



National Motor Vehicle
Theft Reduction Council

AUSTRALIAN VEHICLE CRIME CONFERENCE 2017

Post Conference Communique
and Outcomes Summary



Introduction

The following notes summarise the program content and outcomes of the Australian Vehicle Crime Conference hosted by the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council in conjunction with Victoria Police and the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators in Melbourne on 4-5 April 2017.

The AVCC was proudly sponsored by RACV.

The conference brought together more than 240 representatives from policing and law enforcement, crime prevention, academia, general insurance, motor trades, local government and community sectors to review current national and local strategic and operational responses to vehicle crime.

The conference program was divided into three distinct themes of diverting young offenders, disrupting the vehicle laundering and separated parts markets and building stakeholder capacity/ promoting innovation. The full program and most speakers' presentations can be viewed or downloaded at <https://carsafe.com.au/conference>.¹

Select presentations on the key themes and issues were complemented with expert panel sessions in which conference participants were able to pose questions to one or all of the sessional presenters.

The key presentation points are summarised below together with a brief assessment from the NMVTRC about what it sees as the implications for its forward work program or the work of others.

1. The presentations by Messrs Shelton (The Future of Vehicle Identity) and Bielecke (Insurance Industry Response to Motor Fraud) have not been reproduced at their request.

Background

Following sustained reductions for more than a decade, many parts of Australia are now experiencing rapid increases in vehicle related crime. Much of this increase has been associated with an unprecedented level of violence and reckless driving behaviour. Widely publicised aggravated home invasions, violent road incidents and armed robberies, often committed by repeat young offenders, are causing considerable community anxiety.

The insurance industry is experiencing significant increases in claims costs due to the loss and damage of higher value vehicles and the emergence of sophisticated frauds utilising accident and repair scams.

Responding to these emerging dynamics in vehicle crime presents significant policy and operational challenges for governments, police services, the justice system and the private sector.

Theme 1: Responding to Youth Crime

Context

On any day there are around 1,000 young people held in juvenile detention nationally and a very high proportion of them are as a result of motor vehicle offences. Detention is costly – keeping a young person in secure care costs more than \$440,000 a year – and its impact on post-release re-offending is open to debate.

The perception is that offenders are often returned to the community without the skills or support required to stay away from crime. But exactly how does the system work and what are the viable alternatives?

Responding to the Challenge of Increasing Vehicle Crime

Assistant Commissioner Bob Hill APM, Victoria Police

Despite long term reductions in crime over a number of years, Victoria has more recently experienced an increase in the incidence and prevalence of vehicle-related theft. Changes in the manner of offending – and resultant community concern – have prompted Victoria Police (VP) to review its approach to crime of this nature and to develop a more effective response to the current and future challenges it presents.

Mr Hill outlined the increases in 'theft of' and 'theft from' vehicle offences since 2015 which:

- show sustained increases of more than 20 per cent in both categories, compared with all burglary offences which rose by around 10 per cent;
- represent the highest theft rates for 10 years and placed the state of the top of the national 'league table' for related offences for the first time; and
- dominate total crime data in Victoria.

He emphasised that theft dynamics had also changed with:

- the predominant group of offenders aged 15-25;
- an escalation in the propensity for violence in the form of aggravated burglaries and violent on-road incidents leading to considerable community anxiety;
- the growth of 'networked offending' with greater information sharing and engagement between offender groups;
- fewer offenders committing more frequent and serious crimes – in some cases in conjunction with 'Fagan' like adult co-conspirators;
- an increase in reckless driving behaviour using stolen vehicles as weapons in ram raids on commercial premises and deliberate collisions with police vehicles.

Mr Hill explained that VP Executive Command accepted that the propensity for violence in related crimes and the reckless driving behaviour of some offenders had impacted negatively on the public's perception of community safety. He explained that VP had responded to the problem by:

- allocating 'force-wide portfolio responsibility' to him;
- conducting a formal review of the organisation's related systems, practices, processes and intelligence products; and
- the development of a range of legislative responses in respect of aggravated burglary and 'car-jacking' offences, youth bail provisions and scrap metal dealing.

The resulting Vehicle Theft Reduction Plan (VTRP) endorsed by Executive Command in February this year, is based around the key pillars of establishing best practice, stakeholder engagement, communications and research and has also seen important changes in respect of the:

- restructuring of local vehicle crime teams;
- development of a new recidivist offender management model;
- conduct of crime scene investigations;
- acquittal of forensic identification files and warrants; and
- bail compliance.

A sharper focus on stakeholder engagement has also seen the establishment of frequent, senior level liaison with key government departments (human services, justice, roads, local government), the judiciary, the business sector (insurers, the motor trades, master builders) and specialist not-for-profit crime prevention organisations (Crimestoppers, NMVTRC) to identify areas of common interest and coordinate joint activity.

Theme 1: Responding to Youth Crime continued

A Multi-agency Approach to Managing Young Offenders

Detective Chief Inspector Paul Betts, West Midlands Police (United Kingdom)

Police and youth justice workers are at the front line of youth related crime and understand that the life experiences and pathways that lead to serious youth offending are complicated and challenging to address. Intervention and service delivery is often characterised as being hampered by a lack of client centric cooperation between multiple agencies.

In the early 2000s the United Kingdom introduced a coordinated multi-agency approach to the delivery of youth justice services across local health, social care and justice agencies. Expectations for this 'new' model for managing persistent, serious offenders in the community were high but what have been the results a decade later?

West Midlands Police in the United Kingdom has been recognised by the Home Office as applying exemplar practice in the way it manages youth crime and justice.

Mr Betts explained that the United Kingdom's Crime and Disorder Act (1998) set the foundation for the better coordination of local youth justice responses across England and Wales by requiring relevant agencies to actively collaborate via the establishment of Youth Offending Teams (YOT) under the auspices of the local authority (or municipal government in the Australian context.) The model allows for a variety of service delivery options ranging from traditional colocated or integrated services, to the formation of charitable trusts and commissioned services.

The three key performance indicators set for all YOT's are to reduce first time entrants to the juvenile justice system (JJS), the use of custody and re-offending rates.

YOT work with young people (and the families of young people) that get into trouble with the law to try to help them stay away from crime. They also:

- publish annual action plans to reduce local youth offending;
- run local crime prevention programmes;
- supervise young people serving community sentences; and
- stay in touch with a young person if he or she is sentenced to custody.

Mr Betts demonstrated that the YOT approach has been phenomenally successful over the course of the last decade with:

- the number of first time entrants to the JJS falling from more than 110,000 in 2007 to around 10,000 in 2015; and
- custody rates for under 18s falling from around 3,000 per annum to around 1,000.

