neighbourhood Watch must succeed. In the final analysis the major aim of such a scheme is to bring about social solidarity by increasing contact between neighbours and by working together to fight a common enemy. If this goal is achieved, residential burglary declines because of opportunity reduction. There are some big ifs in this construct.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are generally organised to achieve a single goal — prevent residential burglary by opportunity reduction. Research overseas shows that such single purpose anti-crime schemes are often shortlived. The public must also consider action programmes targetted at the root causes of crime. Empirical evidence shows that youngsters are disproportionately represented in criminal activity. Research also shows that much of the criminogenic process is linked to the development stages of youth. The community must be encouraged to improve educational, employment and recreational opportunities available to the youth.

Before I conclude I wish to make two final comments.

1. In our society the citizens have come to believe that crime prevention is the task of the police and other criminal justice agencies and that crimes occur because of the failure of these agencies. The responsibility for the existence of such a belief to a large measure lies with the official agencies. Recently, the newspapers reported that the regionalisation of the police force in New South Wales "will enhance the force's capacity to prevent and solve crime . . .". The fact of the matter is that the police and other agencies, in a large majority of cases, can only react to crime, not prevent it. In preventing crime the police's role is secondary to citizens' efforts. Therefore, it is essential that we direct our resources to promoting the ability of the citizens to gain a measure of control over the

neighbourhood. This, without doubt, is the most effective way to reduce crime; striving for efficiency in the criminal justice system is secondary to this goal.

2. Crime diminishes quality of life. A single experience of being a victim of rape, mugging or extortion can have much more enduring effect on quality of life than the effect of stagnating national economy. It is important, therefore, that in our attempts to engender the citizen's involvement in crime prevention we reiterate this point rather than play on the fear of crime. In this effort, the media have a very important role to play.

# The NRMA Experience

**Mr John Lamble  
General Manager  
NRMA Insurance Ltd**

## INTRODUCTION

Car theft has been increasing for a number of years and has become a major cost factor in the pricing of car insurance in New South Wales. Naturally, this is something which has been a major concern to NRMA Insurance Ltd. In order to understand the nature of this problem, considerable effort has been made over the last couple of years to collect detailed data on car theft and undertake extensive analysis of that data. With over one million policies in force and around 20,000 theft claims per year, NRMA Insurance Ltd has been able to delve into many facets of the problem of car theft.

This detailed analysis has been carried out by the Insurance Research Department of NRMA Insurance Ltd and has culminated in the publication of "Car Theft In New South Wales". This paper will cover the major findings of this research and to highlight what I see are the major issues to be addressed in devising initiatives to reduce car theft in New South Wales.

## THE COST OF CAR THEFT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

There were 66,000 car thefts reported to the police during 1986. It is NRMA Insurance Ltd's estimate that the cost of damage to the vehicles involved was \$140 million. Although the bulk of this cost was directly met by insurance companies, it is really the community at large who foots the bill — whatever it costs the insurance industry gets passed on to consumers through increased premiums for car insurance. A significant proportion of the sizeable premium increases imposed by insurance companies during 1986 can be attributed to the increase in theft in New South Wales, particularly in Sydney.

New South Wales has by far the worst experience of any state in Australia. It is also evident that its experience is deteriorating faster than any other state. The only other state to show any noticeable increase in the last decade is Victoria — where the theft rate is currently half that of New South Wales.

The burden of car theft placed on the policyholders of New South Wales can be gauged from the following figures showing how NRMA Insurance Ltd's theft payout per policy has increased since 1979. In the last seven years, the theft cost per policy has quadrupled from \$13.40 a policy in 1979 to \$57.10 in 1986.

Also to be considered is the fact that these estimates of total cost only relate to the damage directly associated with the stolen vehicle. They do not include any allowance for such costs as:

- The increased premiums to individual policyholders as a result of losing their no-claim bonuses.
- The incidental costs and inconvenience incurred by the car owner while a stolen vehicle is being located and being returned to its pre-theft condition (or being replaced if not recovered).
- The damage done to other private and public property in car theft incidents.
- The cost and administrative burden incurred by the police force in recording and following up all incidents of car theft reported. Based on advice from the New South Wales Police, it is estimated that in 1986 the administrative work incurred in the

recording and following up of theft incidents alone accounted for approximately 100,000 man-hours of work — and that doesn't include time spent on detection of the car thieves.

### THE "PLAYERS" IN CAR THEFT

The "players" can be categorised into four key groups — the "professionals", the "petty thieves", the "fraudulent thefts" and the "joyriders". Their involvement in car theft is as follows:

- (a) The "professional" element consists of those who steal cars either to re-identify them for resale (the "reborns"), or to strip them for resale of the parts to the second-hand spare parts trade. It is estimated that this element initiated around 16,000 of the thefts in 1986, at a cost of \$68 million. Of this, \$9 million (from 1,000 thefts) would have been incurred on "reborns" and \$59 million (from 15,000 thefts) on those stripped for parts. With this kind of "turnover" there is no doubt that there must be a thriving market for the product.
- (b) The "petty theft" element consists of those who steal or break into cars to remove accessories and personal items which can be easily traded for cash and/or drugs. This element has become more prevalent in recent years. Cars with expensive stereo equipment installed are the prime targets. In 1986, this type of theft is estimated to have totalled \$14 million from 7,500 incidents.
- (c) The "fraudulent" element comprises those who contrive a car theft incident in order to make a financial gain from an insurance company. NRMA Insurance Ltd's experience is that somewhere around 18 per cent of theft claims lodged (11.5 per cent of all thefts reported to police) are fraudulent or contain features which strongly suggest fraudulent activity. This level is comparable to similar studies conducted in other countries. It is, of course, not possible to refuse payment of claims purely on suspicion and without a reasonable degree of proof. Allowing for this, it is estimated that in 1986, \$25 million (on 7,500 claims) was paid by the insurance industry on theft claims which were, in fact, not genuine.
- (d) The "joyriding" element comprises those who steal cars either for the "dare" of it and as a convenient means of transport home after a night out on the town. This element comprises approximately 30 per cent of NRMA Insurance Ltd's theft claims. Of course, a large number of the "joyriding" thefts do not result in an insurance claim. Overall, it is estimated that over 50 per cent of all thefts (35,000 in 1986) were "joyriding" incidents and about half of this group caused little or no damage. The total cost of these incidents in 1986 was estimated to be \$33 million.

The key observation to be made from these figures is that, while "joyriding" represents by far the largest component in numbers of thefts, it is the professional element which generates the greatest cost. Given that these two elements are motivated by totally different desires it is going to take quite different initiatives to have a significant impact on each of them.

### INSURANCE FRAUD

In dealing with the car theft problem, there needs to be a separation of true theft and fraud. The "fraudulent" element is totally different in nature to other thefts in that it is a contrived event and, as such, will not be affected by measures aimed at reducing true car theft. Insurance fraud is something which has not been treated by government and the community as seriously as it should have been. The syndrome of "oh well, the insurance company has plenty of money anyway" is a myth because it is always the community who actually ends up paying for it.

Obviously, it is the insurance industry which must take the lead in developing initiatives to combat insurance fraud. But such initiatives will fail if they are not seen to have the endorsement and active support of government and the community. Fraud is a serious crime requiring serious penalties. It will not be dealt with by posturing or tokenism.

## CONCENTRATION OF THEFT ACTIVITY

There are two further aspects of car theft I would like to touch on, relating to where car theft activity is concentrated and the targetted vehicles.

### Geographic Trends

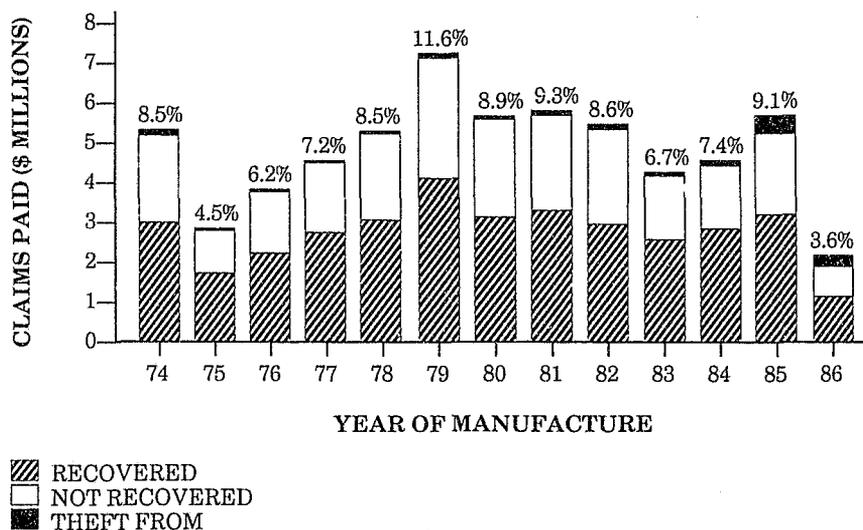
Car theft is very much concentrated in the Sydney Metropolitan Area. Within Sydney itself, it is predominantly a western suburbs phenomenon and is becoming particularly bad in the south western region of the Sydney Metropolitan Area. The impact of these differences in experience is well illustrated by the theft cost per policy. In the south western region of Sydney the theft cost per policy was \$141, over four times that for policies in the northern beaches (\$35) and nearly seven times that for country policyholders (\$21).

In developing priorities for tackling the car theft problem, it should be noted that the nine Sydney postcodes which we have classified as extreme account for around 30 per cent of the total cost of car theft in the city. The total cost of cars stolen in 1986 in Liverpool, Cabramatta and Parramatta alone (the worst three suburbs in Sydney) was estimated at more than \$17 million.

A general pattern to emerge from detailed profiles of car theft in the worst suburbs is that somewhere between one third and one half of car theft in these suburbs occurs in a fairly tight cordon around the commercial and shopping districts. Large shopping centre car parks and car parks where vehicles are left for considerable periods of time are prime targets for car thieves. Given the relatively low volume of car park related theft in the city area, it would appear that the presence of some form of security in these parking areas would help to reduce the incidence of car theft.

More generally, the fairly tight cordon within which a large proportion of car theft takes place in the high risk suburbs suggest that more intensive covert surveillance of these areas by police would have a positive effect on reducing car theft, particularly the joyriding element.

FIGURE 1  
NRMA INSURANCE LTD  
THEFT PAYOUT BY YEAR MODEL



## The Target Vehicles

A common misconception regarding car theft is that it is something which is predominantly targetted at late model cars. Whilst current model vehicles are high risks, it is vehicles 10 to 15 years old which are the main targets. While the graph on the previous page shows the relative theft risks by age of vehicle, it somewhat masks where the major share of the cost of car theft lays. To put a proper perspective on this aspect, Figure 2 is also included setting our NRMA Insurance Ltd's total payout by year model.

FIGURE 2  
YEAR MODEL TRENDS  
IN CAR THEFT



These results show quite clearly how the nature of car theft changes with the age of the vehicle and where, in dollar terms, the real cost of car theft is concentrated.

- Theft involving new vehicles is very much targetted at stripping accessories. This can be seen in the very high "theft from" component and the high proportion of "theft ofs" recovered with minor stripping damage. This is, in all likelihood, an area of petty crime which has supplanted video burglaries as a means of obtaining quick cash and/or financing drug habits.
- The bulk of the cost of car theft is incurred on vehicles five or more years old. Over 65 per cent of NRMA Insurance Ltd's 1986 theft payout was for 1981 and earlier models. With vehicles of this vintage, the main objective is to steal the car to strip it for parts. This is evidenced by an increased proportion of both major stripping damage and unrecovered thefts for older models.

The key conclusion of these results is that any anti-theft measures which can only be instituted for vehicles as they are being manufactured (such as the stamping of key parts with identification numbers) are not going to have any immediate, or even medium-term, impact on the level of car theft. This does not mean that such measures should not be considered, but they need to be seen as measures which will only have an effect in the long-term. We believe that anti-theft measures must be concentrated on the receiving end of the car theft cycle (especially for second hand body parts) if any high-impact, short-term gains are going to be made. This implies a channelling of police efforts in a different direction. It also raises the question of the role today's information and communication technology has in supporting such effort. It will require some masterminding in the Police Force with computer resources backing them, for this second hand trade to be curbed. We don't think it will be solved by the 'man on the beat'. You certainly need the support of the man on the beat, but it will need some masterminding.

It is also of interest to look at the variation in the theft experience for different makes and models of vehicle. Owners of Laser Turbos, SAAB's and LTD's beware — your car is a

prime target for car thieves and it is going to cost a lot in insurance premiums. In contrast owners of Volvo's and Corolla's may rest more easily. I might add that the whole of the Turbo range is a problem area. It seems to attract a certain class of person and a very serious cost to the insurance. You can see that for an LTD there is a loading of something like \$400 odd on the premium for car theft risk alone. We've got to add to that the cost of collisions, hail damage or windscreen breakage, whatever it might be. So there are some very fancy costs arising in this area. And that's taken over all LTD's. If you have an LTD in Cabramatta, watch out!

**FIGURE 3  
THE TARGET VEHICLES  
THEFT COST PER POLICY**

|             | YEAR MODEL |         |         |
|-------------|------------|---------|---------|
|             | 1970-79    | 1980-84 | 1985-86 |
| COROLLA     | 18.9       | 23.6    | 25.6    |
| LASER       |            | 100.4   | 174.9   |
| LASER TURBO |            |         | 1,413.3 |
| COMMODORE   | 141.4      | 103.1   | 53.6    |
| FALCON      | 67.5       | 74.9    | 80.7    |
| VOLVO       | 29.9       | 13.8    | 12.2    |
| SAAB        | 23.0       | 97.6    | 356.8   |
| LTD         | 138.8      | 350.2   | 474.1   |

One thing the table does not show, but which needs to be considered, are the reasons which lead to a particular vehicle becoming a target. This has implications when examining the role that vehicle security has to play in reducing car theft.

In concluding, I'd like to make some comments about community attitude to car theft. It would be fair to say that car theft is not viewed as a particularly serious crime. That this community could absorb about \$60-\$80 million worth of stolen parts from this source alone each year, is strong evidence of an ambivalent attitude towards it — for every seller, there's a buyer. It can be seen that it is a relatively risk-free crime. The chances of being caught are very small and the penalties for those who are caught act as no deterrent to others. We believe that there is a lot of evidence that juveniles are employed by the professionals to steal cars. The juveniles see it as an easy way of making \$50. They think they grow taller as a result of it in the eyes of their peers. And the law in New South Wales at the moment seems to make it far too easy for a juvenile to commit a crime, be slapped on the hand and sent away — they are back at work the next week.

The evidence suggests that stealing a car, even for the professional element, is very much a juvenile male activity. If we don't want to put these offenders in gaol then we need to find penalties which are sufficiently repulsive to them. The penalties at the receiving end of the car theft cycle also need to have a large deterrent effect.

Theft is generally seen as something which mainly affects the more affluent part of the community. But this is a misconception. Car theft strikes at older vehicles and is concentrated in the less-affluent parts of Sydney. It is the relatively disadvantaged section of the community who are the victims of car theft.

One of the key objectives of the NRMA's "Make Life Hell for Car Thieves" campaign is to increase the community's awareness of the seriousness of the car theft problem and the need for them to take an active role in its prevention. To monitor the effectiveness of this, attitudinal research is being conducted before and after the campaign to see what impact can be made on increasing community awareness. It will be interesting to see the results. We will also be utilising the Neighbourhood Watch programme to support the message.

Finally, I'd just like to say that unless the community, and that includes the governing sector of the community, accepts that car theft is a serious problem, it is going to be very difficult to achieve any significant reduction in the incidence of it.

# The Practical Impact of Car Theft On the N.S.W. Police

## Chief Inspector Rex Anderson N.S.W. Police Department Anti-Theft Branch

Although I could tell you that the first recorded case of an aircraft hijack was in 1934 I can't tell you the date on which a motor vehicle was first reported stolen. But we do know that the time of the manufacture of the first motor vehicle was the time the offence of stealing motor vehicles came into existence; and since that time it has increased steadily and, unfortunately at times, more than steadily.

Figures from the annual report of the N.S.W. Police Department show that during 1986 there were 60,831 motor vehicles reported stolen. I should immediately point out that of that number, 50,791 were recovered. Later I will attempt to explain why some of these vehicles were not recovered and where they went.

More recently, figures for the period 1 January 1987 to 31 March 1987, show a total number of 14,998 vehicles stolen and 12,596 recovered.

The impact of motor vehicle theft on the N.S.W. Police Force is a matter of some concern. Time, one of our most valuable resources, is severely taxed when we become involved in motor vehicle theft. The public, and a lot of other people, feel that a motor vehicle is stolen, it's reported to the police, the police recover it, tell the owner, the owner recovers his own vehicle and that's the end of it — very quickly. If you say it very quickly it doesn't take much time. But the recovery of a motor vehicle is not quite as simple as that. From the moment a motor vehicle is stolen, police time is taken up in many ways. You may not think that accepting the report of a theft of a motor vehicle by a policeman takes up time, but it does — paperwork. There is time taken to circulate the theft of that motor vehicle. There is time taken to recover the motor vehicle. There is time taken, once you recover the vehicle, in informing the owners of the recovery; and this sometimes is not very simple. The owners are at work, at their neighbour's place or some other place.

At times when vehicles are recovered they may be minus the doors, or the bonnet, and if it is an expensive vehicle we are duty bound to place a guard on that vehicle to stop it being further stripped and again valuable police time is taken. If we have to take possession of the motor vehicle, which we do from time to time, if it's been used in the commission of a crime, we have to wait until the tow truck arrives. If you have a motor vehicle accident in George Street with another motor vehicle, within two and a half seconds you'll have 13 tow trucks on the scene trying to get your business. If you're a policeman and you're recovering an expensive motor vehicle, or a motor vehicle which you must take into your custody, and you call a tow truck, see how long you wait down in George Street — because you're not a paying customer; they're not going to get the repair job out of you.

Now we appreciate that when a motor vehicle is stolen it immediately places a strain and expense on the owner. There is an immediate cost to the owner. And there is also an immediate cost in police time. The circumstances surrounding the theft and recovery of motor vehicles vary, therefore various periods of time are consumed.

The point I would like to make here is that while police are recovering stolen motor vehicles, or making enquiries about them, they may not be available for more serious or more urgent duties. The question is often put: why are so many vehicles stolen in N.S.W.? I suppose the short answer is "because there are more motor vehicles in N.S.W." There are certainly more thieves in N.S.W. I sometimes suspect our counterparts from the southern states push their car thieves over the border. They deny it but it's a bit hard to believe they don't do it.

Our car thieves generally fall into five categories, each with a different reason for stealing. The two main motivators for stealing are a quick profit — that's the main

motivator — or to obtain a means of transport. You get the person who comes into town from the western suburbs on Saturday night and stays a bit late at the licensed premises, misses the last train home and they just take a car and drive it out west and leave it. People steal cars, or motor vehicles, to commit a criminal offence such as a bag snatch or an armed robbery. That happens daily.

As for the types of offenders, there are five in our opinion. There are the petty thieves — they break into motor vehicles, sometimes to steal valuable equipment inside but at times they will drive the vehicle away. They might only drive it a block or three or four blocks away from the scene so that they can take the stereo equipment or the golf clubs or the fur coat that's left on the back seat.

Then we have the thief who steals to make a fraudulent claim. These are staged thefts, organised thefts. On some occasions the vehicle is burnt in order to profit from the insurance companies.

