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Theft Reduction Council

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theft torque

Vehicle crime experts gather in Melbourne



Deputy Commissioner Andrew Crisp opens the conference.

The Australian Vehicle Crime Conference was held from April 4 to 6 at the RACV City Club, hosted by the NMVTRC in conjunction with Victoria Police and The International Association of Auto Theft Investigators (IAATI). The event was proudly sponsored by RACV.

With a variety of presentations, the conference provided an excellent forum for sharing knowledge and expertise in the field of vehicle crime prevention. 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 based around three key themes.

Diverting young offenders

Detective Chief Inspector, Paul Betts from West Midlands Police made the key presentation on how in the mid-2000s the United Kingdom introduced a coordinated multi-agency approach to the delivery of youth justice services. The model is based on the principle that offending (and re-offending) by young people cannot be solved by one agency alone, and that strong partnerships across local health, social care and justice agencies is a prerequisite.

Since the introduction of the system the number of first time entrants to the juvenile justice system had fallen from 110,000 in 2007 to around 10,000 in 2015. Mr Betts did mention that there were still a number of significant and stubborn challenges in respect of a small but complex cohort of high-rate offenders.

Vehicle crime experts gather in Melbourne continued



Paul Betts addressing the conference on youth issues.

Despite these challenges, Mr Betts indicated that recent evaluations confirmed every pound invested in related programs saves at least two in re-offending alone. Addressing this issue from a Victorian perspective, Assistant Commissioner Stephen Leane, explained that Victoria Police was pursuing a similar approach based on a combination of:

- 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 and prosecution).

Mr Leane confirmed 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, sector reform and service delivery initiative.

Disrupting the vehicle laundering and separated parks markets

The key presentation came from Geoff Gwilym, the Executive Director of the VACC, who emphasised how the 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 end-of-life vehicles (ELVs).

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

(See later Stop Press section for details of the Victorian Government's related announcement.)

Building stakeholder and community capacity and promoting innovation

Community engagement

Brian Negus, the RACV's General Manager of Public Policy, presented on the Power of Collaboration. Mr Negus indicated RACV's data confirmed that Victoria is experiencing an unprecedented increase in home burglaries linked to a car theft. He emphasised the need for stakeholders to better understand the causes and behaviours that have led to this point and that the response needs to be relevant and informed.

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.

Theft by wire: facts vs fiction

Media coverage of remote hacking experiments continue to fuel community perceptions that all modern vehicles are vulnerable to electronic attack.

Robert McDonald, the Secretary-General of RCAR outlined the results of his analysis of more than 200 late model theft claims in Australia. He explained the circumstances around the theft of all those vehicles supported the NMVTRC's assessment that the majority of late model vehicle thefts have been facilitated by access to the owner's key and electronic transponder. Mr McDonald added that while electronic attacks (generally via a vehicle's on-board diagnostic port, continued to grow in certain parts of Europe, it was not a significant factor in the Australian market.

Despite this, Mr McDonald called on car makers to maintain a process of continuous improvement in respect of attack testing and looking for weaknesses in their systems.

A full list of speakers, presentations and a comprehensive conference summary can be downloaded here: carsafe.com.au/conference

Delegates give conference big thumbs up

Feedback from participants of the AVCC was overwhelmingly positive. Eighty five per cent of participants rated the conference as very good, or excellent overall, with 81 per cent giving the same ratings for the program content.

Most respondents felt the tight 30-minute presentation structure worked well as it kept presenters on point and allowed a wider variety of topics to be covered. The majority of delegates felt that the panel discussions were particularly valuable, with many indicating that they would like to see this element extended for future events.

All suggestions for improvement will be considered for future NMVTRC hosted events.



Day 1 expert panel Q&A.

Theft hot spots bouncing back

The NMVTRC is again teaming up with 17 local councils in crime hot spots across Australia to reintroduce its successful the Operation Bounce Back (OBB) program. This year's program focuses on the 'Car Security Begins at Home' (CS@H) message and what people can do to ensure they reduce their risks of becoming a victim of vehicle theft.