More information is available from www.gov.uk/government/collections/youth-justice-statistics.

Despite the system's successes Mr Betts emphasised that a number of significant and stubborn challenges remain, including:

- smaller but more complex cohorts of high-rate offenders;
- the continued over-representation of socio-economically disadvantaged groups including black and Asian minorities and 'looked after' children, i.e. those who have been housed under state care programs;
- the high rate of neurodevelopmental impairment amongst those in custody with:
 - up to one in three suffering from a learning disability compared to one in 20 amongst the general population;
 - clear links between specific cognitive and socioemotional impairments and certain types of aggressive or antisocial behaviour in particular social contexts and situations;
- a proliferation of re-offending in young adults aged 18-24.

Mr Betts indicated that the above suggests that the commitment to continuous improvement and innovation needs to be maintained across each of the key areas of:

- early intervention and prevention practice;
- juvenile justice, police, courts and prisons; and
- resettlement.

Despite these challenges, Mr Betts said recent evaluations confirmed that every pound invested in related programs saves at least two in re-offending alone.

Diverting Young Offenders

Dr Monica Thielking, Department of Psychological Sciences, Swinburne University of Technology

In 2015 Dr Thielking led an evaluation of the Synergy Automotive Repairs program which is a diversionary social enterprise run by Mission Australia, in partnership with the Suncorp Group and the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council for young people involved in motor vehicle offending.

The results revealed many positive outcomes for participants and provided insight into the backgrounds and needs of young people involved in motor vehicle offending and the key ingredients needed for implementing such programs. Since then, Victoria has experienced a significant increase in vehicle-related aggravated burglaries and violent on-road incidents leading to considerable community anxiety. Many of these offences are being committed by recidivist juvenile offenders.

The reasons behind why violence is being used in vehicle related offences is not fully understood by those seeking to support young people from engaging in further offending behaviours and to prevent such offences from occurring in the first place.

Dr Thielking discussed the key findings of the Synergy Evaluation and outlined the core components of her current project Understanding Youth Offenders' Motivations to Commit Violent Motor Vehicle Theft in Victoria and how these studies may contribute to designing useful interventions for addressing the issue.

In the face of extensive media reporting of recent aggravated burglaries, violent assaults and so called car-jackings often attributed to youth gangs Dr Thielking posed the question: Do we need to be scared of young people?

She explained that Australian Bureau of Statistics data on youth offenders proceeded against by police in 2015/16 indicated that:

- after accounting for population growth, the number of youth offenders had decreased slightly (by < 1 per cent) since the beginning of the ABS time series in 2008;
- youth offenders comprised 13 per cent of the total offender population;

- the predominant principal offence committed by youth offenders was theft, which comprised 35 per cent of all youth offenders – with around half of those offences associated with public transport fare evasion;
- the second most prevalent principal offence comprised acts intended to cause injury (15 per cent), followed by illicit drug offences (11 per cent);
- the highest youth offender rate for any single year of age was for the principal offence of theft for offenders aged 16 years.

Overall, she said the data showed that youth offending across most offence categories had fallen since 2008 with the exception of illicit drug offences (up 49 per cent) and sexual assault (and related offences) (up 52 per cent – mainly due to non-assaultive sexual offences).

In respect of vehicle crime in Victoria, Dr Thielking said that Crime Statistics Agency data indicated that there were 81 fewer thefts committed by youth offenders (aged up to 18 years) in 2016 compared to 2015, but were up by 55 per cent on 2013 levels.

Dr Thielking indicated that while the data showed the overwhelming volume of violent vehicle related crime was committed by young people born in Australia (80 per cent in 2016), Sudanese-born youths were vastly over-represented: accounting for more than 5 per cent of car thefts, 7 per cent of alleged home invasions and 14 per cent of aggravated burglaries.

She said a complex mix of personal and environmental influences often combined to drive an individual's propensity for offending including academic failure and educational disengagement, social disadvantage, domestic violence and family separation, homelessness, negative peer influences and substance abuse.

Dr Thielking explained that research had shown designing effective interventions revolved around three key principles:

1. **Risk** – matching the intensity of intervention to the risk level of the offender;
2. **Need** – targeting risk factors associated with re-offending;
3. **Responsivity** – adapting the intervention to the individual learning styles and characteristics of the offender.

Theme 1: Responding to Youth Crime continued

Case Study: Synergy Repairs

Dr Thielking used her 2015 evaluation of Synergy Repairs as a case study of a best practice intervention. Synergy is a unique partnership between Mission Australia (service operator), the Suncorp Group (commercial partner) and the NMVTRC (foundation partner) to deliver technical training and work experience for offenders aged 16-20 with a view to them securing full-time employment in the repair sector.

All work is supervised by an experienced, trade-qualified workshop manager and two full-time spray painters and panel-beaters and must meet the same quality standards of other Suncorp repairers.

Dr Thielking said that in her assessment Synergy met all the elements of an effective intervention and had delivered in terms of curtailing recidivism, imparting life skills and providing employment pathways.

More information on Dr Thinking's evaluation can be downloaded from— https://carsafe.com.au/assets/Synergy_Evaluation_Report_Final__3May2016.pdf

New Research: Insights into Contemporary Young Offender Behaviour in Victoria

Dr Thielking outlined the proposed approach underpinning new research for the NMVTRC and Victoria Police to better understand the factors that have led to the propensity for violence amongst the current cohort of young offenders in Victoria. She explained that the project will explore:

- commonalities in the self-reported life trajectories of young people who have been convicted of violent car crime;
- their self-reported attitudes toward self and others (i.e. peers, community, and Australian society);
- reasons for the use of violence in their offending and their perceptions of and attitudes toward the victim in their most violent incident; and
- potential drivers and barriers to transitioning to a positive change and a better future.

Dr Thielking indicated that the proposed approach is to conduct in-depth interviews with young people currently serving a sentence related to a violent motor vehicle theft. Interviews will be based on a qualitative non-structured approach to develop an in-depth understanding of participants and how they interpret themselves and others. A series of vignettes involving violent and non-violent vehicle crime incidents will be used as a less confronting way of eliciting responses. Participants will also be asked about the factors that they believe contribute to positive change.

The intended outcomes of the work will be to:

1. More fully understand the motivations and factors that contribute to violent motor vehicle crime.
2. Identify the needs of young people who engage in related crime to inform interventions that aim to reduce re-offending.
3. Produce a set of recommendations for government and community agencies that seek to prevent youth motor vehicle crime and enhance community safety.