The next category is the joyrider. They steal the car, drive it around, then dump it, usually intact or with minor damage. But some joyriders have a habit of burning the vehicle when they leave it.

Then there is the criminal who steals a vehicle to use it in the commission of a crime. If your vehicle is stolen for this purpose, hope that it's used in an armed robbery or a bag snatch straight away because the type of person who steals a car to commit an armed robbery drives to the bank, holds up the bank, rushes out, jumps in your vehicle and drives it only one or one and a half kilometres before leaving it. So that type of vehicle is usually recovered intact immediately after the commission of the crime.

The last group of thieves of course is the professional, a very selective thief. He steals a vehicle and will either change the identity completely and sell it here or interstate or it may be partially or fully stripped, the parts sold and the shell abandoned.

The first four categories account for approximately 80 per cent of the total number of vehicles stolen and the last, the professionals, we believe for the remaining 20 per cent of motor vehicles stolen — those which are never recovered.

So what are the N.S.W. Police doing about motor vehicle theft? If you listen to certain people you'll be convinced that we're doing nothing. But we are attempting to attack this problem and I would say, in the first instance, every member of the N.S.W. Police Force is charged with the responsibility for attacking the problem of vehicle theft. In our front line — and I use the words "front line" because it is a battle — we have the Motor Squad at our Criminal Investigation Branch. Then we have a branch we call the Anti-theft Branch and the objectives of the Motor Squad and the Anti-theft Branch are very similar in that we are attempting to reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft and to increase the effectiveness of policing techniques.

One of the most important aspects of our work is intelligence gathering. Intelligence dealing with all aspects of vehicle theft is constantly gathered, analysed, and resulting from this operations are mounted. Unfortunately our operations are only as strong as the information we receive.

We are assisted by a number of committees and organisations. We have the Anti-theft Advisory Committee which meets monthly and has representatives from the office of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Bureau of Crime and Statistics, the NRMA, the GIO and the Insurance Council of Australia representing all other insurance companies in N.S.W.

We have a Motor Vehicle Theft Suppression Committee with representatives from a number of sections of the Police Force. The insurance companies already mentioned and other organisations such as the Motor Traders Association and the Auto Parts Recyclers Association of N.S.W. The Department of Consumer Affairs rates a mention here. We liaise with the department and recently they set up an Encumbered Vehicle Register. This register is in its early stages but the police have no doubt it is an excellent initiative.

The strategies of the Motor Vehicle Theft Committee include seeking the support of the motor vehicle industry, offering suggestions in relation to door and ignition locks. We are

aware of, and appreciate, changes in manufacture mean an increase in cost. But we will continue to seek their co-operation and this also applies to brake-type locks.

We are attempting, with the assistance of our Community Relations Branch, to make the community more aware of the problem of motor vehicle theft. We hope through the community to reduce the incidence of motor vehicle theft. We have an education programme designed to bring the magnitude of the problem to the public. We are using proposals such as the distribution of a crime prevention brochure, sponsored and funded by a major insurance company. Information sheets are distributed in approximately eight foreign languages. We have a brochure aimed at school children. A video has been produced and will be distributed to all television stations as a community service, and an audio tape will be distributed to radio stations throughout N.S.W.

In my opinion and in the opinion of my colleagues, owner-driver apathy towards the security of motor vehicles contributes to the increase of motor vehicle theft in this state. Owner-drivers continue to ignore the usual safety precautions, leave the vehicle unlocked, would you believe in this day and age, even leave their keys in the ignition — sometimes very bright members of the public install an expensive car alarm, park their car and walk away without switching it on.

In every area we are attempting to educate the public. We've printed cards that we distribute in high-risk areas to our beat police. If they find a car left unlocked, or with valuables in sight, we put a polite little card in the vehicle saying 'please don't do it again'.

The Government Insurance Office of this state offers their customers a discount on motor vehicle insurance premium if they install a recognised security alarm system sold by an approved alarm company. Discussions are currently continuing with other insurance companies to introduce similar schemes.

As for public parking areas, railway commuter parking areas are shocking targets for car thieves as are parking areas at sporting fixtures and the like. We have contacted the controlling bodies of all these organisations and asked them to upgrade their security measures. We've conducted many, many operations in an attempt to detect offenders and at times we move into a high-profile mode with a view to deterring potential offenders.

We are receiving tremendous support from the Police Minister, Mr Paciullo, who is well aware of the problem and has recently directed that a task force be formed to cover the problem of car theft. Some excellent suggestions were made and they are in the office of the Minister at the present time.

The markets for stolen vehicles are many. The police are currently acting to monitor the interstate and overseas transportation of stolen vehicles. As the result of a task force recommendation on motor vehicle registration procedures which don't couple together from state to state, we're trying to organise a forum on the uniformity of procedures for re-registration.

We make every effort to identify dumping grounds for stolen vehicles. We have sought the assistance of all sorts of people — bushwalking clubs, Telecom lineworkers, even the Aviation Corps of the Australian Army, who fly daily around the western suburbs.

We are constantly taking new initiatives. Obviously we can't tell you exactly what they are as we don't want to show our hand. But I can assure you that we are attacking the problem on a number of fronts with our resources — our Community Relations Branch, with our members deployed in the best possible way. Outside organisations are only too willing to assist us. Insurance companies are of tremendous assistance.

To conclude, I would like to say that we believe the greatest assistance we can obtain in relation to motor vehicle theft is from the community. To this end we are steadily moving towards a style, in this state, of community-based policing. If we can communicate to a greater extent with the community, if we can suitably educate the community, if we can successfully introduce a policy of community-based policing, if we can improve our relationship with the community, if we can attempt different strategies in consultation with them, if we can obtain more suitable feedback from them, then we may have some success.

# The Victorian Police Experience

## Detective Inspector Bob Turner Victorian Police Stolen Motor Vehicle Squad

As in every state in Australia the number of vehicles stolen in Victoria has risen dramatically since 1981. In 1981 there were 17,148 vehicles stolen, in 1982 18,903, in 1983 18,852, in 1984 19,000, and in 1986 24,416 vehicles. The figure is expected to be 28,000 in 1987.

The recovery rate for stolen vehicles in Victoria in 1981 was 90.2 per cent. In 1986 it had dropped to 88.3 per cent. We believe that the drop in recovery rate has been caused by two factors. First, the increased activity in professional car thieves: In 1981 the total value of unrecovered vehicles was \$5.6 million. In 1986 the value of unrecovered vehicles was estimated at \$16.2 million and we expect the value of unrecovered vehicles to exceed \$20 million this year.

The other factor is the decline in economic conditions. The resources of the Victorian Police have been stretched beyond the limit — as is demonstrated by the failure to increase the strength of the Stolen Motor Vehicle Squad, which has the same strength today as it had in 1976. The Stolen Motor Vehicle Squad in Melbourne is aware that professional car thieves are becoming more sophisticated in their operations. Police intelligence suggests that organised crime figures who have been investigated by royal commissions over recent years, have diversified their activities by the purchase of panel shops and other businesses in the motor industry. This pattern closely follows the American experience and it is only a matter of time before we see a dramatic drop in the rate of recovery rates for stolen vehicles. This will be the indicator by which we will be able to measure the success of organised crime in the car theft industry.

The only way a national car theft racket can be attacked is by the national police effort. A joint Australian Police Ministers Council and the Australian Transport Advisory Committee Working Party on the Re-registration of Stolen Vehicles looked at the problem and has made recommendations on this problem. The most important of those recommendations are a uniform method of inspection of all vehicles prior to registration, a more secure method of identification of vehicles to be adopted by manufacturers, and the establishment of a national register of stolen motor vehicles.

The most important of these recommendations is the last. It is the opinion of the police in Victoria that the establishment of a national register should be complemented by the establishment of a national data base containing information and intelligence from all states capable of identifying professional car thieves who run multi-state car theft operations. It is quite common for a wreck of a car to be purchased in Sydney and be "reborn" as a car stolen from Melbourne. The identity of the wreck is transferred to the stolen car which is sold in Brisbane.

Between April 1985 and February 1987, the Victorian police investigated a major fraud involving the use of stolen cars to obtain finance. During the investigation, 87 stolen cars were recovered in Adelaide. All of these vehicles had passed through the registration systems of Victoria and South Australia without being detected. We are presently carrying out an investigation into the hiring and theft of luxury cars in Melbourne which are being transported to Tasmania and registered there.

These investigations are evidence that the interstate trade in stolen cars is substantial and the establishment of a national data base is essential to deal with the problem.

The policy of the Victorian Police Force is that we support measures which make motor vehicles more difficult to steal. We do not single out any particular one as being better than the other. Recently, however, we have become aware of what we consider to be a major improvement in technology. An inventor in Melbourne has come forward with a

system which cuts off the fuel to the motor and the power to the ignition. The device is activated when the ignition switch is turned to the "off" position. The system is deactivated by the depression of a secret microswitch installed in a convenient position in the car. In our opinion this is a major improvement to security. The major manufacturers have had an opportunity to assess the device and we are hopeful that they will be able to improve the technology and use it. We have a close liaison with three major manufacturers, GMH, Ford and Nissan, and note that GMH and Ford will install car alarms as standard equipment in their top-of-the-range vehicles.

While we applaud the installation of car alarms and theft devices, we do not consider this the complete answer to the problem. There is a definite link between the car repair industry and professional car thieves, who have ready access to tow-trucks and similar vehicles. As alarm systems become more popular, the professional car thief will simply tow the car away instead of driving it.

"Operation Nickem" was the code name for an operation in Melbourne carried out by members of the Stolen Motor Vehicle Squad. It was an inquiry into criminals who owned car yards. They were putting up proposals for finance on cars being sold through their yards which contained false information regarding the identity, address and employment history of the prospective customer. The telephone numbers on the proposals were connected to the homes of criminals or their friends, so there was always somebody on the other end of the line when the finance company inquired as to the character of the customer. In all cases glowing references were given on behalf of customers who did not exist. Having obtained a cheque from the finance company for the sale of the car, the car yard owner would then make one or two payments to lull the finance company into a sense of false security, then the car would go missing, have its identity changed, and be sold in Queensland, New South Wales or South Australia. The money from this sale would go into the pocket of the car yard owner. If the vehicle was a stolen car in the first place the car yard owner's profit would be increased. We estimate that an amount of \$5 million was obtained by this method.

"Operation Nickem" was our introduction to large-scale fraud involving stolen cars and gave us the impression that it could become a popular method for the gathering of wealth by criminals.

If a national registration data base containing the vehicle numbering system had been established, rorts of this magnitude could not be undertaken. In passing I must say that the finance companies involved made the basic mistake of not checking the telephone numbers on the proposals against the local telephone book. If they had done so, the frauds might have been discovered much earlier. I am pleased to say that we are now having an input into training programmes of the finance companies involved.

The establishment of a vehicle identification numbering system on a national basis is another important recommendation of the APMC and ATAC working party. It is essential that a vehicle is given an identification number at the time of manufacture which stays with the vehicle until it is scrapped. If all states can agree to this facility, registration authorities will be able to refer inquiries to a central data base.

The present system, where each state has its own numbering system, is totally unsatisfactory and should be terminated. The present system would work satisfactorily if car thieves stole motor cars and registered them in their own state. But because car thieves operate on a national basis, police and registration authorities have to operate likewise.

Between 1983 and 1986, 1,142 people appeared before the County Court in Melbourne and pleaded "not guilty" to car theft charges. Of that number, 640 were convicted and 505 were acquitted — roughly a 50 per cent acquittal rate. We are prepared to acknowledge that we are not right all the time, but we are not prepared to accept that there is insufficient evidence to convict half the time. The large number of acquittals caused us great concern and caused us to look at the possibility that the juries were failing to understand the complexity of evidence. We therefore began presenting evidence in graphic form. We now do this as a matter of course in all cases involving multiple car thefts and conversions.

We are now putting these operations on a graphic computer. What took us over 2,200 manhours to do by hand, we can now achieve in 40 hours with the use of a graphic computer. We can produce graphic presentations according to the requirements of the Court in about one hour, and we have experienced no difficulties with defence counsel or judges in this area.

Apart from the use of graphic presentations in court, we are also using them in investigations. The use of presentations during investigations allows supervisors and executive staff to see the direction in which an investigation is heading.

In conclusion I would like to make the point that the problem of car theft is not a problem of individual states. It is a national problem which must be attacked on a national basis. It must be attacked by the police on a national basis, by insurance companies, registration authorities, motoring organisations, motor car manufacturers and motor industries.

There is also a need for legislation for police powers in respect of seizure, search of premises and investigations into car theft. The legislation must be uniform in each state to allow detectives in one state to adequately carry out inquiries in another. If we recognise car theft as being a national problem we must consolidate all concerned organisations into a national body where each interested party can have an input.

There are a number of organisations looking into the problem, each with the best intentions. It seems to be that the Australian Police Ministers Council is probably the most appropriate vehicle to achieve the aims I have spoken about. I recommend that the APMC be encouraged to carry on the work that they have undertaken in this area.

# Community Awareness and Prevention of Car Theft

**Mr Laurie Monaghan**  
**Investigations Manager**  
**NRMA Insurance Ltd**

## COMMUNITY AWARENESS: THE NEGLECTED STRATEGY

Car theft is a complex problem involving various types of offenders and so by necessity requires a broad range of prevention and detection strategies. What adds to the complexity is that recent attitude surveys (NRMA Research) reveal that people are only moderately concerned about car theft and, more disturbingly, relatively few take precautions.

My discussion focuses on reducing car theft through increasing community commitment, the main focus being publicity designed to encourage car owners to take better security precautions, but with some important distinctions.

It has been said "Society prepares the crime for the criminal to commit" (Buckle). While the intention of this comment has a far wider application, it can be placed comfortably in the context of the community's approach to preventative measures in dealing with car crime — leaving vehicles unlocked and/or valuables in sight, thus creating opportunity for car thieves.

It is argued by criminologists that in most instances car crime (theft of and theft from vehicles) is not an act involving lengthy planning or premeditation where the offender examines the various risk/return ratios of the potential offence, but rather one involving seizure of inviting opportunities by an amateur. Reducing the opportunities of performing easy car crime will tend to eliminate a significant amount of this crime, since the choice is not seen by amateurs as one between illegal alternatives, but essentially between an inviting illegal opportunity and no opportunity at all.

Most amateurs would not break into a car if the act required sophisticated skills or a degree of commitment to the crime beyond that of simply being in the right place at the right time and having the nerve to perform the act.

The vast majority of 'joyriders' and petty thieves fall into this category. In our estimate they account for approximately 60 per cent of car thefts in New South Wales.

We know that from car security surveys conducted in April 1985 and as recently as January 1987 that one in five parked vehicles is left unsecured with either a door unlocked or a window open or both. Property left in sight inside the vehicle, increased the overall risk to one in three vehicles.

One can draw from this simplified example that opportunity is abundant for the so-called amateurs. That apathy is even more disturbing when you consider that 25 per cent of car owners who had alarms fitted to their vehicles and subsequently had their car stolen did not have the alarm switched on prior to the theft.

Possibly the most serious impediment to community prevention strategies is the lack of incentive and inclination for the individual to take responsibility for preventing theft. A study by Research Bureau Limited (1977) suggested that when motorists leave their cars unlocked they take into account the length of time they expect to be away and the place in which the vehicle is parked, as well as the inconvenience of securing doors and windows and the degree of protection they believe this will provide. It was also suggested, along the same lines, that the greater number of car windows left open during the summer probably reflects the fact that drivers prefer to face what they might see as a marginally increased risk of theft than enter a hot and uncomfortable vehicle.

We should also consider that as car owners perceive a low probability of theft they also adopt a fairly complacent attitude towards the issue of prevention. It may also be cynically suggested that the true impact of car theft is considerably eased by insurance cover.

In brief, car owners' security habits appear to reflect subjective perceptions of the overall risk of car theft and the risk faced in particular situations.

It is important that public education campaigns be focused more sharply on individual awareness of the general risk of car theft and, specifically, high risk areas in which car thieves operate, and the cost of vehicle theft. By this I mean demonstrating the savings preventative measures can yield, especially in the cost of replacing goods stored in the vehicle, alternative transport, higher insurance premiums, higher taxes and the like. It is estimated that car theft in New South Wales accounts for over 100,000 man hours of police time each year simply recording the crime statistics before any investigation is done. In terms of direct cost, NRMA policyholders pay \$57 each and in Sydney up to \$90.

Our focus goes beyond victim-directed awareness simply aimed at directing people's attention to the opportunities for crime created by careless behaviour and that of providing advice on effective counter measures. That is, locking doors and windows and fitting anti-theft devices. It is indeed a long term approach coupled with other and more direct strategies that we have set in motion. Awareness is merely a stepping stone to action and is not limited to car owners.

It is interesting to note that past overseas experience has shown that when awareness has been extended to young people, particularly in schools, in the form of lectures and conferences, a significant decrease in car thefts has occurred (ICPO Interpol Conference, 1962).

In the area of offender-oriented publicity, advertising has warned that offending is likely to increase costs for society as well as for the individual himself in terms of social stigma and financial penalties. Campaigns directed at offenders have focused primarily on drinking and other road safety themes. In this regard we can readily relate to the introduction of Random Breath Testing (RBT) in New South Wales just prior to Christmas 1982 and its carry-over. Awareness of RBT has been extremely high, no doubt, as a result of an effective multi-faceted coverage reinforced by strong environmental support through police enforcement (Bureau Crime Statistics and Research). It appears that campaigns which have been intended to increase the fear of detection by informing their audience of changes in legislation or law enforcement practice have much greater success than those that are not supported by those actions. It is not merely the moral constraints that keep people on the right side of the law but one's perception of the risk of detection when breaking the law.

In other words, any publicity measures aimed at car thieves must be supported not only by a greater police vigilance in the streets but a perception that the risk of detection has increased with this heightened activity. In the past the two have not necessarily coincided or matched the publicity hype. In New South Wales the clear up rate by arrest for car theft has dropped from a low 6.9 per cent to 3.6 per cent in the first half of this financial year (1986-87) — which renders offender-oriented publicity more or less impotent.

In an effort to improve the situation, the police could be used in two very different ways — in increasing community awareness and in providing an effective deterrent to would-be car thieves. Uniformed foot patrols could patrol identified theft hotspots during peak times for thefts, talking to the public about car security issues and car theft generally while acting as an overt deterrent to thieves. The concept is not new, particularly in regard to residential burglary and patrol targetting strategies, but the adaptation to car theft is worth exploring further, notwithstanding the possibility of displacing the problem somewhere else.

The NRMA is concerned with public issues which affect motorists, therefore our efforts and influences are directed towards the community as a whole. It is our objective to raise community awareness of car theft through an extensive public relations and advertising

programme (victim-oriented), in the hope that public attitude and behaviour will be modified in such a way as to ultimately reduce car thefts — the major focus of publicity in the crime prevention field. Specifically, our campaign is designed to influence the general public, all areas of government, including the police, vehicle manufacturers and property developers and shopping complex management.

I refer to property developers in the context of constructing shopping complex car parks with improved surveillability and other physical mechanisms associated with security. This is not unlike an extension of Oscar Newman's concept of defensible space in a residential environment.

Is publicity an effective prevention strategy? Overseas studies, particularly in the United Kingdom (there have been evaluations of two large scale and small advertising campaigns on car theft held between 1975 and 1979), suggest that crime prevention advertising has, in itself, failed to produce changes in the behaviour of potential victims toward improving security behaviour.