The City of Casey launched its campaign at the Berwick Motor Group with many key stakeholders in attendance. The launch was supported by local businesses and community groups including the Mayor, Cr Sam Aziz and Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner, Robert Hill. The launch received significant media coverage carrying the program's key messages.

This year's locally developed strategies saw the introduction of a range of new and innovative ideas. Glenorchy City Council invited local primary schools to produce their own CS@H community service announcements (CSAs). The ads adjudged to be the best will be recognised at a special screening at Village cinemas later in the year.

The City of Casey successfully negotiated with Village cinemas to show the NMVTRC's CSAs across Victoria throughout April as an in kind donation, while the City of Dandenong used its cash component of the OBB package to develop additional image-rich materials to help people from non-English speaking backgrounds and those with lower levels of literacy.



Collinsvale Primary School Students for Operation Bounce Back.

How do motorists perceive vehicle crime?

The NMVTRC's latest consumer study provides interesting insights on how Australian motorists perceive car crime. The national sample of 1,206 respondents was weighted to represent 12.3 million people aged 18 years across the nation's capital cities.

It is interesting to see how the results of the survey correlate with the current issues being faced by the community and crime prevention practitioners. The results indicate 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 misconceptions.

Odd spot

Man steals taco van to house pet ram

A 51-year old Melton man has face the Geelong Magistrates Court charged with stealing a \$65,000 pop up taco food van in Torquay.

Police report, after spotting the vehicle the man then hooked it up to his own car and drove the vehicle back to his home in Melton. He then gutted the vehicle to the point it was unrecognisable. The accused had removed all internal restaurant items in order to make room for himself and his pet ram to live in.

The man had been asked to remove the ram from his property in Bacchus Marsh with reports the animal had attacked people. The accused lead

his own protest to keep the ram by sleeping on the streets of Melbourne. He gained state wide media attention as he frequently walked his ram through the streets of Melbourne even taking him to Canberra to protest further.

The owner of the van has since had the vehicle recovered with the majority of the fittings that were removed returned or recovered by the accused. The 'ram raider' himself has been placed on a 12 month community corrections order with 120 hours of community service and fined \$900.

Article originally appeared in Geelong Advisor, 3 March 2017.



Stop press: Victoria announces crackdown on cash for scrap

The NMVTRC welcomes the announcement by the Victorian Government in May that it will introduce new laws to ban cash payments for scrap metal to remove the lure of quick cash for criminals. The move follows on closely on the heels of similar New South Wales reforms introduced in March.

The NMVTRC has been calling for the modernisation of related laws across Australia since 2012 to remove ambiguities and gaps, and deal more effectively with enduring non-compliance.

In 2014 Task Force Discover – the multi-agency task force initiated by the NMVTRC and led by Victoria Police – revealed a staggering level of regulatory non-compliance across industry that facilitates the intentional and incidental laundering of stolen vehicles.

Further evidence of the need for reform came in May last year with the release of the Victorian Law Reform Commission's (VLRC) report on its review of the use of regulatory regimes in preventing the infiltration of organised crime in lawful occupations and industries. The VLRC report drew heavily on the NMVTRC's submission and the TFD findings to illustrate the unfair impacts that criminal activity can have on a lawful industry both for consumer and legitimate participants.

In introducing the Justice Legislation Bill 2017 to Parliament, Victoria's Minister for Police, the Hon. Lisa Neville, said "Banning cash for scrap metal will fundamentally starve the business model of criminals who steal cars. The new laws provide police with additional tools to disrupt the trade of stolen cars and stop organised crime infiltrating the scrap-metal and vehicle-recycling industries."

Businesses dealing in scrap will be banned from making or taking cash payments and possessing or trading an unidentified vehicle, and will be required to keep traceable records for related transactions. The new laws will also introduce fines of up to \$31,000 for non-compliance.

Minister Neville indicated that sector-wide consultation on a broader reform agenda will begin in the second half of 2017.

While the New South Wales and now Victorian reforms represent major steps forward, the NMVTRC's assessment is that similar vulnerabilities exist in nearly all the remaining states and territories with like reform required to close off gaps that allow some activity to go unregulated and equip regulators with a better 'tool-kit' to deal with serial non-compliance.