The Changing Nature of Youth Offending

Assistant Commissioner Stephen Leane, Victoria Police

Against an ongoing trend of fewer under 18s committing crime, a smaller cohort is rapidly accelerating into serious and violent offending. This includes a growing trend toward 'networked offending', with young people moving in and out of loosely organised groups for the purposes of offending. Mr Leane has 'force-wide portfolio responsibility' for youth issues.

Mr Leane outlined how VP is responding to these challenges and the opportunities for dealing with youth offending into the future. He explained that:

- while Victorian children are underrepresented as offenders generally (and the number offending continues to reduce) a small group is rapidly escalating into serious crime at young ages;
- there had been an increase in loosely associated individuals coming together for the purpose of offending, in contrast to organised 'gangs' with stable membership;
- young people were over-represented as offenders for robbery, burglary, theft, sexual and transport offences;
- vehicle and other property crimes were increasingly being facilitated by violence; and
- public order issues at major events (Moomba 2016 riots, New Year's Eve and White Night 2017) and youth justice facility riots had presented police and other agencies with very challenging environments.

He said that a number of emerging trends were already evident, including:

- the growth of social media as an enabler to coordinating group activities;
- a 'performative' motivation for offending with photos and videos of related behaviour shared on social media;
- heightened levels of risk taking/ thrill seeking behaviour;
- a greater propensity for violence even when victims are cooperating;
- a weakened deterrence effect of custody and other penalties; and
- the predatory recruitment of young people by organised crime groups.

Mr Leane indicated that research showed that many young people in juvenile justice detention facilities faced common challenges with more than:

- 6 in 10 having:
 - a history of both alcohol and drug misuse;
 - been subject to a current or previous child protection order;
 - been victims of abuse, trauma or neglect;
 - previously been suspended or expelled from school; and
 - three in 10 presenting with mental health issues.

He observed that while some of these factors cannot be changed (historical abuse, neglect and family factors) others provide opportunity for intervention (substance abuse, mental health, education exclusion).

Mr Leane explained that VP was pursuing a multi-stream approach to intervention spanning:

- prevention strategies (community engagement, child abuse reporting, specialist services referrals, prosecuting adult offenders who offend against children);
- early intervention actions (cautioning and diversion, referral to specialist programs and services); and
- traditional enforcement (charge, summons, bail, remand, prosecution).

He said the approach was based on a combination of publically visible operational actions (holding young people to account while working with families) and behind the scenes strategic actions (consulting young people, bringing together sectors and government, influencing reform and capability building in communities).

Mr Leane indicated that VP had attempted to engage young people on the issue via its Youth Voices Forum and the Chief Commissioner's *Youth Summit*.

The former was hosted by the Salvation Army (without police present) and specialist facilitators with thirty at risk young people. The group reported stress, financial hardship, discrimination, difficulty negotiating services and under employment as contributing to a feeling of being 'locked out' of the wider community.

The Youth Summit involved 200 representatives from government, NGOs, academics and young people, including some who had participated in the Voices Forum. Mr Leane said that the Victorian Premier was committed to putting recommendations arising from the Summit to the Cabinet for consideration.

Mr Leane outlined that there had already been a number of changes to the State's youth justice management and other settings, including:

- the government's Community Safety Statement which proposes:
 - more than 2,700 new police officers
 - the introduction of 42 'youth specialist' police;
 - the extension of the Youth Justice Bail Supervision Scheme across the State;
 - an Intensive Monitoring and Control Bail Supervision Scheme;
 - expanding the Central After Hours and Bail Placement Service to 24/7 operation;
 - the provision for courts to issue Youth Control Orders;
 - prior notification to VP by the Youth Parole Board of impending releases of previous violent offenders;
 - increasing the maximum period of youth detention to four years;
 - the creation of an offence of 'procuring young people to commit offences' – the so called Fagan's law;

Theme 1: Responding to Youth Crime continued

- the Children’s Court give particular consideration to community safety when sentencing young people who have committed serious violent crimes and have previous convictions for similar offences;
 - clarification of Children’s Court matters to be heard in the higher courts;
 - arrangements for the same magistrate oversees all proceedings relating to a young offender;
 - provision for Youth Crime Prevention grants in the order of \$10 million; and
 - maintenance of the ‘Kopkoda’ program to improve relations between police and disengaged youth.
- sector policy reform, such as:
 - the transfer of youth justice management from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to the Department of Justice and Regulation (Corrections Victoria);
 - a broader review of the overarching policy framework for the development of a contemporary youth justice program and accompanying service delivery model;
 - a review of existing youth justice facilities and the building of a new, secure youth justice centre;
 - service delivery initiatives in respect of:
 - the Children’s Court Youth Diversion Service in all Children’s Courts across Victoria (post-charge, pre plea);
 - expansion of Children and Youth Area Partnerships to more effectively join-up social services to support vulnerable children and young people; and
 - Governance reforms via the Children’s Services Coordination Board, Victorian Secretaries’ Board and the DHHS/VP Relationship Governance Committee.

Mr Leane said that the key issues to address the current deficiencies were:

- reconnecting disadvantaged young people to education, training and employment opportunities;
- ensuring support services can address vulnerabilities (e.g. mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, housing); and
- further building community capability.

He added that a current parliamentary inquiry by the Legal and Social Issues Committee was likely to make further recommendations for reform.

Synergy Repairs: Restoring Young Lives and Cars Troy Crellin, Mission Australia

Mission Australia has developed considerable expertise in the design and operation of self-funding social enterprises that operate as a commercial business with incomes re-invested to train participants who require additional support above and beyond that which is available in traditional vocational training programs.

In an Australian first Mission Australia, the NMVTRC and the Suncorp Group have entered into a partnership to establish Synergy Repairs, an automotive skills training program based in North Melbourne. Young offenders aged 16-20 have the chance to turn their lives around and secure full-time employment in the repair sector.

All work is supervised by an experienced, trade-qualified workshop manager and two full-time spray painters and panel-beaters and must meet the same quality standards of other Suncorp repairers.

Mr Crellin said that in an environment of high recidivism in youth offending cohorts (with up to 60 per cent of offenders reoffending in the five years to 2015 (Youth Parole Board 2016)) and high levels of youth unemployment, Synergy-type programs can play a vital role in breaking the cycle. He explained that the collision repair sector was also facing a critical skills shortage as a result of generational change within the industry and the challenges of recruiting school leavers who are choosing non-technical career paths.