Riley and Mayhew (1980) in their assessment of crime prevention publicity conclude that a campaign may demonstrate official concern about the crime and sustain awareness of the value of prevention among those already security conscious, but they challenge the value of publicity in producing much change in actual behaviour — a conclusion seemingly supported by North American evaluations.

A study by Marplan (1973) which incidentally is the only evaluation of a campaign directed solely at household burglary in the United Kingdom, involved a comparison of the relative effectiveness of three different ways of communicating advice, mainly in relation to house security. A crime prevention booklet 'Protect Your Home' was distributed to each household in two parts of south west England, back up through television was provided for the booklet in one area and in a third nearby area a television campaign on the same theme, but not mentioning the booklet, was transmitted.

The evaluation found that security awareness was improved in the area where the booklet was distributed with television backing, compared to the other two. There was also a marginal change in security behaviour, measured in terms of claimed adoption of the recommended precautions in the area where the booklet had television support compared to no change in the other areas where the booklet and television advertising was used alone.

Evaluations of United Kingdom Home Office campaigns aimed at both car thefts and household burglary have produced similar results (Marplan 1973b, 1973c).

As far as I am aware there has been no evaluation of any car theft or household burglary awareness campaign conducted in Australia. Interestingly, this includes two previous car theft awareness campaigns conducted by ourselves in September 1983 and April 1985. In essence, we have had little or no assessment of an awareness campaign relevant to our own situation, apart from those campaigns providing changes in legal sanctions or law enforcement upon which I commented previously.

The argument against community awareness campaigns being successful is persuasive to say the least. So why is the NRMA sponsoring an awareness campaign, when one considers the evaluated history of previous campaigns, albeit overseas ones, and the extraordinary costs associated with mounting a publicity campaign of this nature. Riley and Mayhew suggested in their study that "... publicity is both easy to do and likely to protect the campaigner (my words) from a charge of complacency about crime".

This I strongly suggest is not the NRMA view nor would I hope this would be the basis of a government campaign. In fact, we have siezed upon some of the improvements recommended by the Riley and Mayhew Home Office study and adopted those relevant features to suit our situation as a car insurer and motorist association. For government campaigns dealing with crime prevention issues the Home Office study recommended three changes:

- i) The content of publicity and the way in which the objectives it is designed to achieve are reached.
- ii) The need for a greater appreciation of the role publicity may have in aiding the implementation of the other crime prevention measures.
- iii) The need for official attitudes to be modified about the extent to which publicity is useful in changing behaviour.

For the first time, we have set in place a comprehensive evaluation of the campaign involving pre-, current and post-campaign research of the actual method and content of the communication, so that it is understood and clearly communicated through television and the print media. The aim is to gauge the level of interest, support and effectiveness of the campaign.

It is our intended aim to lift the level of awareness sufficiently to lead to changes in the community's perceptions of risk both generally and in specific situations. This is to be done in terms of the cost to the community, where and what thieves steal, and more importantly, as the underlying theme of the campaign, what the individual can do to stop car theft. A comprehensive information pack fulfills this requirement.

This goes beyond the simple scope of a car locking campaign. It removes the minimisation effect of insurance protection highlighting the cost of theft as clearly a community impost, and more importantly, removes the perception of remoteness of risk, the "it can't happen to me" belief.

The campaign will progress in 'bursts' over a few months, rather than continuous publicity after a longer initial 'burst'. The follow up 'bursts' will act as an important reinforcement to current awareness in general and in specific community locations together with development of further initiatives hopefully involving government and police interest.

I believe the strength of this campaign lies in two areas that set it apart from previous campaigns.

Firstly, the concentration of awareness at the local level, focusing on the "hotspot" location in identified suburbs. The value of this is two-fold. The community is more readily able to identify with the car theft problem because of the familiarity with the area, bearing in mind that between one third and one half of car thefts in the "hotspot" suburbs occurs in a tight cordon around the commercial and shopping districts, and that focusing adverse publicity at commercial and shopping complexes places an implied pressure on the owners to improve car security.

Secondly, we have in place an active and well established community crime prevention programme in the form of Neighbourhood Watch, with some 600,000 homes covered by the programme. While the purpose of the scheme is to reduce the rate of crime, particularly residential burglary, it also offers an ideal facility to continue car theft awareness.

It follows that by talking to a committed and alert audience such as a Neighbourhood Watch group the message is translated more rapidly into action. The added advantage of this approach is the development of a maintenance factor within the programme. Through a thoughtful approach, the awareness activity gives much needed impetus to the programme, providing renewed interest in a scheme that is now starting to level off and even dwindle in some areas.

Our role then is to ensure that our message is understood and communicated clearly to the community in a positive way — to alert government, police, local councils and the public alike to the size and cost of car theft in N.S.W. It is not our role to act as the initial catalyst and then drop it. Many crime prevention campaigns have floundered because of this attitude.

It is our intention to enhance the heightened awareness and offer some simple constructive direction to those who can effect change as to what can be done to 'Make Like Hell for Car Thieves'.

It should be emphasised that community awareness has limited effectiveness as a single strategy, regardless of its comprehensiveness. However, combined with other strategies such as appropriate government legislation, increased police activity and improved security measures by car manufacturers and property developers, it will make it more difficult for victims to be careless and for potential offenders to commit crime. Then the role of community awareness is viewed in a better perspective as an effective crime prevention strategy.

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# The Insurance Industry's Role

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It is an unfortunate fact of life that a significant proportion of motorists do not maintain an acceptable attitude to the security of their vehicles. In some cases insurance policyholders have not had their claim for the theft of their vehicle paid because of the complete lack of even basic security. In this respect, it is not uncommon for insurance companies to have a warranty in their policies requiring the motorist to securely lock the vehicle at all times when it is left unattended.

Having regard to this, it is surprising to find in a recent survey of parked cars in streets, carparks and at home in garages and the like, that a large percentage were found to be unlocked and in some cases with keys still in the ignition.

With some 66,000 vehicles stolen last year, the cost to insurance companies is around \$140 million — cost which we all have to bear. It is worth noting some vehicles have been stolen more than once within a twelve month period.

Motor vehicles are stolen by "joyriders" but also by professional thieves who are intent on either selling the car interstate or stripping it of desirable parts for sale on the black market.

The integral security provided by some manufacturers is of a high standard and highly resistant to physical attack. However, many motor vehicles have only a minimum of security, which makes them extremely easy to break into and steal.

Motorists should be aware that an experienced car thief can enter, start and drive away a vehicle in 60 seconds.

There are many devices on sale to improve security of motor vehicles and all of them have some measure of deterrent. However many of them present nothing more than nuisance value to a car thief and may involve the car thief in only a further few moments of time.

It is important for a motorist to recognise that insurance companies are not in business to subsidise carelessness. A motorist must always take steps to preserve his property. The most important step in securing a vehicle is to shut and lock all doors and ensure that windows are firmly closed.

Many motor insurers have gone to great lengths to make their policyholders aware of the crime of vehicle theft. This has been done by explanatory pamphlets, reminder notices and stickers for attachment to the car as a further reminder to take precautions.

Insurance companies closely monitor the trend of losses against their policies, especially theft claims. One remedy available to an insurance company is an increase in premiums to offset losses. However this action can only be maintained up to a certain point. Ultimately, insurance could become unaffordable.

When a crime such as theft reaches an unacceptable level, insurance companies are obliged on behalf of their policyholders to find ways and means of combatting the crime. The first step in investigating the theft phenomenon is to discover what makes and models of cars are highly prone to theft and to ascertain what it is that makes those vehicles so easy to steal. If it is found that the manufacturer's security in the vehicle is of a minimum standard and easily compromised by a thief, insurers are able to take the matter up with manufacturers to encourage them to improve security. Quite often the manner of stealing the vehicle reveals the shortcoming, and by implementing a security measure to offset that method of theft, the vehicle then becomes less of a target.

Insurance companies work closely with the police in combatting car theft. Insurers are often able to analyse claims information to build up a picture of the trend of theft which would identify prime locations for theft, the types of cars, the types of thieves, and the reasons for theft. This information, passed on to the police, often correlates with similar information they have collected through their own sources. This enables them to station action squads in those areas and also enables insurance companies to adjust their rates accordingly.

It is worth pointing out that one significant motor insurer recently restricted its underwriting to specific areas of metropolitan Sydney, as a direct consequence of the theft of cars reaching an unacceptably high level in some southern and many western suburbs. This was a drastic step but it brought home very clearly to policyholders in those high risk areas that, unless the situation improved, they would be unable to obtain insurance from this particular insurance company in the future.

### FRAUD

One very important aspect of car theft is the question of fraud claims. Insurance companies have always been targets for fraud. However, they have always been alert to the possibility of fraud claims and undertake rigorous investigations to check the legitimacy of claims to protect the interests of the honest majority of policyholders. It is regrettable that the extent of fraudulent motor vehicle claims, especially where the vehicle is arranged to be stolen and often burnt out, is quite a high proportion of overall theft claims — as much as 20 per cent.

Motor vehicle insurers have intensified their investigation of claims to uncover fraudulent claims and it does seem that the degree of fraud distorts the true picture of actual motor vehicle theft.

The checking of claims is not the only measure adopted by insurance companies. They also thoroughly check a high proportion of new business proposed to them, and quite often uncover proposals from prospective clients where the person had already submitted a claim against another insurance company for the theft of the same vehicle.

### THE RATING OF MOTOR VEHICLE PREMIUMS

The amount of premium, paid by a motorist to insure his or her car is determined by the motorist's driving record and the vehicle categorisation.

1. In the first instance, an insurance company requires the motorist to declare his driving record. All convictions under the Motor Traffic Act and all previous claims under motor vehicle policies must be reported to the insurance company. On the basis of this information the insurer determines how good or bad a driver is and rates him or her accordingly. Naturally, a good driving record will obtain the lowest premium. Where however, a motorist's driving record is not so good, the basic premium will be increased until the situation is reached where the insurer may not be prepared to insure the motorist at all.
2. The categorisation of the motor vehicle is a very complicated arrangement whereby vehicles are assessed on their repairability and availability of spare parts. Some vehicles are very costly to repair because of the quality of their construction and engineering standard and the high cost of spare parts. On the other hand, mass-produced vehicles are generally easier to repair and parts are comparatively cheap and readily available.

The basic premium on a vehicle will also be increased if the vehicle has been modified either at the factory or by the owner. Modification takes the form of either engine performance improvement or adding to the cosmetic appearance of the vehicle. Normally insurance companies are wary of vehicles whose performance has been significantly modified, for example the fitting of a turbo charger. In this sense, motorists should understand that it is not acceptable to an insurance company to significantly increase the accelerative power of an engine, not only because of the increased performance but because of the increased attraction of the vehicle to thieves.

Some makes and models of cars are prone to theft, either because of the ease with which they can be stolen or their desirability on the black market, and because of that they attract a significantly higher premium than is the case with other vehicles. Manufacturers often become painfully aware of this when intending buyers choose other makes and models that do not have this premium loading and which represent a significant saving to the buyer in the form of cheaper premiums.

To summarise, the theft frequency, as with the accident frequency, of any make and model motor car will have a strong bearing on the fixing of the premium. The motor vehicle which has achieved a low theft frequency will be a far more attractive proposition for insurance than a motor vehicle which is more prone to theft.

### NO CLAIM BONUS

The no claim bonus represents a very significant reduction in the basic motor vehicle premium and it is something that the majority of motorists aim for. Then having achieved the maximum no claim bonus, they endeavour through safe driving and security of their vehicle to maintain it. The important matter to bear in mind is that it is a no claim bonus not a no blame bonus.

Many motorists express concern that they will lose a proportion of their no claim bonus if their car is stolen, even though the theft of the vehicle is no fault of theirs. The fact of the matter is, that the reward, a reduction of premium, is for no claims being submitted against the policy. In the theft area it is a matter of great importance to the motorist to ensure that his vehicle is adequately secure at all times when left unattended and certainly there should be no occasion when the keys are left in the ignition. Notwithstanding this, if the vehicle is stolen by being broken into and the insured is forced to make a claim on his policy he or she will lose a proportion of the no claim bonus.

In addition to the loss of the no claim bonus, motorists should be conscious of the fact that having acquired another vehicle following the settlement from the insurance company, they will be required to take out new insurance and have to meet a further payment of premium. So it is not simply the loss of no claim bonus, but the additional premium to ensure the replacement car that falls to their account.

### ANTI-THEFT DEVICES AND INCENTIVES

The insurance industry has already built in a number of incentives for the prudent motorist. Insurance companies have noted that many anti-theft devices which come on to the market are very quickly compromised by thieves and once compromised are of little use in the further protection of that vehicle.

While some insurance companies may choose to provide a "discount" to the motorist who installs an anti-theft device, it must be remembered that the principle of the no claim bonus is to reward the motorist for whatever anti-theft means he or she chooses to employ, whether that be an alarm system, steering lock or ignition bypass. It must also be remembered that insurance companies and, certainly, the Insurance Council, do not hold themselves to be 'authorities' approving security devices.

The development which insurers would prefer to see incorporated into vehicle design is for cars to be rendered completely immobile when the keys are removed from the ignition.

Another factor to bear in mind is that even when anti-theft devices are fitted, quite often the motorist does not activate the device or use it properly. The unacceptable attitude to security of many motorists brings into question penalties for leaving cars unlocked, especially in cases where keys are left in the ignition. There is a theory at the moment that authorities, either police or parking police, on finding vehicles unlocked and in the ultimate situation with keys in the ignition, openly inviting theft, should 'book' the motorist. This must act as a deterrent to carelessness. And even a reduction of a small percentage when as many as 66,000 cars were stolen in N.S.W. in 1986, would be an improvement. It appears that to achieve an immediate reduction in car theft, the emphasis should be on motorists themselves placing greater importance on the security of their own motor vehicles.

## PENALTIES

The Insurance Council of Australia has noted the trend of many policyholders who have contacted ICA after their vehicles have been stolen expressing personal feelings about their experience and identifying inadequate penalties as a principal reason for their disquiet. Their comments are often strongly voiced against the leniency of the courts to those charged with motor vehicle theft.

While penalties under the Crimes Act may in themselves be an adequate deterrent, it is often the actual penalty handed down by the court which is irksome to the unfortunate victim. The victim has seen his or her prized motor vehicle stolen, vandalised and stripped of parts.

Penalties must be an adequate deterrent and be seen to be so.

## CAR BREAK-IN INSTRUMENTS

So, how are cars broken into?

Some of the more common instruments used to break into cars are all too readily available in shops and department stores. The instrument most commonly used by car thieves is the "dent puller", or "slide hammer". These instruments have become popular tools for the car thief and are being used for a purpose not intended in their design.

Given that the Crimes Act makes it an offence to have in possession a car break-in instrument, the ready availability of the "dent puller" would appear to be at odds with the law. As a consequence, every endeavour must be taken to limit the availability of such instruments to all but legitimate users.

What can the manufacturers do? Essentially, manufacturers must recognise the degree of car theft. They must take immediate steps to improve the security of their vehicles during the manufacturing process. Cheapness in security design is not acceptable. Whatever security devices are built into the car they must be of a high quality and highly resistant to physical attack.

## IN CONCLUSION

For there to be an immediate improvement to the current rate of motor vehicle theft in N.S.W., awareness on the part of each and every one of us is of paramount importance. We have to remind ourselves to take extra precautions in order to prevent our own cars from being stolen. In this sense, we must remind ourselves to act as though our motor vehicles were uninsured.

In the longer term, an improvement in the security of motor vehicles can be expected to have a bearing on the problem only when sufficient numbers of such improved vehicles are on the roads.

On the subject of fraudulent insurance claims, we must remember that it is estimated that as many as 20 per cent of all motor vehicle theft claims may be fraudulent. It would appear that this aspect of motor vehicle theft requires special consideration in order that measures may be introduced in order to introduce deterrent measures. In this regard perhaps "insurance fraud" should be singled out for special attention, with a special section incorporated into the Crimes Act.

Finally, penalties must reflect the seriousness of the crime. Inadequate penalties are not helping the problem at all and the courts must recognise that they have a role to play.

# Car Security Hardware — How Good Is It?

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In order to establish how good something is, one needs to be able to say how well it performs the task it was designed for. The task for car theft security devices is to prevent cars being stolen. But that requires some knowledge about those who steal cars to ensure that appropriate devices are developed to foil particular thieves.

## CAR THIEVES

Unfortunately, little is actually known about the car thief population. Most general comments about car thieves as an identifiable group tend to emerge either from the beliefs of police or from official crime statistics. Local police beliefs are reflected by Australia's police commissioners who, at their annual crime conference last month, issued a joint statement on car stealing. It stated that most stolen vehicles were taken by "opportunistic thieves". And further "They are taken simply because the owner has left the car unsecured". (The Australian, 22 April 1987)

Comments about car thieves based on official crime statistics are also likely to be misleading. The percentage of reported car thefts that are cleared-up, or solved by the police, is very low. And the number of people dealt with by police who thus appear in formal statistics, is also low. Indeed, those who are noted in statistics can in no way be seen as representative of the population of car thieves. Simple inspection of available official crime statistics reveals, for instance, that there could be up to 25 times as many car thieves in New South Wales as are actually arrested and Australia-wide there are possibly over 70,000 active car thieves whose identities are simply not known (see Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1**  
**OFFICIAL CRIME STATISTICS: CAR THEFT**

|  | 1984-85   | 1985-86 |        |
|--|-----------|---------|--------|
|  | Australia | N.S.W.  | VIC.   |
| Number of reported car thefts            | 103,164   | 60,831  | 26,334 |
| Number cleared                           | 15,300    | 2,193   | 4,603  |
| Percentage cleared                       | 15        | 4       | 17     |
| Number of persons arrested               | 12,801    | 2,393   | 2,835  |
| Estimate of number of undetected thieves | 70,000    | 60,000  | 13,000 |

A frequent comment arising from unrepresentative statistics is that car thieves are disproportionately young. The correct interpretation of the statistics is that detected thieves tend to be disproportionately young.

That is not surprising. A particularly young looking driver is highly likely to attract police attention, precisely because of the way he looks, the unskilled way in which he may be driving, or simply because he's driving a vehicle without P plates. (The male pronoun is used here because as with most other offences, car theft is predominantly a male offence, although this is based on official statistics too.)

This proposition is supported by the graph plotting the ages of detected thieves which shows 16 as the peak age with a sharp fall thereafter. Car thieves of 17 and above fall

within a group of possibly licensed drivers, so they do not attract the attention of police as readily as those who are obviously too young to be legally driving a car.

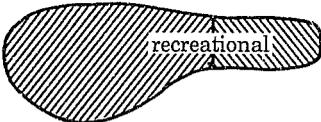
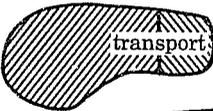
Plainly, young people do steal cars, but this does not mean that young people are "typical" car thieves. Indeed, research into offending by the young indicates that young offenders tend not to specialise and may well have engaged in theft of all sorts, burglary and other property offences like vandalism, as well as car theft.

One sub-group of young people dealt with by the police for stealing cars are those who use their parents' car without permission. Their appearance in official statistics arises from insistence by some insurance companies that before settling a claim following damage done to a car by an unauthorised or unlicensed driver, the police are notified. Plainly, such offenders are not typical car thieves (if indeed such animals exist!).