Mr Crellin explained that in addition to the formal education and training components, Synergy also focuses on building participant life skills and personal development, setting it apart from other juvenile offending diversion programs. Synergy's Student Support Officer (SSO) provides participants with practical support for issues that range from providing housing assistance or court support, and talking with them about problematic drug and alcohol use. The SSO also ensures that participants meet their mandated justice obligations and medical appointments etc. Synergy can accommodate up to 8 trainees at a time via referrals from MA itself, Victoria Police or Juvenile Corrections. Participants continue to receive support and mentoring for two years post-graduation.

Mr Crellin indicated that after two years, participant attendance rates remained strong at 70 per cent. For the most recently completed group of trainees – six successfully completed their TAFE learning outcomes, two have commenced workplace experience placements, one has commenced an allied trade apprenticeship with BMW Australia and one had commenced an apprenticeship with a Suncorp repairer. Highlighting the challenges Mr Crellin said that one participant returned to custody after a further offending incident.

An independent evaluation by an expert in youth mental health and well-being, Dr Monica Thielking, (May 2016) confirmed its effectiveness in curtailing recidivism, imparting life skills and providing employment pathways.

Post conference update: Synergy Repairs was awarded IAATI's 2017 President's Award for the outstanding contribution by an individual or a team in the reduction or deterrence of motor vehicle theft in Australia at the Association's dinner on 5 April.

What Do the Sessional Speaker's Messages Mean for the NMVTRC's Forward Program and Others?

For Victoria, the NMVTRC has already been collaborating closely with VP Since late 2016 on a raft of joint projects in relation to:

- gaining clearer insights into the incidence of violence by young vehicle crime offenders;*
- supporting VP in its implementation of a new recidivist offender management model;
- aligning the intake and referral practices for its joint venture young offender program (with Mission Australia and the Suncorp Group) Synergy Repairs, with the VP model;
- expanding the use of NMVTRC's suite of expert analytics systems at the Police Service Area level;*
- tactically deploying low-cost vehicle theft alert and tracking technology in select theft hot spots;
- the re-introduction of the Operation Bounce Back local government grants program around *Car Security Begins at Home* and *Australia's Most Wanted* resources;* and
- the reform of scrap metal and vehicle parts sector to close off gaps being exploited by profit-motivated thieves.*

*Reform also operating in or learnings applicable to other jurisdictions.

There are some common elements between the United Kingdom's Youth Justice Board's approach to the coordination of youth justice and related services and the youth reforms announced by the Victorian Government (as outlined above by Assistant Commissioner Leane).

The clear evidence of the United Kingdom's success in reducing first time entrants and custody levels suggests such an approach should yield similar results if properly resourced. The NMVTRC will look to encourage relevant agencies in all jurisdictions to move toward formal collaborative mechanisms (and away from the reliance on ad-hoc localised operational cooperation) to better deliver youth justice services.

Theme 2: Disrupting the Vehicle Laundering and Separated Parts Markets

Context

As whole vehicle laundering has become almost impossible to execute without detection, the dismantling or stripping of major components has become increasingly more attractive and less risky for car criminals. Criminal networks are also now more likely to dispose of the stripped shell by crushing or shredding rather than simply abandoning it.

Gaps and anomalies in the way the separated parts and scrap metal markets have been traditionally regulated across Australia have allowed criminal 'theft for scrap' rackets to flourish with little risk of detection.

Reforming the Scrap Metal Trade in New South Wales

Detective Superintendent Murray Chapman, New South Wales Police Force

In 2016, New South Wales Police (NSWP) convinced the state government to introduce Australian-first crime prevention laws aimed at curbing the illicit trade in scrap metal, and end-of-life vehicles in particular. The Scrap Metal Industry Act, which commenced operation in New South Wales in March 2017 requires persons dealing in scrap metal to register with NSWP, bans cash transactions and imposes a range of obligations on participants to maintain certain records and report suspicious activity.

Mr Chapman contrasted the new approach to disrupt the illicit 'cash for scrap' trade with the traditional long tail investigations which were extremely resource intensive, time consuming and often had little impact on the stolen/ not recovered (SNR) volumes. He added that in New South Wales (like most parts of the country) more than four in 10 SNRs were valued at less than \$5,000, with a further quarter valued in the range of \$5,001-10,000.

He explained that following an internal review in 2015, NSWP had committed to 16 key strategies including:

- less focus on long term 're-birthing' investigations;
- greater focus on providing support, better analytical tools (including use of the NMVTRC's Expert Data Service), training and ongoing advice to local area commands (LACs) that have a developing SNR problem;
- ensuring they have strong powers under express criminal laws or business regulation laws in respect of entering premises, searching and inspection, production of records, etc.;
- more focus on actioning fresh intelligence on persons of interest regularly handling stolen vehicles;
- proactive business premises and compliance inspections without warrant; and
- taking an inter-agency approach with the state road agency, fair trading, environment agency and local government all involved in business inspections.

Mr Chapman presented three case studies of based on the new approach that focused on unlicensed auto recyclers. Across the three sites:

- more than:
 - 250 stolen vehicles and engines were recovered;
 - 50 persons were charged under proceeds of crime laws;
 - \$5 million in stolen property was recovered;
- numerous organised, profit-motivated groups were effectively 'dismantled'; and
- the ongoing profit-motivated theft of certain vehicle types was effectively halted.

He said that the benefits of the new model included:

- a higher capability and motivation for LACs to conduct their own operations and business premises inspections;
- immediate action taken when stolen vehicles or regulatory breaches are detected;
- shorter turnaround times with legal actions and prosecutions; and
- businesses shut down and criminal enterprises disbanded.
- Mr Chapman indicated that the change in focus had been a major contributing factor in the State's improving theft performance which had seen profit-motivated theft fall more than 15 per cent since 2015 with total thefts declining more than 6 per cent.

The most recently implemented strategy relates to the reform of the scrap metal industry to introduce a simple registration scheme expressly as a crime prevention initiative. Related activity in New South Wales had previously been exempt from business licensing and second-hand dealing laws.

He explained the key features of the registration scheme were:

- a requirement for related businesses to register with NSWP (with a small registration fee);
- a prohibition on cash transactions;
- recording keeping in respect of sellers' details, including personal identification and price paid;
- an obligation to report suspicious behaviour to NSWP;
- a prohibition on buying vehicles with no or obscured identity;
- broad powers of police entry without a warrant to search, take photographs and seize and copy records;
- flexible penalties for non-compliance including provision for short term and long term closure orders.