The most substantial research on car thieves was undertaken 10 years ago in the United States. It isolated five major types of offenders: joyriders, short-termers, the felony-motivated, long-termers and the profit-motivated (McCaghy, Giordano and Henson, 1977).

While this typology appears to reflect the likely groups involved in car theft in Australia today, it is not immediately helpful in assisting the measurement of the impact of car security devices. What is more useful is consideration of the orientation of the car thief and there are three orientations that can be distilled from the typology. They are recreation, transport and money-making, and are described a little further in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2**  
**ORIENTATIONS OF CAR THIEVES**

| MAIN ORIENTATION  | INCLUDES  |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• non-utilitarian (fun)</li> <li>• status seeking</li> <li>• challenge meeting</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• short-term</li> <li>• temporary travel</li> <li>• extended personal use</li> <li>• use for commission of another crime (e.g. robbery)</li> </ul>           |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• amateur car-strippers</li> <li>• professional sale of parts</li> <li>• professional re-sale ('re-borns')</li> <li>• fraudulent insurance claims</li> </ul> |
| <b>OPPORTUNITY TAKER</b>  |    |
| <b>OPPORTUNITY MAKER</b>  |    |

Using the concept of a thief's main orientation avoids using labels such as joyrider (an inappropriate term which tends to trivialise the offence of theft). Thefts oriented towards recreation can be supposed to be pretty much youthful exploits. Having fun, seeking status and meeting challenges are all youthful traits. All young people meet challenges — some sit at their computers and try to hack their way into large computer installations, some paint graffiti on moving trains, and some steal cars. Note, however, that stealing cars to meet a challenge may not be passive, it may require an active attack on security devices. This introduces the concept of the distinction between the opportunity taker and the opportunity maker.

Such a distinction is more subtle than the bald distinction between the opportunist and the professional — terms which are seldom defined explicitly. For example, just what are

opportunistic thieves! A working party of the British Home Office Standing Conference on Crime Prevention suggested in 1985 that such thieves were "not determined or sophisticated", and in 1986 that the presence of such thieves is indicated when the stolen car is found crashed or abandoned with an empty petrol tank.

They also suggested in their 1985 report that opportunists were the group which committed 70 to 90 per cent of car thefts, a figure which appears likely to receive some local police support (Home Office 1985, 1986). It needs to be noted that "opportunistic" in the way that the English seem to use it, includes not only those who take advantage of opportunities provided by careless motorists, but also those who make the most of opportunities provided by poor car design.

Without a particular study, however, it is not possible to say what percentage of these opportunistic thieves so described take advantage of existing opportunities or make their own. Unfortunately, a study to establish that fact is unlikely to get far, as a motorist whose car has been stolen is most unlikely to admit, for instance, that the keys were left in it, or that a security device had not been properly used or activated.

What can be said however is that most recreation-oriented and transport-oriented thieves are more likely to be opportunity takers than opportunity makers. The reverse would seem true for those stealing cars in order to make money, as the shaded areas on Figure 2 indicate.

### SECURITY DEVICES

It is necessary now to consider the sort of security devices which are used to make a thief's task more difficult.

The devices exist to make the car to which they are fitted less of an opportunity for a thief than adjacent cars. The devices also aim to make life harder for the opportunity-making thief through slowing him down, complicating his task, or frightening him off.

It is important to note that most anti-theft security devices are sold separately from the car — that is, manufacturers do not usually include sophisticated security equipment in new cars.

This practice may well be a significant contributor to the crime problem. So why do manufacturers not install state of the art security technology in all new cars?

One response to this is that such devices are not a selling point. The bottom line for a car manufacturer appears still to be the question; "Will this security device sell more cars?"

An even more cynical response is that the theft of cars can actually lead to increased sales of new cars. The 17,000 or so Australian motorists who have not seen their cars since they were stolen last year, are all potential new car customers. It is, therefore, simply not in car manufacturers' best interests to have cars thief-proofed.

Manufacturers' reluctance to move towards more in-built security continues despite a General Motors (U.S.A.) study that showed cars fitted with alarms as standard equipment were 20 per cent less likely to be stolen than equivalent cars without an alarm. While there is some move towards installing alarms in top-of-the-range cars, more action is necessary.

Car manufacturers can be expected to disagree with these propositions. But they cannot disagree with the fact that a car is an inherently insecure object. It is, after all, nothing more than a light steel box with a lot of vulnerable glazing and a fairly primitive locking system. Additionally, it has its own self-contained power source on which some security devices depend. And it is often found in company with other cars unattended in vulnerable public places, like railway car parks where a patient, thoughtful thief can, without too much trouble, ascertain patterns of behaviour of car owners.

So what security devices are available to help protect these fragile, gregarious machines?

Figure 3, which is based on a 1985 British Home Office research report (Southall and Ekblom, 1985), provides an overview of these devices.

**FIGURE 3  
ANTI THEFT DEVICES**

| <b>OBJECTIVE</b>    | <b>MECHANICAL</b>   | <b>ELECTRICAL &amp;<br/>ELECTRONIC</b>  |
|---------------------|---|---|
| detecting tampering |   | motion detector   |
| preventing entry    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• warning decal</li> <li>• door locks</li> <li>• door latches (shrouds)</li> <li>• sill lock button</li> <li>• internal bonnet release</li> <li>• boot lock</li> <li>• toughened window glass</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keypad</li> <li>• hand-held remote control</li> <li>• key/plastic</li> <li>• lock actuation</li> <li>• electronically operated (central) locking system</li> </ul> |
| detecting entry     |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tilt sensor</li> <li>• door switch</li> <li>• ultrasound detector</li> <li>• infrared detector</li> </ul>  |
| immobilising        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disable/remove rotor arm</li> <li>• in-built steering lock</li> <li>• independent lock (e.g. Krooklok)</li> <li>• wheel nut rod</li> <li>• transmission lock</li> <li>• fuel line lock</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• V.A.T.S.</li> <li>• starter motor</li> <li>• ignition</li> <li>• fuel</li> <li>• engine control (carburation, timing)</li> </ul>                                   |
| preventing          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vehicle identification number</li> <li>• window etching</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• electronic coding</li> <li>• bar strip coding</li> </ul>   |

Despite this impressive array, the fact has to be faced that in the same way sophisticated security devices in factories, offices and shops have failed to prevent their being burgled, the devices listed above will not prevent a determined and skilful car thief from stealing a car.

The soundest approach would be to incorporate a mix of mechanical and electrical devices to make it harder for a thief to steal a car. But mechanical devices can be overcome by brute force and electrical devices nullified by attacking the source of their power.

### MATCHING SECURITY DEVICE AND THIEF

The typology of thieves and the array of security devices have somehow to be matched in order to lead to prevention of car theft. Some devices will simply not prevent theft by some thieves. For instance, an opportunity maker whose only concern is to quickly acquire a car for immediate transport may simply smash a window in, thus overcoming entry preventing security devices.

All security devices can be shown to have weaknesses of some sort or another. For instance, warning decals may not deter a thief at all. On the contrary, they may simply advise him what particular device is being used, and he then knows precisely what to do to beat it. This, of course, is the problem with all devices. A diligent thief can quite legitimately acquire a device, or a new car with a built-in device, develop a method for overcoming it, practice and perfect that method, and virtually steal at will. If in-built devices are incorporated into more expensive vehicles a thief may do precisely that.

That car thieves may be quite thoughtful, calculated, and ready to work out the cost-benefits of their stealing is often forgotten.

Consider the case of window etching. A thief who intended stealing a \$50,000 car for resale, might well calculate that window etching would require him spending \$2,000 to replace all windows before he could dispose of the car. On the other hand, a thief who only wished to get home would not be concerned his stolen car had etched windows, and would not have to make any such calculation.

This sort of consideration of the behaviour of thieves revealing the relative failing or drawbacks of security devices can be somewhat depressing. However, there are two further considerations that effect the practical utility of security devices — carelessness by users, and lack of interest in the community.

### USER CARELESSNESS

Carelessness by users is well demonstrated by the numbers of motorists who do not use the most common in-built security device — their keys. This is not a new problem. A government committee in Victoria in 1964, reported that a night-time survey between 8.00 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. found 23 per cent of vehicles parked on public roads had unlocked doors. Nor is it an Australian problem — the 1985 British Home Office report claimed that one in five cars was left unsecure when parked. Locally, the NRMA found in a survey last year that “an astounding 25 per cent of cars left in metropolitan car parks were left unlocked” (Daily Telegraph, 6 May 1987).

It might be thought that those motorists who have invested in extra security devices might be less likely to be careless. However, a local survey of 108,000 parked cars in 1985, found that while only eight per cent had car alarms, 25 per cent of them were not activated (Daily Telegraph, 6 May 1987).

How many of us have walked past a parked car with a Krooklok lying idle on the back seat? How many drivers do not worry about activating their devices because they are only popping quickly into a shop and will only be a minute? And how many motorists who use a device requiring an additional or particular key (as in BiLock or VATS) will play safe and hide a spare key elsewhere on the vehicle, thus compromising their security?

The attitude of the motorists towards keys is slightly ambiguous. While the loss of a bunch of personal keys will often lead to a person replacing all the locks at their residence, they appear likely only to buy a new car key rather than to replace the car's locks (admittedly an expensive proposition). Yet the financial losses that follow a car theft tend to exceed those of a house burglary.

There is nothing security device manufacturers can do to compel a motorist installing their device to actually activate it, or use it strictly according to their instructions. And failure to do so can render the device quite ineffective.

### COMMUNITY LACK OF INTEREST

The community's general attitude also tells against the efficient use of car security devices. In general terms, members of the public appear little concerned about, for instance, a stationary car sitting in a public street with an alarm wailing and lights flashing.

There is some criminological research into the behaviour of bystanders towards criminal events, but it is not encouraging. One such study in 1980 involved 16 incidents of theft from cars being deliberately perpetrated by researchers from the University of Alabama (Formby and Smykla, 1981). Eighty-three persons walked past the thefts while they were being committed — 16 per cent paid no attention, 53 per cent gave the incident a quick glance and 31 per cent stared for at least five seconds. But none of them intervened.

One intervention did occur when a passer-by asked the researcher-thief: "Is that your car?" The thief responded; "Yes," and the woman shrugged: "Well, okay then," and kept walking.

A second intervention involved two thieves who were observed by five staff in a nearby shop. An observer noted, "I walked into Murphy's Mart. Five employees were standing at the window. I heard them talking about the robbery. 'Did you see that?' 'Yeah, quick call the cops.' 'You do it.' 'No way.' 'Where did they go?' 'There they are.' Then as I walked away, I heard, 'Oh well'."

Those two episodes did not lead to any positive action. But five other incidents did involve direct action. Two of them were described thus:

*A woman and a little girl approached me and asked if I needed help. I told them, "I think I can get it." They stood there for about one minute and watched me. The woman said "I think you need to bend the hanger a little," so I did. I pretended I still couldn't open the door so she said "let me try" and she opened it on her first try. She told me that she always locked her keys in the car. She pulled up the lock and I said, "Thank you". The woman and the little girl went back into the house. I opened the car door, took the tape player and a tape, and walked back up the street.*

*At the courthouse, I had a difficult time working the hanger behind the window because the window was completely closed. I was so intent on getting into the car that I didn't notice the car pull up beside me. A man got out of the car, identified himself as a locksmith and offered to make me a set of keys. I told him I lost the keys to the car which belonged to my father and I needed to take the CB to get repaired. "I got something," he said. He got a tool out of his car, slid it down beside the window, and opened the door. (Formby and Smykla, 1981, 402-3).*

All the five positive interactions involved members of the public assuming the person breaking into the car actually owned it. It is interesting to note that the incidents just described involved female researcher-thieves. The likelihood of a bystander assisting a scruffy youth break into a Porsche would, of course, be qualitatively different from the case of a well-dressed young woman with children at her side trying to break into a Commodore wagon.

But the fact remains that, in general terms, there would seem to be little likelihood of a thief who was actively, and brazenly, breaking into a car, being troubled by any member of the public. This receives some dubious support from the remarks of a "former professional car thief" located by an intrepid Sydney newspaper Journalist. He is quoted as saying:

"Car alarms are a joke . . . most people hear the alarms and **don't do anything**. They're like burglar alarms on houses, all they do is tell people a crime may be being committed or the owner has set it off while getting into it."

"**People generally ignore them**, but if they do decide to check it out, by the time they ring the cops and they arrive, it's all over, you're well away.

So brash are some pros working what is becoming Australia's fastest growing common crime, that they'll even drive off in a vehicle with the alarm blaring.

"Once you're inside and get it started all you have to do is drive a couple of blocks, stop, open the bonnet and pull out the battery leads to the alarm . . . **no one bothers you** (Daily Telegraph, 25 April 1987)."

So where does all this leave us? Some thieves will be deterred from stealing a car with security devices. But which thieves remains unknown. Some motorists will not use their security devices all the time so may not gain the benefit of having them. Some members of the public will not lend their weight to fighting car theft but their reasons for not doing so are unknown. Some thieves will make a conscious effort to steal particular vehicles, irrespective of security devices, but after making a cost-benefit calculation.

It is mainly these against whom security devices are aimed. But that group of thieves may well be small as just over half of all cars stolen in N.S.W. are recovered undamaged. Nevertheless, it is those thieves to whom reference is being made when the Home Office refers to "a race between designers and thieves".

But are such thieves the real menace to the community that some would like to suggest? One "professional" American car thief describes his work this way:

What I do is good for everybody. First of all, I create work. I hire men to deliver cars, work on the (identification) numbers, paint them, give them (forged documents), maybe drive them out of state, find customers. That's good for the economy. Then I'm helping working people to get what they can never afford otherwise. A fellow wants a Cadillac but he can't afford it; his wife wants it but she knows he can't afford it. So I get this fellow a car at a price he can afford; maybe I save him as much as \$2,000. Now he's happy. But so is the guy who lost his car. He gets a nice new Cadillac from the insurance company — without the dents and scratches we had to take out of it. The Cadillac company — they're happy too because they sell another Cadillac. The only people who don't do so good is the insurance company. But they're so big that nobody cares personally. They got a budget for this sort of thing anyway. So here I am, a guy without an education, sending both my kids to college, giving my family a good home, making other people happy. Come on now — who am I really hurting? (McCaghy, 1986, 151)

This thief would probably see the use of security devices as an occupational hazard which would need to be overcome. Other thieves would see them as an impossible hurdle. Therein lies the best that can be said — some car security hardware is undoubtedly good for preventing the theft of some cars at some times.

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# Is a Thief-Proof Car Possible

**Mr Rob Newton  
Section Engineer  
Holden Motor Company**

The Holden Motor Company Engineering Department believes that a completely thief-proof car is not a reality. If a thief really wants to steal a car for some reason, he will take it. There is no physical way of stopping a professional. He can resort to a tow truck or car trailer.

However, there are ways to deter most thieves which must be mainly aimed at preventing a thief entering for theft of goods or parts and secondly aimed at theft by removal of a vehicle.

## MECHANICAL DEVICES

- Door locks with shields, which Holdens have installed, as well as elimination of readily accessible door lock snibs. Obviously, these do not prevent entry by breaking windows or smashing door locks out of the sheet metal but they do deter the wire coat hanger type approach. Some European manufacturers and GM Opel mechanically jam door locks in anti-theft mode. A thief can gain access by smashing a window but still cannot open doors from inside.
- Ignition and steering locks have been improved. However, thieves still smash locks off steering columns to abort the locking medium on the steering.
- Mechanical locking of automatic gear shift mechanism is a common accessory approach and quite effective.
- Mechanical locking of manual transmission clutch pedal (often interlocked to steering wheel). This can be effective, however requires physical operation to fit which people often forget or don't bother with.
- Mechanical locking of the car wheels is possible although difficult. And legal "tow away" and moving of vehicles in an emergency would be affected.

Retention of audio systems has been given specific attention since they are traditionally a high theft item. Holdens have made audio systems much more difficult to remove by inaccessible mechanical attachment.

The advantage of theft deterrent is offset against service time — it can take approximately one hour to gain access.

## ALARMS

- Doors, boot and hood opening alarm, often combined with ignition or fuel disabling. Holden Calais incorporates such a feature which is capable of higher sophistication.
- Again there is some deterrent to theft. However, people often do not activate the alarm which requires the pushing of a button on a small radio key.
- Entry and glass breakage detection and alarm.
- Motion detection and alarm.

These features are generally effective in providing warning but require sensitive setting. As is the case with most alarms, they are a proven deterrent but require notice to be taken and fast response.

## ELECTRONIC DEVICES

- Disabling of starter motor and ignition or fuel system. Most such systems can be effective in a one-off situation, when individual cars are modified, but they are readily by-passed by a knowledgeable thief when applied to production vehicles.
- New ingenious systems are evolving. Considerable emphasis is being placed on study of vehicle security by General Motors in the U.S. One such development with high expectation is VATS (Vehicle Anti-Theft System) which is now fitted as standard on Chevrolet Corvette models. VATS is an electronic system that could take a thief up to half an hour to defeat. A 10 minute delay in getting away with a vehicle is considered sufficient to deter most thieves.

VATS can be used in conjunction with mechanical devices and alarm features. VATS involves a small resistor pellet embedded in the ignition key. This pellet has a specific electrical resistance, like an electrical code. Hidden elsewhere in an inaccessible part of the vehicle is a decoder with an electrical resistance. When the key is turned in the ignition lock, the car will start only if the decoder's resistance and the key's resistance match. If they don't match, the decoder cuts off the fuel injectors and starter motor, disabling the vehicle for two or more minutes.

A car equipped with VATS has one of 15 resistance values in its system. The thief will be faced with the prospect of connecting as many as 15 resistors into the circuit until he finds the right one.

With 15 resistor values and a two-minute delay for each attempt to match them, the average defeat time by trial and error is 15 minutes. There is no way to quickly scan all values or to interrogate the module to determine resistance value. Jump starting, auxiliary feed to injectors or other electrical/electronic pulses, do not provide a means of by-passing VATS.

The thief is going to learn everything there is to know about the system. But VATS is designed not to outsmart the thief but to add time to his efforts.

The VATS system is totally passive, so the legal driver does not have any inconvenience, nor need to change any habits in order to operate the vehicle.

The combination of mechanical, alarm and electronic features is no doubt the most effective approach. However, the added cost to the vehicle is also of importance to maintain a commercially competitive product.

Added security features require high investment and increased purchase price, which can affect car sales, particularly if all car manufacturers do not provide similar features. Many theft deterrent systems add considerable mass to the vehicle and subsequently increase fuel consumption, which is contrary to government and manufacturer goals. A careful compromise is required between cost, weight and effectiveness.

The individual approach would be more expensive to the owner, since the vehicle requires re-work, but it is far easier to make a one-off design where a thief does not know what he is looking for. This cannot be achieved by the manufacturer on a large volume basis.

The manufacturer can provide increased theft protection, as technology develops. However, to further assist in deterring theft, government attention should address penalties for car theft which should be increased and uniformly enforced Australia-wide.

Tighter constraints on first vehicle registration details being recorded and checked before re-registration is also desirable on a national basis.

Reduced insurance premiums need to be offered as incentives for car purchasers to pay more for vehicles fitted with effective theft deterrent systems.

Design assessment of theft deterrent systems with input by the insurance industry at the conceptual design stage should be required. We believe that most vehicle manufacturers would be willing to discuss future possibilities with insurance companies so that their effectiveness and value can be improved.