Theme 2: Disrupting the Vehicle Laundering and Separated Parts Markets continued

An Industry Model for the Management of End-of-Life Vehicles (ELVs)

Geoff Gwilym, Executive Director, VACC

More than 600,000 vehicles are 'retired' from the national vehicle fleet each year having reached the end of their economic, or safe operating life. The absence of formal ELV arrangements in Australia has significant business and community impacts, including:

- environmental damage via the release of hazardous gases into the atmosphere and the transfer of toxic liquids and other materials to land fill and waterways; and
- vehicle crime – with the NMVTRC estimating that related 'theft-for-scrap' rackets account for more than 25 per cent of the nation's total stolen vehicle costs.

Leading automotive parts recyclers recognise that the sector needs to improve operating standards and believe that industry lead reforms can, with appropriate government support, deliver cost-effective solutions to the problems posed by ELVs.

Mr Gwilym referred to a number of examples to illustrate the problem that the current lack of regulation of the 'cash for cars' market posed for the broader community, including the:

- impacts on local government – with one Melbourne municipality alone having to meet the cost of disposal of more than 1,500 derelict or abandoned vehicles per annum; and
- results of the NMVTRC/Victoria Police Task Force Discover (TFD) – which demonstrated the general lack of environmental and occupational safety compliance within large parts of the sector. The VACC estimates that only around one in three of the 432 business visited by TFD were legitimate vehicle recyclers.

Mr Gwilym explained that the industry had become frustrated with the lack of action from regulators and is seeking a shared solution to both remove cash-for-scrap dealings and support an industry led and government supported national system for the acquisition and decommissioning of ELVs. He said if a national solution proved too difficult to achieve, Victoria should lead the way. He indicated that based on 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics data, current ELV volumes are in the order of 800,000 nationally with around 208,000 in Victoria.

Mr Gwilym indicated that the legitimate industry could provide a credible network of Approved Treatment Facilities and should be used as a resource in the design of a better system. He said the best legitimate businesses have adopted the Motor Trades' Association of Australia's (MTAA) Green Stamp Plus accreditation, had good infrastructure in place and know how to safely process ELVs. He added that a significant generational change is occurring across the sector with 'old school' businesses that fail to grasp change predicted by the MTAA to close.

Mr Gwilym said that although there are good overseas models for government to examine there appears to be a reluctance to move on the issue. He added that:

- the costs associated with vehicle recycling and commercial viability were critical factors;
- variability in metal market prices was a key destabiliser for legitimate recyclers (and motivating factor for non-compliant backyarders);
- Australia lacked a coherent policy on the treatment of non-metallic materials which can represent up to a third of a vehicle's mass;
- the nation rates poorly internationally in respect of how we treat such waste with more than 240,000 tonnes of shredded plastics going directly to landfill each year; and
- there was a lack of industry/ government discussion about the generation of energy from waste – with some countries already filtering non-metallic waste to generate high grade recyclable materials.

He explained that despite these constraints much smaller markets such as Denmark and Belgium had been able to sustain viable auto recycling schemes.

Mr Gwilym said that industry sponsored research had indicated that it cost \$391 to decommission a vehicle in compliance with environmental standards (based on application of United Kingdom ELV processes, with slight customisation to account for local conditions). He indicated that the industry's preference was for an industry led, government supported product stewardship scheme:

- funded by the creation of an ELV Recycling Fund and Register;
- with a \$200 fee levied as part of the vehicle import tax (rather than passed on to local dealers).

He said that the levy could be designed to vary in accordance with fluctuations in the international metal market price, i.e. higher (but not to exceed \$200) when prices are low, down to zero when scrap prices exceed \$200.

Mr Gwilym explained that industry considered that all ELVs should be recorded as written-off vehicles (WOVs). He added that benefits would include:

- limiting the theft of vehicles for their scrap value and insurance fraud;
- curtailing the illegal reuse of the legitimate VINs from ELVs;
- reducing the unlicensed 'cash for cars' economy;
- preventing the unauthorised disposal of a vehicle by other than the registered operator;
- reducing the number of enterprises that handle ELVs inappropriately; and
- improving the accuracy and integrity of the national and jurisdictional vehicle registers (and annual retirement volumes).

He further indicated that the industry's recommendations for action extended to:

- urgently banning cash payments for scrap metal and better enforcement of current regulations;
- improving controls over the export of vehicles and parts, particularly to Asia, the Middle East and Africa, including the licensing of exporters;
- the robust investigation of the role of virtual markets in fencing illicitly sourced parts, i.e. Gumtree, eBay etc.;
- the harmonisation of WOV laws; and
- adoption of ELV processes based on the Japanese or United Kingdom systems.

Following the Money

Amanda Bird, Australian Taxation Office

Taxation law together with Commonwealth and state proceeds of crime legislation can be very effective tools to combat the activities of organised crime groups. The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has a long history of working closely with law enforcement agencies targeting tax evasion and financial fraud committed by organised crime figures.

Ms Bird outlined how the ATO's is working with government (internationally and domestically), law enforcement agencies and private enterprise to tackle organised crime and specifically how the ATO can assist law enforcement in motor vehicle crime investigations.

She commenced by explaining the difference between the offences of Tax Evasion (evading tax obligations, not lodging and avoiding the ATO) and Tax Fraud (manipulating the system, obtain refunds not entitled to, identity theft).

Practical Example 1

Ms Bird demonstrated how a staged vehicle collision allowed networked offenders to exploit legitimate business practices to fund other illegal activity and avoid tax. (See Practical Example 1 Presentation Slides at https://carsafe.com.au/assets/avcc2017/Amanda_Bird.pdf)

Practical Example 2

Ms Bird then outlined the case of a 52 year Gold Coast resident with outlaw motor cycle gang connections suspected of producing large volumes of methyl amphetamine to demonstrate how proceeds of crime or unexplained wealth can expose further tax obligations.

Despite declaring income averaging \$35,000 per annum, Mr X had accumulated:

- an extensive property portfolio;
- 10 cars and two motorcycles (some later reported as stolen); and
- 17 bank accounts and four credit cards.

He had also been receiving Centrelink payments.

Between 2005 and 2010, the ATO discovered \$8.37 million of undeclared income from the sale of narcotics exposing Mr X to \$3.85 million of unpaid tax (plus penalties and interest). Mr X subsequently pleaded guilty in the Supreme Court to drug offences and was ordered to forfeit cash, properties and cars to the value of \$2.4 million. He also received a Pecuniary Penalty Order for \$1.4 million.

What Do the Sessional Speaker's Messages Mean for the NMVTRC's Forward Program and Others?

The NMVTRC's assessment is that the New South Wales Scrap Metal Reforms set the benchmark for effective market reform and have the support of key industry stakeholders.

The NMVTRC's preference would be for other jurisdictions to replicate the New South Wales model in precisely the same form, i.e. as a standalone crime prevention initiative that is not burdened by the significant anomalies, gaps and sanctions deficiencies of existing second-hand trading and LMCT laws. These deficiencies are outlined clearly in the NMVTRC/Victoria Police Task Force Discover Final Report.

In the event that amending existing laws is a government's preferred option, there are also a range of definitional and sanctions/ penalties deficiencies in current regulatory systems that will render reforms ineffective if not expressly addressed. The NMVTRC's analysis of those deficiencies and proposals for modernising related laws can be found here:

<https://carsafe.com.au/assets/ModernisingRegulatoryRegimesAccompanyingNotes.pdf>.

The NMVTRC also supports the MTAA's wish to drive the modernisation of industry standards to accommodate ELVs and is working with road authorities about how the registration system might complement those efforts by placing certain obligations on the registered operator of a vehicle to ensure that it reaches an approved treatment facility.

Theme 3: Building Stakeholder and Community Capacity and Promoting Innovation

Context

The consequences of vehicle theft are felt strongly by local communities. Vehicle theft and home burglary go hand in hand – more frequently we are seeing vehicle keys being stolen via house burglary and stolen vehicles are often used to transport stolen property. Car theft often results in extensive damage to property and sometimes, tragically, in the injury or death of innocent road users.

Organised crime groups that have historically focused on stolen vehicle laundering are increasingly expanding their operations into vehicle related fraud adding tens of millions of dollars to claims costs.

The business sector, local government, crime prevention and community safety groups all perform vital roles in combating vehicle crime. The NMVTRC therefore maintains a major focus on building stakeholder capacity, community resilience and promoting innovation via new technology, communications and knowledge sharing projects.

Burglaries to Access Keys (the New Permanent State) and How Motorists Perceive Vehicle Crime

Ray Carroll, Executive Director, NMVTRC

Significant parts of the nation have been in the grip of a spike in residential burglaries to access the keys of 'secure vehicles' since mid-2013 – with vehicle keys the only property stolen in up to one in four burglaries in which a vehicle is taken.

Offenders are becoming more brazen, often prepared to enter occupied premises to quickly grab keys left in accessible spots. These changes in method along with an increase in violent in-home and on-road incidents in Victoria has led to considerable community anxiety that goes well beyond the reality of its statistical frequency. These changes in theft characteristics are the new 'permanent state.'

Understanding motorists' attitudes to vehicle crime and security is central to the development of effective communications programs in response to these trends. The NMVTRC conducts annual surveys on community perceptions, including concern about vehicle crime relative to other crimes.

Mr Carroll commenced by contrasting the prevailing characteristics of vehicle crime in Australia with that which existed in 2001. He pointed out that:

- some 46,000 cars were stolen in 2016 compared with more than 127,000 in 2001;
- in 2001 only 23 per cent of the vehicles stolen were fitted with an Australian Standards Equivalent (ASE) engine immobiliser, compared with 86 per cent in 2016;
- in 2001 ASE equipped vehicles made up just 7 per cent of all thefts, compared with 73 per cent in 2016; and
- in 2001 only around 25 per cent of thefts were associated with a residence compared with 55 per cent in 2016.

He also indicated that the NMVTRC estimated that more than 70 per cent of late model thefts were facilitated by prior access to the vehicle's key based on the analysis of thousands of local thefts and international studies.

Mr Carroll next reviewed the major communications themes and key messages typically promoted by police and others over previous decades, which can generally be categorised as the 'Look, Lock, Leave' style campaigns observing that they were no longer relevant to the prevailing theft dynamics.

He concluded by outlining the headline results of the NMVTRC's most recent national consumer perceptions survey, conducted in November 2016, which indicated that:

- awareness and concern levels are generally in line with current levels of vehicle crime in individual jurisdictions;
- the motivations of offenders and vehicle targets are generally well understood;
- the vulnerability of the home and the significance of key theft is not yet fully understood; and
- although media focus is often on the most extreme cases it is not leading to mis-conceptions.

The Power of Collaboration

Brian Negus, General Manager Public Policy, RACV

Australia's motoring clubs are arguably the most influential voices in framing public debate on road use and infrastructure policy.

Mr Negus indicated that RACV insurance data confirmed that Victoria is experiencing unprecedented increases in the rate of home burglaries and car theft and that extensive media coverage, particularly where violence is involved, has put home invasion and carjacking in the forefront of people's minds. He said that it was clear that stakeholders needed to better understand the causes and behaviours that have led to this and that the formulation of our collective response needs to be informed and relevant in a new age of crime. He also stressed the importance of:

- a concerted and sustained approach in which:
 - government agencies and industry stakeholders can work together to achieve change (i.e. working in isolation will not cut it);
 - government has a critical role in supporting a sustained program as history shows that behavioural change requires a sustained effort e.g. the introduction of mandatory wearing of seat belts, and more recently, addressing family violence; and
- a relevant, consistent and unified campaign that ensures:
 - strategic partners are seen to be saying the same thing; and
 - the optimal community impact.

Theme 3: Building Stakeholder and Community Capacity and Promoting Innovation continued

Mr Negus explained that the RACV supported a community approach to identify actions to help people to:

- protect their homes and cars; and
- encourage neighbours to be more vigilant and support each other in preventing crime.

He added that technology can help neighbours better communicate and work together.

Mr Negus said that RACV was committed to improving community well-being and resilience on behalf of its 2.1 million members and that its credible and trusted brand and proven advocacy record positioned it well to help educate and change community behaviour.

Mr Negus indicated that:

- RACV paid out more than \$12 million for vehicle theft claims in 2015 – at an average claim value of \$12K;
- many cars were stolen as result of home invasions – with aggravated burglaries soaring by 65 per cent in the last two years and 40 per cent in 2016;
- 32 per cent of offenders in aggravated burglaries entered through an unlocked door.

In respect of opportunities, Mr Negus said RACV supported the wider application of emerging home and vehicle security technologies that will allow connected vehicles to be tracked in real time and homes (and contents) made more secure via the use of digital fingerprints and traceable liquids.

He said the RACV's advice to the community is:

- be vigilant – don't be an easy target;
- share and act on local neighbourhood information;
- create local solutions for locally identified problems; and
- prevention is the best measure of defence.

In summary, Mr Negus said that reducing the rate of burglaries and car theft will only be achieved through broad strategic alliances with a sustained focus on collaboration, changing behaviour, investing in technology solutions and effective community engagement.