In summary, a thief proof car is not possible. But with the combined efforts of vehicle manufacturers, insurance companies and the government departments involved, the incidence of car theft can be reduced.

# Is a Thief-Proof Car Possible?

**Mr Kevin Cass**  
**Homologation Engineer**  
**Ford Motor Company**

If a manufacturer produces a vehicle that can be easily stolen he receives bad press. The car attracts higher insurance premiums and therefore the manufacturer receives a subsequent loss in market sales. If a vehicle is developed to be fitted with burglar alarms, high security anti-pick locks, or hi-tech electronic push-button systems, then obviously the costs must be reflected in the retail price. These items are provided more in top-of-the-range vehicles where there's less price sensitivity and customers are prepared to pay the premium for these added features.

The average customer requires and expects a vehicle that provides a reasonable level of security, perhaps similar to the average perception of one's own home security, and it is this expectation the vehicle manufacturer tries to meet. The first problem to define is what level of theft? Is it to prevent entry into the vehicle so that radios and personal effects cannot be stolen, keeping in mind that however elaborate the door-locking system is, in most cases it will be easily negated with a house brick wrapped up in a towel!

Now, having gained access, the next problem is how to prevent the vehicle from becoming mobile? Once again, what type of thief are you addressing? Is it the professional — the person that takes the vehicle for monetary gain, and this includes holdups and robberies? If so, there is little that can be done as eventually he will establish a method to bypass the system. Previous discussion with Victorian Police has indicated that it is the professional involved in organised crime that represents the highest cost to the total industry. Increasing doorlock security and securing column lock strength, while an added deterrent, has little impact long-term on this type of theft.

You can walk around wreckers yards in Victoria and see compliance plates and ID plates on late model vehicles that have been written off by insurance companies. It takes very little effort for an organised team to get these plates, steal a vehicle, rework the vehicle, which is "reborn" and is offered for registration either locally or interstate with very little chance of detection. That there has never been a system that requires the compliance plate, the identification plate and registration plates to be surrendered to the authorities when a vehicle is written off or is placed in the hands of the wreckers, still amazes me.

The next type of thief is the joyrider. He is the one that takes the vehicle to get from A to B, lairize or just for thrills. In many instances he does not hold a licence, has never held a licence or is a de-registered driver. And he not only damages the vehicle he has stolen, he is a threat to every other road user and to private property.

Victorian Police statistics for 1983 showed that in the first three months, over 33 per cent of the cars stolen were left unlocked. Of these, 8 per cent were left with keys in them. This year, 1987, of 33 stolen Ford vehicles, 9 (or 27 per cent) had the keys left in the car. So this is an area that needs further review by the authorities and fines or penalties imposed on owners.

If there are to be further deterrents to theft, such as improved locking systems and steering column locks, then a national reporting system should be established to address such items as: How was entry gained? How was the vehicle made mobile? What makes and what types of vehicles are in a high-risk category? This type of information is required by vehicle manufacturers if they are to establish a logical approach when addressing future vehicle designs.

In summary, manufacturers are forced to provide an acceptable level of vehicle security and anybody who ignores that requirement will suffer in a very competitive market place. The major problem is that if anti-theft security is provided, with the associated

increased costs, does it result in a major reduction in vehicle theft? Statistics from our overseas affiliates do not show a positive trend in this direction. Other preventative measures must also be reviewed to restrict the climate the professional operates in — a more responsible attitude by vehicle owners and stronger penalties for joyriders as an added deterrent.

## Statement from Audience Member

I speak as an automotive locksmith and my statement is directed at Ford and GMH. Both of these companies try to tell us that they are concerned with car security and yet Ford and GMH, since the early 70s, have persisted with locking systems that are nothing more than antique and stone-age. You can lift the door trim from the outside of a Commodore and look straight down into the locking mechanism of that vehicle, and in instances where you have central locking devices, open all four doors, not just the one door. This is not a deterrent. The system as used in the steering lock assemblies on all General Motors products has basically remained unaltered since the very early 1970s. Ford in 1976, in the introduction of their XC range of vehicles, took the most monumental backward step in automotive security I have ever seen in the introduction of their steering lock. I find it an insult to actually call it a lock — I find it an insult to commonsense engineering. I get rather heated, but the reason for this is that I am constantly face to face with the public and I see the distress and financial inconvenience where, generally speaking people are in the position of having no hope with an insurance claim and may have thrown away a week or two weeks' wages because some little hooligan has been able to come along and vandalise totally antique security systems.

### RESPONSE — KEVIN CASS

The locking systems in locally manufactured vehicles are purchased from overseas. There is no industry here that makes them. And we think we're using the latest technology! One gentleman this morning spoke about the security of Chubb Systems. We've looked at Chubb Systems. They are dearer than what is provided overseas but for the security increase, the cost is not justified. You mentioned about the 1976 lock placed on the Ford vehicle. That was picked up from Germany. That is a Robert Bryce design and we saw on the graph this morning where in Germany the actual theft of vehicles had really declined, although it's kept pace with the increase in production. Now you talked about the Laser. You've got to remember that that is an imported vehicle. We import it from a country in Asia that doesn't have the theft problems that we have in western countries. And we are aware of the problem with the Laser. There is work going on with the door-locking system. The big problem is the theft of radios and in the middle of this year, starting off with Laser, and that will continue on to all other models, we are introducing stereo systems and AM/FM radios with a pin numbering system. Now the pin-numbering system will mean that when the vehicle goes down the line the number will be set and if you take that radio out of that car, unless you know the pin number, the radio will not be able to be worked. We are facing the problem.

(INTERJECTION) They were using that 8 years ago in . . .

(STATEMENT continues) They are using advanced technology in the States and I mentioned in my speech anti electronic push-button devices but in America vehicle theft is increasing. In '84, in the Detroit area alone, it increased over 20 per cent.

# Is a Thief-Proof Car Possible?

**Mr Peter Caldwell**  
**Chief Engineer**  
**Technical Services, NRMA**

The car has a number of basic weak points — large areas of glass, large areas of thin sheet metal, many openings, the boot, doors, bonnet, and it's designed to be moved. Each of these presents its own problem. And so we can home in on perhaps where it's most effective to apply car deterrent devices.

We believe that the most fruitful way to attack car security is in the form of steering lock or devices to prevent movement, ignition cut-outs, starter cutouts, fuel cut-off devices and so on; plus the securing of desirable items in the car. Stereo equipment, for example, these days is a very vulnerable and highly desirable target. And perhaps these can be better secured. In fact motor companies have already taken steps to better secure these with the car, although it's pretty tough to combat a thief with a chain saw.

In 1983 we conducted another theft campaign in which we identified the steering lock as a desirable way to go and talked to a number of the car manufacturers and importers and we found GMH and now, of course, Ford, particularly responsive as they of course, have their own home-grown design facilities whereas most of the others do not, and depend largely on Japanese design input. And in particular we discussed with them the then proposed Swedish standard, which was a very much tougher steering lock. This highlights the inadequacy of the current design rule 25A where there are absolutely no performance requirements at all for the steering lock. And that is an area where we think efforts should be made. If you change the design rule it's the same for everybody and so you're not penalising any one manufacturer against another.

Thief-proofing depends in practice on two things, possibly three. One is the level of inconvenience acceptable to the driver, the owner; the other is the cost; and possibly another one is the weight. Now some people consider it inconvenient to lock the car. Other people are prepared to not only lock the car but even cover the windows with armour plating.

Let's look at the cost. How much should you spend on thief-proofing your car? I would suggest a number of considerations. This of course is largely dependent on owner assessment and the after-market.

If you own a 25-year-old Mini that's worth maybe \$500, you're obviously not going to put a \$500 alarm in it when you only use it for perhaps 10 or 15 km a day to drive it to the station. Whereas if you own a Jaguar, and you've got a computer in the back of it, a complete office file and a telephone, without which you'd be out of business, perhaps it's worth spending some money on it.

In 1983 we approached the manufacturers and it's interesting to look at some comparative statistics, particularly on Commodore. Commodore in 1980-84 had an extremely poor reputation for being stolen — it was the top of the line. But in 1985-86 it had dropped quite remarkably from one of the highest risk cars to quite a low risk while the Ford range had increased in risk very markedly. Now this might reflect the level of equipment, particularly stereo equipment, in the vehicle. It might also reflect on measures taken by General Motors, particularly on steering lock and the ease with which the stereo equipment could be removed.

Mercedes have a fairly low theft rate and they claim that their steering lock is almost unbeatable. It has hardened steel parts in it and they claim that the only way people steal a Mercedes is to fraudulently get hold of a key.

If you look at the ratio of 'theft of' to 'theft from' for the different categories of vehicles, all except the luxury vehicles have either 1-½:1 or 2:1 ratio in favour of "theft of" as opposed to "theft from". The luxury vehicles on the other hand are exactly the opposite and have a 2:1 ratio of "theft from" versus "theft of", highlighting the desirability of modern stereo equipment and other equipment being fitted these days.

# Car Theft and The Law — A Magistrate's View

**Mr Rod Blackmore  
Senior Special Magistrate  
Bidura Children's Court**

In looking at this question we sometimes tend to look at statistics, particularly those where you can see that the peak age of car thieves seems to be about 16, that there are twice as many juvenile car thieves who are detected and prosecuted as there are adults. But I'd exercise some caution in looking simply at criminal statistics.

The statistics produced by the New South Wales Bureau of Criminal Statistics and the Department of Youth and Community Services divide up car theft into a number of sub-groups. The problem is with the way statistics are gathered. It doesn't accurately reflect the movement of thieves within the categories. For instance, there's no uniform basis on which police charge any one of them. A person may well be charged with car theft but the police, when it is all washed up, are really depending on someone who's joy-riding. Again, someone who is simply charged with being a passenger in a taken vehicle, may well have been just as involved in taking the vehicle as the person who was driving. So the figures don't really reflect what is going on.

The principal statistic to which we will refer was found in the Annual Report of the Police Department, their crime statistics and the number of reported incidents of car theft, and their clear-up rate. It has been suggested that for the 1985-86 year, the clear-up rate fell to 3.61 per cent. Obviously that's a very small clear-up rate. We have been told how difficult car theft is to detect. But that does have a relevance to public expectation of courts.

## LOOKING AT CRIME STATISTICS

Attached to this paper are tables of statistics relating to car theft: cases dealt with by magistrates in Local Courts (adult offenders) and Children's Courts, together with N.S.W. Police statistics on reported car thefts and clear-up rates. It has been postulated that because juvenile offenders are arrested twice as frequently as adult offenders for the range of offences categorised as car theft, that this activity is predominantly a juvenile phenomenon; but when one looks at the very low clear-up rate as a whole, there is good reason to ask who is committing the car thefts for which no offender is detected and to what extent the undetected offences are the more serious problem, particularly in terms of financial loss to the vehicle owners and insurance companies. Neither the adult nor the juvenile offender statistics are accurately based on exact involvements of offenders in their crimes.

In N.S.W. a number of different charges may be laid:

- (a) larceny (simpliciter) — sec. 117, Crimes Act
- (b) deemed larceny — (indictable):
  - (i) take and drive conveyance, or take for purpose of driving — sec. 154A;
  - (ii) knowingly drive taken conveyance or knowingly be carried in or on a taken conveyance;
- (c) deemed larceny — (on summary conviction):
  - (i) & (ii) as above, but under sec. 526A;
- (d) use motor vehicle without consent of owner (sec. 8A, Motor Traffic Act.)

These categories can be seen to be reflected in statistical tables, but there is no uniform basis on which police charge offenders. The charge, for instance, may be laid as "stealing a motor vehicle" under section 117, but the prosecution may actually rely on one of the deemed larceny (or "joyriding") sections, 154A or 526A without that being specifically indicated on documentation available to the court, and accordingly not available to grass-roots providers of statistics. It is also not unusual for the facts of a case to indicate

that an offender who has been charged simply as a passenger (carried in a taken conveyance) was just as much involved in the physical theft of the vehicle as the offender who did the driving; and again, no real qualitative research can be expected of clerical staff completing statistical returns. The effect of this is that there can be no real assessment of crime statistics distinguishing between the most serious problem — the thieves who steal for the purpose of financial gain by stripping or changing identities of vehicles, or who almost habitually destroy vehicles after illegal use — and the lesser (but still serious) problem of so-called “joyriding”.

It has been my experience — and there are probably more charges of car theft pass through the court in which I sit than in any other single court in N.S.W. — that the facts presented by police, including the admissions made by offenders as to their motivation, rarely relate to situations from which it can be said that theft for gain is the real allegation; nor has it been my experience that juvenile offenders are often identified as being the pawns of adult offenders. It is commonly said publicly, however, that much of the activity of car theft is related to an “industry” for personal gain, and that adults will use juveniles because of a recognition of the comparisons in sentencing and the consequent lower risk to juveniles.

Using crime statistics related to court appearances and other forms of clearance (e.g. cautioning of juveniles) is therefore an unreliable indicator of the dimensions of the problem, and more dependence may have to be put on statistics relating to recovered stolen motor vehicles and the experience of insurance claims.

The same symptomology may, of course, be seen in other types of offending: how many professional thieves from retail premises are detected and arrested in comparison with the casual “shoplifters”; how many “drug-pushers” or Mr Bigs are detected and arrested in comparison with the casual user or addict? The undetected multitude is indicative of the fact that for many offenders crime “does pay” in comparison with the relatively small risk of detection.

It is quite apparent that many offenders who appear before the courts for car theft have committed numerous other similar offences for which they have not been detected; many who come to court technically as “first offenders” do so with the likelihood that their appearance results not from a first offence but the first time caught.

### **WHO ARE THE OFFENDERS?**

Further examination of the topic necessarily revolves about those who actually come before the courts, and — in particular — juvenile offenders. It can be seen from the statistics that girls are less than 10 per cent of the total number of juveniles detected for car theft; girls do figure prominently in other categories of theft (e.g. stealing from retail stores) and in fraud and misappropriation, but are rarely encountered as the principals in relation to car theft. When encountered at all it is likely that they are passengers in stolen cars taken by boys with whom they are associating. The peak age for juvenile car theft offenders is 16 years, with a significant number of offenders from 14 years upwards.

It is of interest to consider where juvenile car thieves live, rather than from where the cars are taken. The 12 highest areas of the state are all metropolitan-urban. The City of Blacktown has nearly twice the number of juvenile car thieves living within its boundaries as the next largest area mentioned. (Apart from the 12 areas listed no other area has numbers of any real significance). I will probably be accused of “West-bashing” and others will point to demographic differences between Blacktown, as to the size of its population overall and the size of its teenage population, in comparison with other areas. But there must remain some weight in the observation so frequently made by juveniles that they get involved in car theft “because there is nothing else to do around here” and because of the unavailability of transport services, especially late at night. As for areas where cars are stolen from, Sydney’s eastern suburbs are frequently mentioned as a high-risk area, yet it will be seen that the only eastern suburb mentioned in the “big 12” (apart from thefts in the City of Sydney) is the Municipality of Randwick, and that is 8th in order so far as residence of juvenile car thieves is concerned.

## PRINCIPLES AND DILEMMAS OF SENTENCING

There are basic and fairly readily understood principles criminal courts use when sentencing, many of which apply equally to car theft as to any other offence. Parliament stipulates maximum penalties for crimes and misdemeanours, including maximum penalties that may be imposed by different jurisdictions, e.g. at District Court or magisterial levels. It is to these maxima that courts must have regard, but a basic principle is that a maximum penalty is reserved for the worst offender (whether through his record as a prevalent offender or through the facts of the case being the most serious that can be envisaged in relation to that category of offence). From that maximum, courts will look to see what leniency can be accorded to an offender having in mind his previous character, the comparative gravity of the offence and mitigating factors. Naturally, therefore, "first offenders" are entitled to greater leniency than frequent offenders, and courts are not entitled to take into account suspicions as to other offending which are not borne out by the offender's proven record of convictions.

Some categories of offending, however, because of their prevalence and/or the extent of its effect on the community, demand stronger penalties than others, and many will say that car theft falls into such a category. But with what can it be compared for that purpose? Breaking and entering is equally prevalent; corporate crime is said to be having devastating but less visible effects on the community. There is also a trend, particularly in the social work field dealing with juvenile offenders, to write off offences against property as being of little or no consequence, and to say that only offences committed against persons (robbery and the like) are those which have serious consequences to the community and which deserve priorities of correctional and court-related services; this supposed principle is one with which I do not wholeheartedly agree, nor (I dare to say) is it likely to do the majority of other magistrates and judges. Accordingly there is little point in a sentencer asking himself/herself what would be the appropriate sentence for a car thief if the offender had been appearing for some other form of larceny or some entirely different form of offence; the task is to sentence the offence in question. If comparisons are to be made they are to be made with offences of some category and in the light of observations on sentencing made by superior courts.

Sentencing is presumed to involve "punishment" for the offence, the three aims of which are retribution, protection of the public, and deterrence. I would not wish to argue here the criminological argument that has continued for decades as to how effective or even counter-productive sentencing may be generally in relation to those elements. Additionally it is a recognised principle that juvenile offenders should be required to accept responsibility for their unlawful acts but that, because of their immaturity compared with that presumed in adults, they should also be seen to need guidance and assistance; accordingly "sentencing" of juveniles since the creation of separate courts for children early this century has centred largely on notions of counselling and supervision which have varied immensely in application and effect. In N.S.W. the "age of criminal responsibility" commences at 10 years, but under the age of 14 years a child cannot be presumed to know the wrongfulness of an act; the legal age of adult responsibility is 18 years. Other states and other countries have varying ages for inclusion in the juvenile justice system.

The aim of rehabilitation by the Children's Court may therefore be seen as stronger for juveniles than it is for adult offenders, and even for the 22-plus per cent of juvenile car thieves committed to custodial training there is a notion — largely unrealistic — that there will be some form of "treatment" which will reduce recidivism. It is more widely recognised that the majority of persistent juvenile offenders simply "grow out of" their offending lifestyle. That is not to say, however (as some trendies would have it), that the public must simply tolerate levels of juvenile depravations and that there is no "last resort" place for recidivist juveniles to have time out of the community during which some of that growing up can take place without the list of their victims growing larger.

### HOW ARE THEY DEALT WITH?

Since September 1985, there has been an increased emphasis upon police cautioning juvenile offenders, and it is claimed that nearly 25 per cent of young offenders are being

dealt with in that way in N.S.W., compared with about 7 per cent prior to that date. The scheme has its protagonists and critics. On the one hand it is postulated that entry into the juvenile justice system by way of prosecution in the Children's Court only leads to many offenders penetrating further into the system with negative consequences, and that many can accordingly be dealt with informally and successfully without prosecution. On the other hand, the scheme is not legislatively based, has few clear guidelines and in other states has done nothing to reduce the overall level of offending. There is no list of "minor offences" for which a caution may be administered, nor is there any limit on the number of cautions a particular offender may receive. A view which may find favour with the government is that offences of car theft be regarded as sufficiently serious to require prosecution.