Optimising the Reach and Effectiveness of Collaborative Communications

Samantha Hunter, CEO, Crime Stoppers Victoria

Effective communication is essential to influencing community perceptions about crime and to encourage personal behaviours that can help mitigate risks. There are many well intentioned players, all competing for media coverage, publicity, sponsorship and cut-through to reach the vehicle owner, household or business operator.

But how can we better harness the power of collaborative and coordinated communications to rise above individual organisational positioning and focus on getting the important messages to the public?

Ms Hunter commenced with the ironic observation that it was currently both 'harder and easier' to reach the community with the rapid uptake of social media and increasingly dwindling consumption of the traditional mainstream forms of print and broadcast media, particularly in large cities.

However, she stressed that it was a case of horses for courses using Crimestoppers' successful Regional Crime Crackdown, in the Victorian regional city of Ballarat, as an example of how a hybrid approach could be effective. Based on a mix of radio (analogue and digital), local paper (print and digital), regional television and campaign partner's social media and online platforms, Crimestoppers released the names and images of the region's most wanted car thieves.

Ms Hunter indicated that the campaign resulted in:

- the arrest of twenty-two of the twenty-three offenders named;
- media coverage value in excess of \$70K (excluding digital);
- viewer/ readership of reach of almost 500,000 eyes;
- the lead story on launch day achieving 85,000 page views on the online version of the Courier newspaper; and
- a ninety-eight per cent positive community sentiment.

She stressed that in larger metropolitan communities, coordinated social and digital media programs utilising platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube were the likely most cost-effective channels.

Ms Hunter said that in her assessment the only real barrier to better collaboration was a mindset of 'checking the egos and logos' at the door to focus squarely on the desired message, the delivery mechanism, and the identification of partners, pathways and timeframes.

Tackling Vehicle Crime in Local Communities

Lisa Rudd, Community Development Officer, Glenorchy City Council (GCC)

One in every 150 Australian households falls victim to vehicle theft each year and the consequences of vehicle theft are felt strongly by local communities. Smart municipalities see crime prevention and community safety as central to the amenity and liveability of their city. The City of Glenorchy (in the northern part of greater Hobart) is an acknowledged national leader and innovator in community crime prevention.

The City's underpinning philosophy is that Glenorchy is a place where people care for each other and act together to improve the lifestyle and environment by building a strong, safe and confident community.

Ms Rudd said that the GCC's approach to community projects was based on the philosophy of community involvement, i.e. the principle of 'tell me something and I'll forget, show me something and I'll remember, involve me and I'll understand.'

Ms Rudd explained that philosophy had been central to the development of the direct community engagement element of GCC's 2017 *Operation Bounce Back program*. The centrepiece of the 2017 program will involve students from the 13 primary schools in Glenorchy with the aim that students will share the 'Car Security Begins at Home' message with their parents in an innovative and engaging manner.

Participating students and schools will be required to create their own, 30 second short films based on the NMVTRC's cinema ad campaign. The aim being to generate conversations and awareness regarding the fact that car-key security begins in their own homes. The films will be formally judged with select entries to be screened at a 'red carpet' awards event mid-year.

Theft by Wire: Facts vs Fiction

Robert McDonald, Secretary-General, RCAR

Australian police services and insurers confirm that the majority of late model (secure) vehicle thefts have been facilitated by access to the owner's key and electronic transponder, most commonly via a home burglary.

Despite this, media coverage of electronic manipulation and more recently remote hacking experiments is fuelling widespread perceptions that all modern vehicles are now vulnerable to these attacks.

So how resistant is a modern vehicle's security system to electronic manipulation and remote hacking? Drawing on the claims experience of one of Australia's major insurance groups (and his role as Secretary-General of the international body of the world's leading automotive research centres) Robert McDonald is the authoritative source to help sort the urban myths from the reality of electronic car crime.

Mr McDonald explained that in the 1980s Sydney had the highest rate of car theft of any city in the world and it was not uncommon to be able to break into and steal a car in under 20 seconds. He added that movies and television often over simplify the process of car theft by showing someone ripping out wires and sparking them together (often ignoring the fact that the steering is locked) or alternatively exaggerating the technology required by depicting the thief with a high tech array of tools and electronic devices.

Mr McDonald observed that while the internet is rife with information purportedly showing all sorts of ways to steal all sorts of cars, if anything the sheer volume of vague, exaggerated, or just untrue information makes it difficult to plan a life as a would-be car thief. He said that the reality is, in Australia at least, with the advent of modern car immobilisers, most cars are stolen by obtaining a key by burglary, assault, keys left unsecured, or in some cases left in the vehicle.

Theme 3: Building Stakeholder and Community Capacity and Promoting Innovation continued

Mr McDonald added that there is, however, no denying that in Europe thieves are starting to use devices that often plug into the OBD port (used for service diagnostics) and introduce a new key without access to an original one.

Mr McDonald explained that he had reviewed the individual circumstances of more than 200 sum insured theft claims from IAG-brands for vehicles valued at more than \$50,000 in 2016-17. The \$50K threshold was selected assuming that profit-motivated thieves prepared to employ electronic or other sophisticated theft techniques would target higher value vehicles. He said that the data revealed that:

- 85 were clearly recorded as having the key stolen via a variety of means;
- of the other 216 vehicles reported as stolen, 85 were recovered; and
- by make – Audi, Mercedes Benz, Toyota and BMW were the most popular, with Audi being clearly over represented.

Mr McDonald indicated that if key duplication or some other form of hacking method was used, you would expect to see an exposure pattern of similar models as the location of OBD ports, the compatibility of service tools and entry methods vary so significantly. He said that with the exception of Audi, there was no clear pattern of model, age or location. He explained that Audi had a well-known theft problem caused by the presence of a service key located in the glovebox that is often unknown to the owner. Audi has taken steps to address this issue by direct communication with owners, but it is expected that a large proportion of the Audi thefts are due to this.

Mr McDonald indicated that Toyota had the largest exposure by make and particularly in respect of its SUVs and the Hilux Utility which had inferior immobiliser systems compared to European vehicles. He said the Hilux was the only model with a clear theft pattern and that there had long been a well-documented procedure of thieves using a 'set of components' consisting of an ignition lock, key and ECU to bypass the in-vehicle system.

Mr McDonald said that in addition to the 85 cars stolen with keys, reasonable assumptions could be inferred in respect of a further 127 from the individual details of the insured's claim. On that basis, he said he had concluded that:

- 27 had been taken using a key without the owners knowledge;
- 15 Audis were stolen with the service key; and
- 33 were unproven but clearly potentially fraudulent based on the claim details, sum insured etc.

He explained that this left 26 per cent which could conceivably been subject to an OBD theft method, fraud or other key use.

Mr McDonald concluded by adding that:

- despite the data indicating electronic theft is not currently prevalent in the Australian market, there should be no assumption that hacking methods will not become a problem in the future;
- modern cars have many potential paths to interference, modification and potentially theft; and
- car makers need to be far more proactive in insulating systems from each other, attack testing and looking for weaknesses in their systems.

The Future of Vehicle Identification

David Shelton, Executive Director – Registration and Licensing, VicRoads

The Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) is the primary identifier of a vehicle. However, from an enforcement and community perspective, the number plate performs this role. More than one million sets of plates are issued in Australia every year.

A number plate connects a vehicle identity to a registered operator of a vehicle who is then responsible for the vehicle's use on the road. Last year in Victoria, there were approximately 21,000 instances of number plate theft. Stolen plates are used to facilitate a range of offences; from petrol theft, road traffic offences, toll evasion, car theft, burglary and armed robbery.

Increasingly, these offences are also being committed by vehicles with fake or cloned number plates. VicRoads, Victoria Police and the NMVTRC are collaborating to review the fundamental lifecycle of the number plate and to explore the future role of the number plate.

Mr Shelton explained that the current review was closely examining:

- every process in the production and use cycle (design, production, distribution, ordering, issue, in-service use, surrender and destruction); and
- external dependencies (road policing and crime, toll charging, parking access and exit controls, petrol stations, local government, motor trades, auction houses, etc.), to identify mitigation strategies to prevent their misuse in the community.

He added that the emergence of autonomous vehicles and the more pervasive application of cooperative intelligent transport systems were likely to render the traditional number plate obsolete and drive the future of vehicle identification.

Genuine Theft or Collision vs Fraud

Detective Chief Inspector Oliver Little, City of London Police

When most people think about profit-motivated car theft they normally associate it with anonymous thieves manipulating the car's security and driving it away, never to be seen again. But some forms of car crime can be far more subtle via the manipulation of the legal system and industry practices that cost insurers and ultimately the community tens of millions of dollars per year.

Mr Little briefly outlined the decade-long history of the City of London Police's investment in insurance fraud investigation as part industry-wide fraud detection, enforcement and prevention strategy in collaboration with the financial services sector.

Mr Little indicated that as a result of improved liaison, intelligence sharing and coordination the Insurance Fraud Enforcement Department (IFED) had:

- interviewed more than 2,000 people as suspects;
- initiated 1,300 investigations covering losses of more than £150 million; and
- secured more than 700 convictions and cautions.

Mr Little indicated that the IFED estimated that:

- annual fraud losses in the United Kingdom economy exceed £193 billion;
- detected insurance fraud represented £1.3 billion (from 131,000 confirmed cases);
- more than £2 billion in losses goes undetected.

Mr Little said that offenders could be drawn from all walks of life and professions, including lawyers, doctors, vets, sports people and performance artists. To illustrate the point, Mr Little referred to a number of case studies including a:

- Harley street doctor jailed after faking £200,000 of invoices for professional services;
- bus inspector behind more than £400,000 worth 'crash for cash' scams on one bus route;
- car insurance fraudster jailed after conning more than 100 motorists to buy non-existent insurance cover via a visually plausible but fake website; and
- former insurance staffer jailed for leaking company claims data to third parties.

Mr Little added that the IFED had a range of very effective tools to recover the proceeds of crime ranging from the forfeiture of pension and social service support to the surrender of property interests and extended jail terms.

He stressed that it is not just the profits of the targeted companies (and their customers) that pay the price of fraud indicating that, in the IFED's experience, the activity is often associated with raising funds for other criminal activity including drug production and distribution and the movement of other illicit commodities.

To close, Mr Little used the tragic case of 88-year-old Betty Laird of Leeds to illustrate why combating fraud matters. Mrs Laird was killed instantly (and her 77-year-old companion died weeks later) after three fraudsters conspired to deliberately cause an accident with Mrs Laird's vehicle in order to make fraudulent injury compensation claims from insurance companies.

After a three week trial, the judge dramatically discharged the jury following claims that members were offered bribes by co-conspirators of the defendants. Invoking rarely used powers the judge passed verdict without a jury finding the two men guilty of manslaughter and conspiracy to commit fraud.

Theme 3: Building Stakeholder and Community Capacity and Promoting Innovation continued

Australian Insurance Industry Response to Motor Fraud

Keir Bielecke, Policy Risk Advisor, Insurance Council of Australia

In an industry where customer service and regulatory scrutiny demand streamlined claims settlement processes, identifying and mitigating fraud risk arising from sophisticated organised crime groups is challenging.

In 2010 the insurance industry, under the auspices of the Insurance Council, established the Insurance Fraud Bureau of Australia to pursue an industry wide approach to meeting these challenges.

Mr Bielecke provided attendees with an overview of the IFBA's current innovations to improve the industry's response to growing organised crime involvement in insurance fraud including:

- how the industry is now identifying a more reliable assessment of the true cost of fraud;
- how a new industry supported Insurance Fraud Detection Database (IFDD) will work; and
- why the IFBA will soon be established as a standalone corporate entity.

The Lawyer, the Smash Repairer and Car Napping Rort

Rob Bartlett, Executive Manager, Suncorp Group

Car napping is a generic term used to describe elaborate extortion rackets perpetrated by unscrupulous smash repairers in cooperation with unethical lawyers. Unsuspecting, not-at-fault drivers unwittingly sign authorities for repair that allow the repairers to demand extortionate amounts for the repair and on costs such as car hire and storage fees. When insurers refuse these extortion attempts the repairers retain possession of the vehicle, often against the owner's wishes causing months of stress for the vehicle's owner.

Mr Bartlett informed the conference on how the industry is responding to these complex frauds and how consumer laws require modification to help protect both the insured and insurers from related scams.

What Do the Sessional Speaker's Messages Mean for the NMVTRC's Forward Program and Others?

The presentations by Messrs McDonald (RCAR) and Negus (RACV) reinforce the NMVTRC's assessment that incidence of residential burglaries to access the keys of secure vehicles is the number one community education challenge for police, insurers and crime prevention partners.

To take the lead from Ms Hunter (Crimestoppers) the NMVTRC will seek the collaboration of all interested parties to form a Vehicle Crime Communications Alliance to improve the development and delivery of consistent, cost-effective, consumer focused theft prevention messages.



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