Children's Courts are especially conscious of the life-long effects of "conviction". The notion that juvenile cases are not recorded as convictions in the same way as those of adults, or that the "slate is wiped clean" when an offender turns 18, is a misconception. Accordingly many "first offenders" may be cautioned by the court, or placed on a good behaviour bond, without conviction. Car thieves are less likely to be cautioned by the court than some other categories of offenders, although that is not an infrequent outcome for those who are simply passengers in stolen vehicles. In the 1985-1986 year 8.06 per cent of car thieves (all categories) were "admonished and discharged"; 22.45 per cent were committed to custodial training, with the balance receiving intermediate orders including fines, probation, good behaviour bonds, and a small amount performing community service (a relatively recent innovation for juvenile offenders.) In adult courts orders imposing fines or imprisonment and good behaviour bonds, are fairly equally made between offenders, and with community service being used marginally more than in Children's Courts.

#### **THE EXPECTATION OF DETERRENCE OF COURT-IMPOSED SENTENCES**

It is a commonly held public expectation that heavy sentences with attendant publicity will deter offenders and potential offenders, and such an expectation exists in relation to car theft. There are several reasons for such an expectation being unrealistic. In the adult jurisdiction, the outcome of charges of car theft receive little media attention; familiarity breeds contempt and there are more sensational cases to report than the everyday occurrence of car theft. Juvenile cases are heard in closed courts to which the media could be permitted access (and to which they will have a right to access under the recent Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act, 1987) but it is unlikely that other than the unusual or most prolific areas of car theft will be reported with any vigour. It is the individual offender dealt with by the court who may be most deterred by the court's sentence, i.e. the offender who falls within that 7 per cent of detected car thieves.

It can be strongly argued that however harshly courts might deal with detected and prosecuted car thieves, that action is hardly likely to stem the tide involved in the 90-plus per cent of thieves who are not detected. The answer to that problem must be sought elsewhere.

#### **WHY DO THEY DO IT?**

#### **WHY DO SOME KEEP GETTING CAUGHT?**

There is little difficulty involved in stealing motor vehicles, even when locked and without keys left in ignitions, and the supply is endless. Detected offenders frequently have few formally obtained skills or educational levels. Occasionally this point can be made to an offender who has tried to impress peers with the extent of his ability as car thief. There is, of course, no coincidence in certain popular makes of cars being the most frequent targets of car thieves because of the ease involved in their theft. In some offenders their offending can be identified as obsessive-compulsive. For many juvenile offenders car theft is simply another challenge to test their self-perceptions. Much juvenile offending (including car theft) is identified by psychologists as "acting out" — aberrant behaviour reactions involving misconduct that is socially unacceptable. Criminologists will sometimes refer to Matza's theory of "drift" which is in opposition to the "positive theorists" who suggest that a delinquent subculture stands in opposition to middle-class morality, inexorably leading to the breaking of laws. Matza concluded that,

in actuality, a delinquent "transiently exists in a limbo between convention and crime, responding in turn to the demands of each, flirting now with one, now with the other, but postponing commitment, evading decision; and thus he drifts between criminal and conventional action." Hence many detected juveniles, despite the number of arrests they may have had, do not contemplate that they may again be apprehended; their actions are the "magic of the moment". The frequently publicised high-speed pursuit of car thieves is a further element of the aspect of challenge detected in young offenders and perhaps the most worrying feature in cases seen by the courts; the immense danger to the public at large and the aggravated damage to vehicles and other property caused by their resultant crashes are only too readily apparent. Elements of boredom (the Blacktown statistic to which I referred) and the effects of long-term unemployment, can be identified as casually connected with so-called "joyriding".

I return again to the undetected multitude — the thieves who (whatever the motivation) are too careful to be caught; instead of driving in ways which attract police attention, they will drive with no apparent distinction from the remainder of traffic. As a motorist how often do you encounter the high-speed pursuit or see drivers who are obviously too young to be in charge of a motor vehicle? Yet the statistics of stolen motor vehicles would indicate the strong likelihood of an offender driving along the same road, especially I suppose, at night.

Almost any tool may become a car breaking implement, but the body repairers tool known as a slide hammer or dent puller has become a favourite implement with car thieves in recent times. It could almost be said that there are more of these tools being used for car theft than for their lawful purpose, and the finding of such an implement in the possession of a suspected offender is not capable of easy explanation. Readily available in automotive super markets, this item might profitably be restricted to the automotive trade.

### SENTENCING ALTERNATIVES

The efficacy of sanctions available to courts, whether designed to rehabilitate, deter or exact community retribution, will be forever debated. The law has little imagination in providing sentencing alternatives. One method may be to provide offenders with lawful activities which may replace car theft as a self-perceived "achievement". The Wilderness Project, for instance, took young offenders away from their urban jungles and presented them with new and challenging experiences — abseiling, canoeing, horseriding, and the Wagon Train. For many the programme expanded their experience of what Australian life has to offer, with consequent severance from their former delinquent lifestyles. Another scheme proposed but not substantially acted upon promoted the concept of involving offenders in working mechanically with motor vehicles and acquiring driving skills in non-public areas.

### COMPENSATION

The immense cost to the community, largely (but not entirely) borne by insurance premiums and payouts for damage caused to vehicles and other property as a result of car theft is obviously of grave concern. In a sample I took of vehicle theft charges at the Bidura Children's Court spanning a period of six months in 1983-84, the total value of the vehicles involved could be estimated at nearly \$2.5 million. The owners of luxury vehicles, company cars and the like are apt to shrug away the loss of a vehicle as just another expense, covered by insurance. The more poignant losses are those incurred by persons who are unable to afford more than a cheap second hand vehicle upon which they greatly depend, as the following extract from the facts of a particular case illustrates: "The stolen vehicle is extensively damaged, valued at \$2000, not comprehensively insured, and owned by a widow who supports children."

Compensation, particularly from juvenile offenders with no financial means, is (more often than not) not accurately assessed or applied for, whether by the owner of the vehicle or the insurance company vicariously on the owner's behalf. That may be the end result of futility experienced in the past in making such applications. Technically it would be possible to have compensation orders made (at least for offenders 16 years of age and

above) which could lie unenforced until it was known that the offender had means to pay. But the high administrative cost in keeping track of offenders would suggest that such a procedure would be untenable. It seems likely that the high costs of loss and damage from vehicle theft is one which the community as a whole will have to continue to bear unless the incidence of the offending is reduced by other means. There is, however, a discernible growing interest in this country of "victims' rights", and it may be that an imaginative government will one day respond. In California in 1982 a Victims Bill of Rights Initiative was passed by the voters, from which the legislature developed the Crime Victims Restitution Program. The programme requires that any person convicted of any crime in California shall, in addition to any other penalty, be ordered to pay a **restitution fine**, from which the restitution fund is created. Australia has Criminal Injuries Compensation schemes but these are limited to personal injuries; the Californian scheme applies additionally to loss of and damage to property.

The high incidence of car theft remains, like other types of offending, a reflection of the type of community in which we live; it cannot be solved in isolation while gaps continue to widen between "haves" and "have-nots", while youth unemployment means that many of the young may never aspire to own vehicles or other substantial property of their own, and apathy continues to the deterioration of social values and regard for the property rights of others. The greatest understanding a thief can gain of the consequences of his act is when he has had something he has worked for and valued stolen.

# Local Court Outcomes of Offences — 1984

| Court action         | Larceny of boat | Unlawful use of boat (S.526A) | Unlawful use of boat (S.154A) | Larceny of motor vehicle | Larceny of vehicle (S.117) | Unlawful use of vehicle (S.154A) | Unlawful use of vehicle (S.526A) | Unlawfully take, use motor vehicle | Ride in known stolen conveyance |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Not guilty           |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 2                             | 0                             | 5                        | 15                         | 4                                | 22                               | 6                                  | 7                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 11.11                         | 0                             | 6.94                     | 3.69                       | 7.69                             | 7.31                             | 8.45                               | 6.19                            |
| Withdrawn dismissed  |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 4                        | 34                         | 4                                | 15                               | 4                                  | 3                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 5.56                     | 8.37                       | 7.69                             | 4.98                             | 5.63                               | 2.65                            |
| Forfeit recognisance |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 1                        | 4                          | 0                                | 0                                | 1                                  | 2                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 1.39                     | 0.99                       | 0                                | 0                                | 1.41                               | 1.7                             |
| S.556A dismissal     |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 2                             | 0                             | 1                        | 9                          | 3                                | 22                               | 4                                  | 8                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 1.39                     | 0.99                       | 0                                | 0                                | 1.41                               | 1.7                             |
| S.556A dismissal     |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 2                             | 0                             | 1                        | 9                          | 3                                | 22                               | 4                                  | 8                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 11.11                         | 0                             | 1.39                     | 2.22                       | 5.77                             | 7.31                             | 5.63                               | 7.08                            |
| Rising of the court  |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 0                        | 3                          | 1                                | 1                                | 1                                  | 1                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 0                        | 0.74                       | 1.92                             | 0.33                             | 1.41                               | 0.38                            |
| Fine                 |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 3                             | 1                             | 11                       | 56                         | 9                                | 92                               | 39                                 | 43                              |
| Percent              | 0               | 16.67                         | 100.00                        | 15.28                    | 13.79                      | 17.31                            | 30.56                            | 54.93                              | 38.05                           |
| Recognisance + other |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 2               | 3                             | 0                             | 17                       | 104                        | 11                               | 68                               | 5                                  | 24                              |
| Percent              | 50.00           | 16.67                         | 0                             | 23.61                    | 25.62                      | 21.15                            | 22.59                            | 7.04                               | 21.24                           |
| Periodic detention   |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 0                        | 6                          | 0                                | 6                                | 0                                  | 0                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 0                        | 1.48                       | 0                                | 1.99                             | 0                                  | 0                               |
| Community service    |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 2                             | 0                             | 10                       | 42                         | 3                                | 19                               | 4                                  | 9                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 11.11                         | 0                             | 13.89                    | 10.34                      | 5.77                             | 6.31                             | 5.63                               | 7.96                            |
| Imprisonment         |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 2               | 6                             | 0                             | 23                       | 133                        | 17                               | 56                               | 7                                  | 16                              |
| Percent              | 50.00           | 33.33                         | 0                             | 31.94                    | 32.76                      | 32.69                            | 18.60                            | 9.86                               | 14.16                           |
| Total                |                 |                               |                               |                          |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 4               | 18                            | 1                             | 72                       | 406                        | 52                               | 301                              | 71                                 | 113                             |
| Percent              | 100.00          | 100.00                        | 100.00                        | 100.00                   | 100.00                     | 100.00                           | 100.00                           | 100.00                             | 100.00                          |

Source: N.S.W. Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research

## Local Court Outcomes of Offences — 1985

| Court action         | Larceny of boat | Unlawful use of boat (S.526A) | Unlawful use of boat (S.154A) | Larceny of vehicle (S.117) | Unlawful use of vehicle (S.154A) | Unlawful use of vehicle (S.526A) | Unlawfully take, use motor vehicle | Ride in known stolen conveyance |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Not guilty           |                 |                               |                               |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 1               | 0                             | 1                             | 22                         | 6                                | 19                               | 7                                  | 14                              |
| Percent              | 10.00           | 0                             | 14.29                         | 5.20                       | 9.52                             | 5.01                             | 8.14                               | 9.93                            |
| Withdrawn dismissed  |                 |                               |                               |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 1               | 0                             | 0                             | 37                         | 6                                | 23                               | 5                                  | 4                               |
| Percent              | 10.00           | 0                             | 0                             | 8.75                       | 9.52                             | 6.07                             | 5.81                               | 2.84                            |
| Forfeit recognisance |                 |                               |                               |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 2                             | 0                             | 3                          | 0                                | 3                                | 1                                  | 0                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 12.50                         | 0                             | 0.71                       | 0                                | 0.79                             | 1.16                               | 0                               |
| S.556A dismissal     |                 |                               |                               |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 1                             | 1                             | 1                          | 2                                | 17                               | 8                                  | 11                              |
| Percent              | 0               | 6.25                          | 14.29                         | 0.24                       | 3.17                             | 1.49                             | 9.30                               | 7.80                            |
| Rising of the court  |                 |                               |                               |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 3                          | 2                                | 3                                | 0                                  | 0                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 0.71                       | 3.17                             | 0.79                             | 0                                  | 0                               |
| Fine                 |                 |                               |                               |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 6               | 5                             | 2                             | 54                         | 7                                | 105                              | 41                                 | 53                              |
| Percent              | 60.00           | 31.25                         | 28.57                         | 12.77                      | 11.11                            | 27.70                            | 47.67                              | 37.59                           |
| Recognisance + other |                 |                               |                               |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 2               | 5                             | 0                             | 113                        | 17                               | 92                               | 15                                 | 26                              |
| Percent              | 20.00           | 31.25                         | 0                             | 26.71                      | 26.98                            | 24.27                            | 17.44                              | 18.44                           |
| Community service    |                 |                               |                               |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 0                             | 1                             | 40                         | 7                                | 27                               | 3                                  | 7                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 0                             | 14.29                         | 9.46                       | 11.11                            | 7.12                             | 3.49                               | 4.96                            |
| Periodic detention   |                 |                               |                               |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 7                          | 0                                | 6                                | 0                                  | 2                               |
| Percent              | 0               | 0                             | 0                             | 1.65                       | 0                                | 1.58                             | 0                                  | 1.42                            |
| Imprisonment         |                 |                               |                               |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 0               | 3                             | 2                             | 143                        | 16                               | 84                               | 6                                  | 24                              |
| Percent              | 0               | 18.75                         | 28.57                         | 33.81                      | 25.40                            | 22.16                            | 6.98                               | 17.02                           |
| Total                |                 |                               |                               |                            |                                  |                                  |                                    |                                 |
| Number               | 10              | 16                            | 7                             | 423                        | 63                               | 379                              | 86                                 | 141                             |
| Percent              | 100.00          | 100.00                        | 100.00                        | 100.00                     | 100.00                           | 100.00                           | 100.00                             | 100.00                          |

Source: N.S.W. Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research

## Outcomes relating to juvenile offenders where car theft is the most serious offence charged — 1985-86

| Outcome  | Offence:<br>Ride in<br>taken<br>vehicle | Steal<br>motor<br>vehicle | Take &<br>drive<br>vehicle | (Total) | (Percentage<br>of total<br>outcomes)   |
|--|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------|--|
| Admonished & discharged  | 69                                      | 37                        | 68                         | 174     | 8.06                                   |
| Probation  | 103                                     | 150                       | 159                        | 412     | 19.07                                  |
| Bond — no supervision  | 93                                      | 148                       | 150                        | 391     | 18.10                                  |
| Bond with supervision  | 44                                      | 120                       | 88                         | 252     | 11.67                                  |
| Fine   | 45                                      | 29                        | 58                         | 132     | 6.11                                   |
| Community service  | 5                                       | 44                        | 14                         | 63      | 2.92                                   |
| Committal to training school                                     | 68                                      | 277                       | 140                        | 485     | 22.45                                  |
| (Total)  | (500)                                   | (913)                     | (747)                      | (2160)  | (100.00)                               |
| <b>Local government areas of residence of juvenile offenders</b> |   |                           |                            |         | <b>(Percentage of total offenders)</b> |
| Blacktown  | 43                                      | 132                       | 79                         | 254     | 11.80                                  |
| Campbelltown   | 32                                      | 43                        | 63                         | 138     | 6.41                                   |
| Fairfield  | 39                                      | 34                        | 39                         | 112     | 5.2                                    |
| Bankstown  | 27                                      | 24                        | 39                         | 90      | 4.18                                   |
| Liverpool  | 21                                      | 39                        | 29                         | 89      | 4.14                                   |
| Marrickville   | 27                                      | 25                        | 18                         | 70      | 3.25                                   |
| City of Sydney   | 24                                      | 20                        | 26                         | 70      | 3.25                                   |
| Penrith  | 8                                       | 35                        | 18                         | 61      | 2.83                                   |
| Randwick   | 15                                      | 26                        | 19                         | 60      | 2.79                                   |
| Parramatta   | 10                                      | 34                        | 15                         | 59      | 2.74                                   |
| Wollongong   | 19                                      | 13                        | 23                         | 55      | 2.56                                   |
| Newcastle  | 10                                      | 15                        | 12                         | 37      | 1.72                                   |
| <b>Most serious previous outcome</b>                             |   |                           |                            |         |  |
| No previous outcome  | 178                                     | 208                       | 259                        | 645     | 30.91                                  |
| Admonished/discharged  | 27                                      | 26                        | 39                         | 92      | 4.41                                   |
| Probation  | 50                                      | 105                       | 88                         | 243     | 11.64                                  |
| Bond without supervision   | 29                                      | 50                        | 41                         | 120     | 5.75                                   |
| Bond with supervision  | 56                                      | 102                       | 78                         | 236     | 11.31                                  |
| Fine   | 8                                       | 12                        | 10                         | 30      | 1.44                                   |
| Committal to training school                                     | 114                                     | 342                       | 175                        | 631     | 30.23                                  |

Source: N.S.W. Department of Youth & Community Services.

# New South Wales Crime Statistics

| Crime classification                    | 1985/86 Statistics |                  |               |                                     |                      | 1984/85 Annual Report Statistics |                  |               | Update 1984/85 Statistics |                  |               |
|---|--------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------|
|   | 1 (a)              | 2 (a)            | 3 (a)         | 4 (b)                               | 5                    | 6 (c)                            | 7 (c)            | 8 (c)         | 9 (d)                     | 10 (d)           | 11 (d)        |
|   | Offences recorded  | Offences cleared | % cleared     | Additional 1984/85 offences cleared | Sum of columns 2 & 4 | Offences recorded                | Offences cleared | % cleared     | Offences recorded         | Offences cleared | % cleared     |
| Offences against the person             | 17997              | 10729            | 59.62%        | 195                                 | 10924                | 15176                            | 8383             | 55.24%        | 15385                     | 8578             | 55.76%        |
| Motoring offences (Crimes Act)          | 402                | 380              | 94.53%        | 18                                  | 398                  | 433                              | 417              | 96.30%        | 454                       | 435              | 95.81%        |
| Sexual offences                         | 3278               | 1719             | 52.44%        | 288                                 | 2007                 | 2866                             | 1324             | 46.20%        | 3220                      | 1612             | 50.06%        |
| Property breakings                      | 86784              | 6957             | 8.02%         | 311                                 | 7268                 | 95032                            | 6687             | 7.04%         | 95614                     | 6998             | 7.32%         |
| Theft without violation of premises     | 123570             | 21576            | 17.46%        | 737                                 | 22313                | 115642                           | 18871            | 16.32%        | 117021                    | 19608            | 16.76%        |
| Motor vehicle thefts                    | 60831              | 2193             | 3.61%         | 72                                  | 2265                 | 53130                            | 3666             | 6.90%         | 53130                     | 3738             | 7.04%         |
| Offences involving fraud                | 12420              | 8038             | 64.72%        | 2639                                | 10677                | 15807                            | 10553            | 66.76%        | 18725                     | 13192            | 70.45%        |
| Drug offences                           | 20863              | 20193            | 96.79%        | 406                                 | 20599                | 23118                            | 22529            | 97.45%        | 23557                     | 22935            | 97.36%        |
| Arson                                   | 3087               | 207              | 6.71%         | 9                                   | 216                  | 2476                             | 182              | 7.35%         | 2499                      | 191              | 7.64%         |
| Malicious injury and damage to property | 33646              | 5448             | 16.19%        | 116                                 | 5564                 | 28268                            | 4141             | 14.65%        | 28515                     | 4257             | 14.93%        |
| Other coded offences                    | 16426              | 13395            | 81.55%        | 605                                 | 14000                | 11851                            | 9528             | 80.40%        | 12559                     | 10133            | 80.68%        |
| <b>Total offences</b>                   | <b>379304</b>      | <b>90835</b>     | <b>23.95%</b> | <b>5396</b>                         | <b>96231</b>         | <b>363799</b>                    | <b>86281</b>     | <b>23.72%</b> | <b>370679</b>             | <b>91677</b>     | <b>24.73%</b> |

## FOOTNOTES:

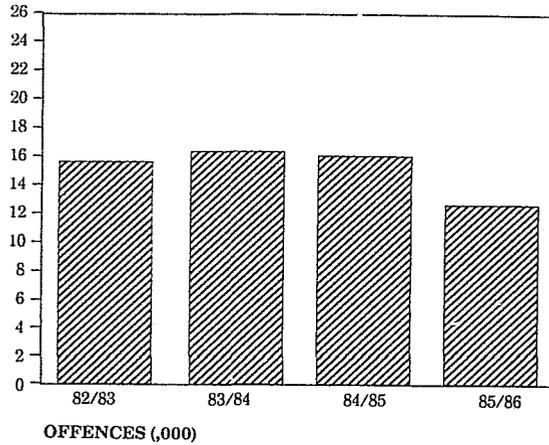
- (a) The 1985/86 Annual Report Statistics were extracted on 27.8.86 (as compared with the 1984/85 Annual Report cut-off date of 17.9.85), and covered all reports in respect of known crime for the 1985/86 reporting period.  
N.B.: The time between the end of the reporting period and the date of extraction was shortened because of the introduction of remote data entry facilities, and will be reduced for future reporting periods and be set at 31 July.
- (b) Column 4 refers to 1984/85 offences cleared after the 1984/85 Annual Report cut-off date (17.9.85) and up to the 1985/86 cut-off date (27.8.86).
- (c) The 1984/85 Annual Report Statistics were extracted from the computer on 17.9.85 by which date all reports in respect of known crime for that period had been entered into the computer.
- (d) Columns 9-11 refer to the total of 1984/85 offences reported and cleared as at 27.8.86.

Source: New South Wales Police Department 1985-86 Annual Report — Crime Statistics

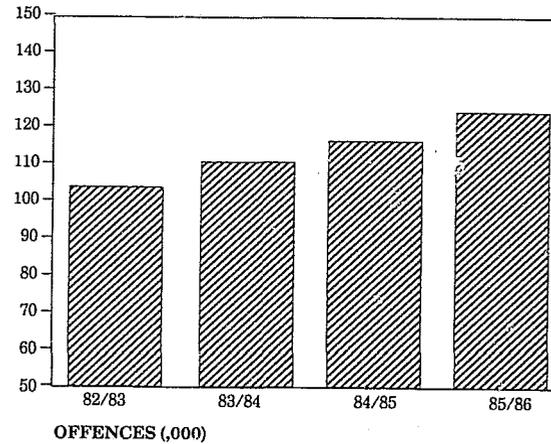
# Crime Trends in New South Wales

Source: N.S.W. Police Department Annual Report, Crime Statistics, 1985-86

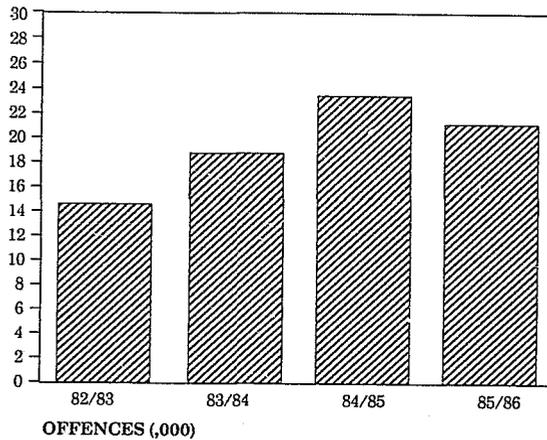
### OFFENCES INVOLVING FRAUD



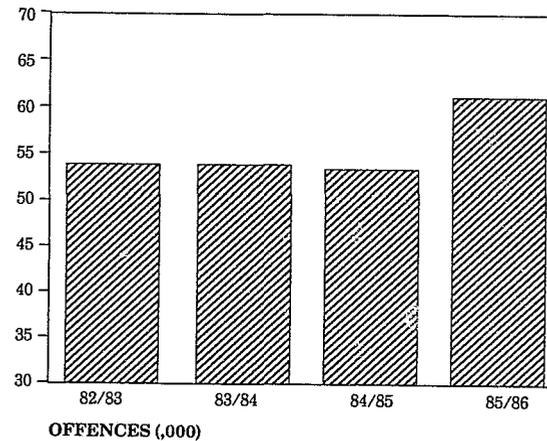
### THEFT WITHOUT VIOLATION OF PREMISES



### DRUG OFFENCES



### MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT



All figures represented in the above charts are based on the date of offence criterion.

# Numbers Reported to Police and Rate Per 100 000 Population 1973-74 to 1984-85

## MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

|                              |   | 1973-74 | 1974-75 | 1975-76 | 1976-77 | 1977-78 | 1978-79 | 1979-80 | 1980-81 | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 |
|------------------------------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| NEW SOUTH WALES              | N | 23,426  | 20,970  | 22,661  | 24,664  | 29,323  | 31,715  | 34,630  | 39,074  | 47,339  | 53,664  | 53,626  | 53,130  |
|                              | R | 484.00  | 429.71  | 461.52  | 493.28  | 580.65  | 620.64  | 669.82  | 747.11  | 893.18  | 1001.19 | 1000.41 | 981.70  |
| VICTORIA                     | N | 10,999  | 10,912  | 11,814  | 14,897  | 15,268  | 16,286  | 16,264  | 17,550  | 19,537  | 19,671  | 21,683  | 22,991  |
|                              | R | 299.70  | 294.12  | 315.88  | 388.95  | 395.54  | 419.74  | 415.95  | 445.43  | 489.64  | 488.11  | 537.02  | 563.72  |
| QUEENSLAND                   | N | 4,770   | 5,203   | 4,996   | 5,017   | 5,617   | 5,892   | 5,870   | 6,057   | 6,569   | 7,763   | 8,040   | 8,767   |
|                              | R | 233.82  | 250.14  | 236.77  | 236.65  | 258.84  | 266.60  | 259.73  | 258.84  | 272.57  | 314.29  | 325.29  | 349.69  |
| WESTERN AUSTRALIA            | N | 5,214   | 5,524   | 4,917   | 5,499   | 6,394   | 6,347   | 5,356   | 5,544   | 5,566   | 6,393   | 7,064   | 8,016   |
|                              | R | 469.72  | 484.56  | 423.87  | 458.25  | 524.09  | 511.85  | 425.07  | 426.46  | 418.49  | 470.07  | 517.71  | 579.33  |
| SOUTH AUSTRALIA              | N | 4,169   | 4,679   | 4,846   | 4,496   | 5,510   | 6,492   | 5,850   | 5,802   | 5,584   | 5,635   | 6,413   | 7,548   |
|                              | R | 338.94  | 374.32  | 384.60  | 351.25  | 427.13  | 499.38  | 450.00  | 442.90  | 423.03  | 420.52  | 478.03  | 557.49  |
| TASMANIA                     | N | 1,074   | 1,046   | 1,024   | 1,043   | 916     | 771     | 954     | 988     | 835     | 937     | 846     | 861     |
|                              | R | 275.38  | 261.50  | 256.00  | 254.39  | 223.41  | 183.57  | 227.14  | 235.23  | 198.80  | 217.90  | 195.55  | 196.86  |
| NORTHERN TERRITORY           | N | 694     | 797     | 605     | 675     | 645     | 687     | 716     | 985     | 965     | 1,042   | 909     | 1,039   |
|                              | R | 667.31  | 895.50  | 599.01  | 649.04  | 586.36  | 602.63  | 606.78  | 800.81  | 748.06  | 777.61  | 678.99  | 748.42  |
| AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY | N | 597     | 542     | 495     | 481     | 593     | 536     | 456     | n/a     | 560     | 691     | 565     | 812     |
|                              | R | 351.17  | 285.26  | 247.50  | 229.04  | 282.38  | 243.63  | 207.27  | n/a     | 243.47  | 300.43  | 238.80  | 332.01  |
| AUSTRALIA                    | N | 50,943  | 49,673  | 51,358  | 56,772  | 64,266  | 68,726  | 70,096  | 76,000  | 86,955  | 95,796  | 99,146  | 103,164 |
|                              | R | 374.85  | 360.73  | 369.21  | 400.10  | 447.84  | 473.45  | 477.16  | 525.19  | 573.20  | 623.26  | 644.70  | 663.18  |

Source: The Size of the Crime Problem in Australia, published by the Australian Institute of Criminology.

## Persons Arrested for Crimes Cleared By Age, Sex and Jurisdiction, 1973-74 to 1984-85

### MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

|         | NEW SOUTH WALES |      |        |     |       | VICTORIA |      |        |    |       | QUEENSLAND |     |        |    |       |
|---------|-----------------|------|--------|-----|-------|----------|------|--------|----|-------|------------|-----|--------|----|-------|
|         | Male            |      | Female |     | TOTAL | Male     |      | Female |    | TOTAL | Male       |     | Female |    | TOTAL |
|         | A               | J    | A      | J   |       | A        | J    | A      | J  |       | A          | J   | A      | J  |       |
| 1973-74 | 1801            | 1530 | 36     | 68  | 3435  | 1147     | 998  | 22     | 31 | 2198  | 843        | 713 | 17     | 19 | 1592  |
| 1974-75 | 1874            | 1343 | 33     | 74  | 3324  | 1202     | 1025 | 27     | 28 | 2282  | 1098       | 757 | 34     | 16 | 1905  |
| 1975-76 | 1904            | 1453 | 41     | 62  | 3460  | 1344     | 1139 | 24     | 22 | 2529  | 977        | 591 | 30     | 12 | 1610  |
| 1976-77 | 1824            | 1415 | 58     | 54  | 3351  | 1330     | 1194 | 25     | 27 | 2576  | 1084       | 620 | 25     | 18 | 1747  |
| 1977-78 | 1998            | 1354 | 75     | 49  | 3476  | 1400     | 1345 | 34     | 29 | 2808  | 1149       | 699 | 25     | 39 | 1912  |
| 1978-79 | 1884            | 1323 | 78     | 50  | 3335  | 1353     | 1124 | 29     | 43 | 2549  | 1038       | 611 | 30     | 33 | 1712  |
| 1979-80 | 2053            | 1604 | 96     | 109 | 3862  | 1536     | 1322 | 54     | 60 | 2972  | 927        | 535 | 31     | 52 | 1545  |
| 1980-81 | 2228            | 1799 | 105    | 139 | 4271  | 1367     | 1223 | 43     | 52 | 2685  | 980        | 512 | 42     | 28 | 1562  |
| 1981-82 | 2572            | 2145 | 109    | 147 | 4973  | 1474     | 1154 | 69     | 34 | 2731  | 989        | 698 | 10     | 40 | 1737  |
| 1982-83 | 2968            | 1982 | 118    | 143 | 5211  | 1344     | 957  | 34     | 27 | 2362  | 1214       | 699 | 60     | 23 | 1996  |
| 1983-84 | 2857            | 2048 | 154    | 109 | 5168  | 1352     | 1223 | 63     | 63 | 2701  | 1305       | 818 | 74     | 55 | 2252  |
| 1984-85 | 2648            | 2036 | 122    | 134 | 4940  | 1387     | 1221 | 66     | 74 | 2748  | 1059       | 807 | 48     | 82 | 1996  |

A = Adult; J = Juvenile.

*Note that "juvenile" in the above statistics means under the age of 17.*

*In New South Wales jurisdiction of the Children's Court continues until the attainment of 18 years of age.*

**Source:** The Size of the Crime Problem in Australia, published by Australian Institute of Criminology.

## A Victim's Perspective

### Mr Ray Whitrod National Spokesman Australian Victims of Crime Association

The thing that has come across to me most strongly has been the emphasis on economic consequences of crime. We've all been talking about costs of crime in terms of money value. Now any researcher worth his salt will know that's been superseded by 10 years of solid research all over the world which shows that economic consequences rate second to psychological consequences of crime. And yet we've talked mainly in terms of money values.

In any type of crime it's the psychological impact which is the most severe, not the economic. And so I thought I might introduce you to one victim who might in some way demonstrate that effect. When I was asked to provide a victim's perspective a few weeks ago, I rushed up to the RAI and said: Have you got any recent victims of car theft that I could talk to, because I spend most of my time talking to victims of violence, not car theft. And they produced four names of people that had had their cars stolen recently. I went out and interviewed them and some of them were fairly distressful cases.

A young lad of 18 saved up for a long time to buy an old bomb, had it stolen, written off a complete wreck. The offender was prosecuted in the Children's Court but the owner got no compensation and he's left still paying hire purchase arrangements on the bomb that he'd bought. And his mother was most upset because they'd come from one of our Adelaide suburbs where there were lots of children who are in fact not community-minded and she's trying to bring up a youngster in an honest way. And the son was saying, "What's the use Mum, I saved up for the car and it's gone now and I still owe money on it". And so she was very distressed.

Then there's Tony Thomas, an official of the Commonwealth Bank, who lives in Hawthorn Dean in Adelaide, a rather nice suburb in the hills, keeps himself fit, aged 50. He has a nice wife. His two kids are grown up, the son married and left home, daughter home but working, wife has a little profitable job on the side copying material and so forth. They're not rich but they're comfortably off. And perhaps his pride and joy is his 1977 Kingswood Holden. He told me his car was one of the few things he really enjoyed in life, his pride and joy. He's got a job at the Commonwealth Bank of some responsibility which requires some hard decision-making but he looks forward each year to a short break at Easter and at Easter every year they go down to a very nice beach, Christie's Beach. They've been going there for 20 years. They hire a caravan and camp alongside a group of friends. They play cards, have a game of cricket. It's one of the things he looks forward to in his life, where he can let off steam and just have a nice time.

The other main thing in his life is his marriage. He and his wife celebrate their wedding anniversary on 16 April. This year it coincided with the Easter break so he hired (\$230) a caravan to go down to Christie's Beach, loaded up on the Wednesday night, filled the tank of his car and took his wife to the casino in Adelaide. They had a very nice meal with some friends. Tony is not a gambler — he's a non-drinker and non-smoker. But he managed on this occasion to have a few bets on the side and made enough to pay the expenses of entertaining his wife and his friends.

Then at 1.30 they came out, went to where he'd parked his car and it was gone. Now Tony is a very careful banker. Before he leaves his car he locks the windows, retracts his aerial and walks around the car and checks it to make sure every door is closed. When he came along and found that car gone "I couldn't believe it. When I read about other people's cars being stolen I always thought that they were negligent or careless. I thought that my protection of the car was adequate and it wouldn't be stolen."

Tony is used to dealing with emergencies so he hailed a taxi and then went up to the S.A. Police Headquarters in Angus Street and reported his car to the police so that they could get a description on the air straight away. Then he went home, very upset about it. It looked to him as though the whole of Easter was gone. But on the way back to Hawthorn Dean he thought there were other things he could do — he's a fairly resourceful sort of bloke — so he rang the two main taxi cab companies in Adelaide and offered a reward if any driver located the car. And so he went home thinking he had done all he could.

The next day, having heard no more about it, he started ringing and visiting the car parks because somebody had told him that stolen cars were left in car parks. So he went to the first one and found out that they had arrangements with the S.A. Police that any cars left over 24 hours the details would be telephoned through to Police Headquarters — except for one called John Martin's which didn't do that. So he went to John Martin's and walked the five floors of John Martin's to see if the car was there. Then he went back to Hawthorn Dean feeling a bit upset and thinking there was nothing more he could do.

The situation was out of his control, and that was one of the points that struck home — the uncontrollability of the situation. He'd done all he could but he couldn't affect the outcome. At any rate, he stayed home at Easter and his Easter holidays were gone. Subsequently on the Thursday after Easter he got a phone call from the Glenelg Police. His car had been found in a nearby street, where it had been abandoned. A local resident noted it had been there for two days before she rang the police.

I saw Tony, a week or so after that. He was feeling a bit upset about it. He said that he was astonished at the impact it had made on him. He said he felt that losing the car had been like losing a member of the family. He'd had that car for 10 years, had spent a lot of time cleaning it and polishing it. He said that he'd noticed that back at work on the Wednesday and Thursday, he couldn't concentrate.

But it was a typical sort of theft. Only \$150 worth of damage done to the car. He decided that he would put a car alarm in, so he paid \$400 for a car alarm.

So there's a very simple, ordinary story about a bloke who was fairly resourceful, more resourceful than most I guess, and the impact wasn't all that severe — a bit of sleeplessness, a bit of slowness at work and so on. And just five days ago, before coming here, I went back to see him again, just to check up with him. When I asked him how he was, he said: "Three days ago, going to work, I had a collapse. I thought it was a heart attack. They got me to hospital. A specialist examined me. It's not a heart attack, thank God, it's a duodenal ulcer." Now Tony had never been sick, had years of accumulated sickleave. I went through with him all the likely things that caused stress. He didn't have any. I spoke to Dr Bill Salter who's a senior psychiatrist in Adelaide and asked: "Is it possible the two events are related? Can the impact of a car being stolen, and subsequently recovered, in these circumstances bring about a duodenal ulcer?" He said: "Yes it could". So Tony is home for a month to start with, and his lifestyle has now altered. He's got to be very careful about his health in future — all because of a stolen car!

This bears out the research from America and Europe. The emotional impact is more severe than economic impact.

Police, courts and prisons do not resolve victim trauma, although their response and collaboration is essential. It is the family of the victim, those who have suffered a similar experience, and the mental health professionals who can facilitate successful adjustment.

Just how much are victims upset emotionally? Sound evidence is hard to come by. British crime survey 1983 UK Government:

**"Affected very much"**

|                    |             |
|--------------------|-------------|
| By serious assault | 30 per cent |
| By car stolen      | 20 per cent |
| By burglary        | 12 per cent |

American researchers (Dr L. S. Perloff, Illinois) have found that people who had either taken the most precautions or who felt most invulnerable were likely to suffer more after becoming a victim. Since these people consider themselves generally immune to attack, the infringement creates more trauma. A sense of powerlessness, inequity, and danger replaces the victim's concept of a just world. Stress reactions and rage makes recovery more difficult.

In most victims there is a gradual dissipation of symptoms, but in others there is a latent period of days, weeks, or even years, during which the victim appears normal but which may be followed by a delayed chronic reaction.

The victims' feelings of fear and powerlessness may produce self-blaming tendencies. They wonder "what did I do to bring this harm on myself?" This may serve to reduce their feeling of powerlessness by exaggerating their own part in the event. By partially blaming themselves, the victims regain a sense of control. Some achieve the same result by blaming others.

Blaming oneself may help to bring meaning to events that seem to be incomprehensible. Self-blame can help people cope by giving them opportunities to change their behaviour or personality in a way which helps them avoid becoming a victim again. Victims prefer to blame themselves rather than admit that life is capricious and unfair.

This feeling of inability to control outcomes may spread to their view of what others can do. They may believe that other people are equally ineffective.

### THE VICTIM'S ROLE IN CAR STEALING

Orthodox criminology has ignored the role of the victim, yet crime is the outcome of the interaction of the offender, the victim, and the environment. It is impossible to explain why a particular offender harmed a particular victim at a particular time at a particular place.

The question of whether, or to what degree, the victim shares responsibility with the offender, is a crucial one. Important decisions hinge on this. It is taken into account by police, prosecutors, judges, juries, compensation hearings, insurance investigators and politicians. It affects how the victims are treated by family, friends, or strangers, by the newspapers and other media.

Victimologists have devised typologies to illustrate the degree of responsibility, if any, that victims should bear. A typology is a classification scheme that aids in the understanding of what a group of people has in common, and how it differs from other groups. All typologies parcel out responsibility along a continuum marked by a number of boundaries.

### A TYPOLOGY OF VICTIMS OF CAR THEFT (KARMAN, 1980)

Type: Conscientiously resisting.  
Responsibility: Totally innocent.  
Actions: Takes special precautions.  
Motives: Seeks to minimise risks.  
Financial outcome: Loses money.

These unwilling victims tried to protect their vehicles by following security advisors and buying anti-theft devices yet their resistance proved futile. They were preyed upon by thieves who knew how to disarm the alarms.

Type: Conventionally cautious.  
Responsibility: Largely innocent.  
Actions: Takes conventional measures.  
Motives: Concerned about risks.  
Financial outcome: Loses money.

Conventionally cautious victims routinely used the anti-theft features provided as standard equipment. They took precautions of removing all valuables from sight, locking doors and windows, and taking the keys with them. They did "nothing wrong" but they did not take any special measures. They are "largely" rather than totally "innocent".

Type: Carelessly facilitating.  
Responsibility: Partly innocent.  
Actions: Facilitates theft through negligence.  
Motives: Indifferent to risks.  
Financial outcome: Loses money.

These victims set the stage for crimes of opportunity. In many cases they were victimised by inexperienced thieves and teenagers — joyriders. They made the theft easier by leaving the doors and windows unlocked, or their keys inside. Their indifference contributed to the crime but they were unwilling, unintentional victims.

Type: Precipitative initiators.  
Responsibility: Substantially responsible.  
Actions: Precipitates theft by leaving car exposed.  
Motives: Wants car stolen.  
Financial outcome: Gains money from victimisation.

These are knowing and willing victims who calculate they would be better off by claiming insurance than by selling the car. They leave the car unlocked deliberately, with keys inside, parked in the high risk area. If challenged, they can claim mere negligence.

Type: Provocative conspirators.  
Responsibility: Largely responsible.  
Actions: Provokes theft by arrangement.  
Motives: Determined to have car stolen.  
Financial outcome: Gains money from victimisation.

Without the instigation by these victims, the crime would not take place. They are not really victims. They are conspiring to defraud the insurance companies. They arrange for their car to be torched or otherwise disposed of.

Type: Fabricating simulators.  
Responsibility: Fully responsible.  
Actions: Fabricates theft on non-existing vehicle.  
Motives: Seeks to make it appear vehicle stolen.  
Financial outcome: Makes profit from alleged victimisation.

Fully responsible victims are not victims in any sense, but criminals. They insure a phantom car and then report it stolen so they can collect insurance.

The philosophy underlying the value judgements on degree of victim responsibility seems to be based on the premise that if the community thinks that cautious motorists should be encouraged to study "defensive driving" techniques to avoid collisions, then people should be obliged to do what they can within reason to increase their safety from criminal attack. If victims want to avoid further misery, they must change how they think and act.

### THE VICTIM'S IMMEDIATE REACTIONS

The intensity of the impact has three main factors:  
The unexpectedness, the unpredictability, and the uncontrollability.

With the unexpectedness come shock, surprise, bewilderment and disbelief.

With unpredictability come fear, anxiety, anguish and stress.

With uncontrollability come powerlessness, helplessness, isolation and frustration.

## DECIDING WHAT TO DO — FOUR BROAD RESPONSE OPTIONS

1. Victims can call the police.
2. Deal with the matter privately.
3. Re-evaluate the situation.
4. Do nothing.

Which option is chosen depends upon the victim's beliefs about the consequences of each option. But the stressful conditions under which victims often have to make their decision sometimes prevents a rational decision.

### REPORTING TO THE POLICE

Insurance usually requires notification. The victim's sense of injustice can be reduced if the police catch the offender and recover the car.

Even if the victims believe it is unlikely that the offender will be caught, they may still anticipate positive consequences — it may lead to more patrols.

If the offender is caught and imprisoned, he no longer presents a threat of repetition, and it may deter other potential offenders.

The action of reporting may help re-establish the victim's feeling of control.

### GENERAL CONSEQUENCES OF VICTIMISATION

"While the extent of emotional distress can never be measured precisely, there is now sufficient evidence to state:

- (1) It is by far the most important element.
- (2) Quite serious psychological effects and even trauma are experienced by many victims."

(Maguire, 1985).

"The most common problems were psychological, including fear, anxiety, self-blame, anger, shame, and sleeplessness."

(Friedman, 1982)

These feelings cause the most resourceful of us to cling to doctors, police and emergency staffs.

The victim's sensitivity to the interpersonal distance of others is increased, and may cause the victim to perceive ordinary professional conduct as indifferent, impersonal, and unfeeling. The victim's misperception of police behaviour is heightened by the emotional insulation that all professionals develop in order to function without distress.

Whenever an individual has been rendered powerless by another, feelings of humiliation, injured pride, and rage develop. Victims sometimes feel that society has let them down by not protecting them or their property.

They want someone to comfort them who genuinely cares.

Part of the problem stems from the occupationally-bred scepticism of police. Police learn to classify people quickly on the basis of a few external clues. They meet many assault victims who were simply losers in a fight they helped provoke — they see battered wives who return repeatedly. Good police officers tend to be sceptics — some become cynics. Cynical officers find it difficult to show compassion.

Ed Murphy, a highly respected U.S. police authority, says: "The individual police officer is the one who is right there after the crime occurs. He observes the trauma and wants to be helpful. But the system does not reward him for being compassionate."

Another American, Heaphy, states: "There is great pressure on the officer to finish with one call and attend another, the system has problems with an officer who spends thirty minutes calming down a victim."

But crime victims understand little of this. They want prompt, empathetic officers, and, importantly, sensitive and non-judgemental investigations.

# Why Do Kids Steal Cars?

**Mr Ross Lay**  
**Acting Regional Director**  
**N.S.W. Probation and Parole Service**

Among those convicted of car theft, young offenders are grossly over-represented. No stereotyped car thief can be distilled from the available evidence, but there is a significant correlation between the age of offenders, their socio-economic circumstances and the length of time they assume ownership of a stolen vehicle.

Factors such as the pursuit of excitement, risks, mobility and status are indicated as explanations for car theft. Offenders from more marginal social and economic circumstances are well represented among those convicted. However, we know more about young car thieves because more of them are caught. Our knowledge of the full range of car thieves is very incomplete. Fewer cars may be stolen if legal behaviour can provide greater social rewards than illegal.

The motor car is the great symbol and indicator of development in the twentieth century. Motor cars are astonishingly powerful in dictating the disbursement of taxes, the need for status, and a focus for crime.

Car theft is a crime of remarkable proximity to each of us. Its impact can range from the temporary inconvenience of being relieved of a car, to tragedy, as when a friend of mine was killed when a stolen car ploughed into the taxi in which he was a passenger.

A few months ago the NRM's journal "The Open Road" had a delightful article written by TV sports commentator Mike Gibson who, following the theft of his flash sports car, chose an aging replacement vehicle that would hold no appeal to even the most indiscriminating thief. It is probably this anecdotal "evidence" that leads to the creation of car thief stereotypes and the dangerous practice of scapegoating when it comes to finding solutions to the problem. We know that kids steal cars; there is abundant evidence of this. But it's kids who are most likely to get caught. We can only get an offender profile from those who are caught. We know very little of the characteristics of the undetected, presumably skilled, highly organised, professional and even syndicated car thief.

Despite the extraordinary cost of car theft to the community generally, and the motorist in particular, there is a dearth of material on the subject. There is any amount of research and literature available on sex offenders, murderers, shoplifting, corporate and computer crime, and the like, but strangely little on car theft.

## THE SEARCH FOR EXPLANATIONS

It is quite reasonable to ask as to why people steal cars. It also seems reasonable to ask why don't more people steal cars more often! Although programmes like the ABC's "The Dingo Principal" are rather unkind towards sociologists, we must expand our understanding of social behaviour. While the behavioural sciences are getting better at researching social behaviour, it is the modification of social behaviour (in this instance lowering the incidence of car theft), where we remain short of answers and success.

Some of the problems in understanding the issues have been due to the disparity between criminological research on the one hand and police reports in the other. In brief, the research (almost exclusively U.S.) on car theft up until the late 1970s suggested that offenders were concentrated among the socially advantaged, middle-class youth. The police proposed the opposite. Juveniles however are disproportionately over-represented among convicted car thieves.

Dostoevsky reminded his readers 120 years ago that no behaviour can be explained in terms of a single motive. By suggesting that the problem of kids and car theft is a multi-factorial matter, I am not sounding a retreat to the safe position of generalisation that fogs focus and explanation. There are many dimensions to this behaviour.

Before looking at a typology of car theft, an analysis of the micro and macro influences on social behaviour in relation to car theft is warranted.

### MICRO FACTORS

In the issue of the Bulletin Magazine of 14 April 1987, there was a four-page article on Endeavour House, the maximum security juvenile institution at Tamworth in the north of N.S.W. Four inmates profiled each had a record for car theft, despite being in custody for more serious offences. My professional responsibilities at this institution have revealed some extraordinary insights into car theft. One young man exhibited an unbroken cycle of car thefts despite his family purchasing a very potent and appealing car for him. There are many more like him. Car theft cannot be explained simply in terms of the need for transport.

When probation and parole officers prepare pre-sentence reports for judges and magistrates on car thieves, one of the most frequently advanced explanations for their behaviour is what might be called "thrill factor". Clearly, life needs to offer experiences that transcend normality. Such experiences may include drinking fine wine, hang-gliding, trekking in the Himalayas or even driving a fast car. They all offer thrill satisfaction.

Yet, if life is locked in by limited resources and choices, the enticement of excitement and the attraction of autonomous behaviour are compelling, even controlling forces in the behaviour that follows.

Consider a young man known to me. He has no great regard for society or for himself. He obtains no significant buzz from any lawful interest or pursuit. He stole cars for appeal and pace. The charge sheets read that he had stolen a Porsche, a Rover 3500, HDT Commodore, fuel injected Peugeot and a BMW and two less exotic vehicles. Once the vehicle had been selected and stolen, he and his apprentice passengers would drive around and seek out a police car to intimidate into a chase. For a brief period the thrill needs were satisfied. In their case a classy car provided temporary status, the wheels provided unfettered autonomy, and the chase provided transitory excitement. Unlawful behaviour is perceived as the only means to the required level of excitement and satisfaction.

Another young offender spoke of the theft of a car from the driveway of a Sydney home. The parting of venetian blinds by the owner signalled his approach had been discovered, but the Commodore had been entered, started and reversed out of the driveway by the time the owner came down the front steps. The story was told with great glee. It was inevitable he would do it again — and he has.

In the micro factor scenario, potential offenders are only likely to be distracted from car stealing if the thrill element is satisfied by some other means. Behavioural change, in this context, can only be realistically expected if the psychological pay-off for new behaviour (i.e. not stealing cars) exceeds the psychological rewards gained by stealing cars. As you can see, the behavioural sciences are not bad at explaining social behaviour; promoting the desired change is another thing altogether.

### MACRO FACTORS

It also seems reasonable to try and interpret car theft in a sociological context as well as psychological. When we ask why kids steal cars, we start to get closer to explanations when we find that nearly all recent research on this subject confirms that about two thirds of car thieves are under 18 years of age, and two thirds of the same population come from low income families.

You are familiar with the concepts of marginality and alienation. Apart from the role of socialisation in regulating behaviour, choices are profoundly influenced by the potential for gain to exceed the potential costs. If you have no job, no mortgage, no superannuation, no good reputation, no marketable skills and no future, then it may be that there is nothing to lose, and a fair bit to gain from a little bit of car theft. If arrest does follow, the only cost may be a brief interruption to independence in gaol.

It is well established in the literature that antisocial behaviour (i.e. no respect for society) correlates with a low self-esteem. If the body of socially and economically marginal people swells as fewer people are needed to maintain a productive society, then cars, among other things, will continue to be the targets for the acting out of perceived marginality.

In this scenario, kids may steal fewer cars if those who live on the social and economic margins of society are not too distant from its centre. Social polarisation translates into a substantial cost to the total community.

The image of the car portrayed on television programmes, advertisements and motor sport suggests that we are seeing a revival of animism (the assignment of life to inanimate objects). Motor vehicles are ascribed personalities and powers, characters and capabilities that we don't normally associate with a bit of machinery. Cars can transcend the laws of physics; they can accelerate social and class mobility; they can propel their owners (and thieves) to the dizzy heights of underserved status. Once behind the wheel of a car, many people are highly vulnerable to change. We can be sure that this seducing image of cars is a powerful factor in attracting those without them to make some unlawful use of them.

### A TYPOLOGY OF CAR THIEVES

From the available literature and research it seems reasonable to hypothesise that there is a correlation between the age of the offender, the socio-economic circumstances of the offender, and the period of time the offender assumes ownership of the stolen car. That is, the younger the offender, the shorter the period of utilisation of the stolen vehicle.

This typology proposes at least five identifiable offender groups in car theft.

#### **1. Joyriding**

Without doubt the majority of car thefts are in this league, with young offenders comprising the majority of perpetrators. The journey may have been brief, but the car may well have its life extinguished at the end of the sortie. The joyride could be complete even before the vehicle is reported stolen. The chances of detection are not great.

#### **2. Short Term Transportation**

Cars stolen at one location frequently turn up at a distant location once their job is done. A car stolen in Tamworth the other night; it had fuel to reach Singleton. The thieves then stole another vehicle in Singleton to complete the journey to Sydney. This is not an uncommon scenario.

A N.S.W. Local Court once heard a young man explain that he stole a car because he needed transport to report to his parole officer!

#### **3. Long Term Transportation.**

The research has not isolated the characteristics of these offenders, but we know that many cars are stolen, disguised and maintained by the thief. These cars would be tailored to blend in with the thief's socio-economic circumstances so as to not arouse suspicion.

#### **4. For Profit**

One hundred years ago young Sidney Kidman set out from Adelaide reputedly with the motto — "leave your cheque book at home, keep your branding iron hot!" As Kidman

allegedly gleaned cattle for profit, we know that many of the cars that disappear, never to reappear are consumed by a highly profitable industry. While we know that this eschelon of car thieves are skilled and organised, it is doubtful whether young offenders are significantly represented among them. Once again it is important to affirm that we only know the characteristics of offenders who get caught. The "for profit" car thieves are not readily detected.

#### **5. To Commit Another Crime.**

Reports suggest that the majority of robberies are effected by offenders who have stolen a car to effect the crime. Generally they are not kids. Most escapes from custody though are facilitated by the theft of a car.

Finally, we don't have research figures for horse theft prior to the motor car revolution, but the references to horse theft in stories and poems suggest this typology fits either the theft of four legs or four wheels. Because we can only work from the knowledge base provided by caught offenders, there are substantial gaps in our understanding of the characteristics of the total spectrum of car thieves and the reasons cars are stolen.

No offender serves a life sentence for car theft. All persons convicted of car theft are released either from courts or from prisons back to the society they have offended. The Probation and Parole Service is in business to work with such people. Commonly they are kids and young offenders, and our endeavours are directed towards identifying new social and emotional experiences that provide a greater pay-off for them than car theft. It is no easy task, but it is a public service that does impact on the problems of kids stealing cars.

## **References**

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## Closing Comments

### Prof. Ron Clark

The thing that has struck me quite forcibly is that, in the long run the most useful approach to the theft problem is through design and manufacture of vehicles. I think that in the long run that is the most useful thing that we can do. If you remember, I quoted a figure that said that something like 30 per cent of all crime reported in the British Crime Survey was related to cars — either vandalism, theft of the car or theft of things from the car. There is an enormous amount of crime related to cars. It seems to me that we really have to, as a society, get a grip on that fact. And I think we have to look to the motor vehicle manufacturers primarily to address the problem; and I think there were some very interesting signs here today that they are beginning to do so. However, that is a long-term solution. It is something that will have to be continually worked on. We may not see any immediate reduction in car theft figures after going down that road, so the question I've been asking myself: is there anything that we really should be doing right now that might impact the theft problem, that might effect it really dramatically? I really don't know the answer to that question but I think that if there is anything we can do, it's probably in the area of vehicle registration, vehicle titling as they call it in the United States, probably also to do with insurance practices relating to much more tight regulations in relation to fraudulent claims — maybe some legislation concerning the operation of crash repair facilities. That kind of approach may bring us rewards quite quickly. If there's one area of work that I would like to see pursued very energetically right away, that's the area I would go for.

### Mr David Biles

Probably the message we've all got from this experience is that even the apparently narrow crime area of car theft is not a simple matter. It's extraordinarily complex and the offenders and the victims are, themselves, extraordinarily complex, have different motivations, and different solutions are needed.

The complexity of the problem was brought home to me many years ago when I was doing some research on car theft in Melbourne. First of all, about offenders: as part of a project I interviewed a group of about 10 or a dozen youngsters, who were all in a juvenile detention institution for stealing cars. I was running a group interview, getting their views and testing their views against each other. I was very interested to explore the notion of "probability of detection". At that stage in Victoria, the clear-up rate was about 12 per cent for motor vehicle theft and, therefore, all things being equal, if you were in gaol for car theft, if you had stolen one car you had probably stolen at least seven or eight others. I explained what I wanted to test and said to these young men, who ranged between 14 and 17: "I want you to tell me how many cars you have stolen and how many times you have been picked up?" Going around the group, the first few met my hypothesis very well: things like "Yeah, well, I've been picked up three times and overall, yeah I guess it's about 20 to 25 cars that I've stolen, that's about right". And then the next two fellows really rocked me. One of them said, "Well, to tell you the truth I've stolen more than 100 and I've only once, this time only, been picked up". But the last one, a young kid, with red hair and big glasses, said: "Honestly, honestly mister, I've stolen four cars in my whole life and I've been picked up every time." And I said, "Son, you'd better try something else!"

The issue of variability was brought home by another aspect of that research, and that was the question of victims. For a three month period, with the full co-operation of the Victoria Police, I contacted as many victims of crime as I could. In fact every 10th person who was recorded in Victoria as having had a car stolen for a three month period got a letter from me, and a one-page questionnaire which asked where was the car, was it damaged, how much did it cost you and, this was the critical one, what do you think should happen to the person who stole your car?

As expected, a significant group expressed anger. About half of them were very angry and said things like "chop off their hands, put them in gaol and throw the key away". They were very angry, traumatised people, and they just wanted vengeance. But remarkably, an equal group didn't say things like that at all. They said: "When my car came back it had a scratch on it and it cost me 50 bucks — I want that person to pay me that 50 bucks — I don't want to go to an insurance company". Or: "I didn't have my car for three days — I had to hire a car — I had to use taxis — that cost me . . . so and so." And by the way, the average cost was about \$150. That was all it cost these people — the inconvenience and so on. Most of the offenders were obviously recreational users. But the plea that came across from the victims was for something like civil law remedy, a compensation, the reparation from the offender to the victim, rather than an expression of vengeance. And I think that illustrates the variability on that side of the equation as well.