



National Motor Vehicle
Theft Reduction Council

NMVTRC Motorcycle Theft Summit

Motorcycle theft in Australia

(Pre-reading Material)

Since 2001 Australia has enjoyed an unprecedented period of sustained vehicle theft reduction, with total thefts tumbling from a then record high of over 140,000 per annum to less than 70,000 in 2007.

However, motorcycles have persistently bucked this trend. As a group they now represent 1 in 10 stolen vehicles and almost a quarter of all non-recoveries. It is also suspected that a large number of off-road thefts are not reported. While preventing and detecting any motorcycle theft is difficult, off-road motorcycles are particularly problematic because they are not impacted by the suite of infrastructure barriers that have been developed for passenger vehicles and registered motorcycles. Portability, demand for parts, un-regulated end use and poor identification all contribute to the overall problem.

This report combines statistical and qualitative information to provide an overview of motorcycle theft in Australia since 2000. Since 2000 motorcycle thefts have increased by 1,200—with a noticeable spike in thefts over the past three years. The responses of a survey the NMVTRC conducted in 2001 with 414 motorcycle riders and 103 motorcycle dealers expands upon this statistical overview. The surveys of motorcycle riders and dealers covered a variety of key issues including attitudes towards motorcycle theft, security, insurance and allowed for respondents to convey their own experiences of motorcycle theft. In some instances, the survey responses formalised information that seems to be commonly known or believed throughout the motorcycle community but had until now not been documented.

In light of this information, the summit will aim to establish the scope and potential growth of motorcycle theft and the need for action, and develop a workable action plan to address deficiencies in current industry and regulatory practices that continue to allow motorcycle theft to occur unabated.

KEY FINDINGS

Between April 2000 and March 2008:

- Motorcycle theft increased by 19.9% compared to a 54.7% decrease in passenger/light commercial (PLC) vehicle theft.
- The recovery rate of stolen motorcycles (35.4%) was far lower than PLC vehicles (84.8%).
- The motorcycle proportion of all thefts increased by two-and-a-half times (from 4.4% to 10.5%).
- Motorcycle theft targets were generally younger (aged < 10 years old at theft) than PLC vehicles (56.8% compared to 23.1%).

Other:

- Six out of every ten motorcycles stolen (58.3%) were taken from a residential location compared to three out of every ten PLC vehicles stolen (29.7%) over the last three years.
- The split between registered and un-registered motorcycle theft was around 50/50 in the last year, although there was some state and territory variation.
- Nine out of every ten registered motorcycles stolen (90.0%) had a valid Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) recorded by Police in the last year. This contrasts with a valid VIN for only two out of every ten unregistered motorcycles stolen (24.2%).
- FCAI figures show motorcycle sales have set a new record in the first quarter of 2008 after an all-time high of 129,966 sales in 2007. The sales market breakdown shows - Road 35.0%, Off-road 28.5%, ATV (All Terrain Vehicle) 15.2%, Scooter 11.0% and Mini bike 10.3%.
- Over the last five years sales of motorcycles has grown by around 70%.
- Three-quarters of respondents to the NMVTRC's motorcycle riders' survey said that they used their motorcycle for recreational purposes only rather than being their daily mode of transport.
- Anti-theft security was rated as one of the lowest considerations by both motorcycle riders and dealers when purchasing a motorcycle.
- Manufacturers and owners of motorcycles were considered by both riders and dealers as the two groups or organisations that could do the most to reduce motorcycle theft.

Motorcycle theft April 2000 – March 2008

Overall motorcycle thefts have increased by 1,200 since 2000, with New South Wales making up 500 of these thefts. All jurisdictions excepting Tasmania have experienced increases in thefts since 2000 ranging from 3 to 60 per cent. Commendably, Tasmania has experienced a considerable reduction over this period with motorcycle thefts down 50 per cent since 2000. It should also be noted however that small jurisdictions are prone to fluctuations (both up and down) due to their low base position.

Over a quarter of the motorcycles stolen in Australia were from non-metro areas (36 per cent), suggesting that off-road motorcycles make up a large proportion of all motorcycle thefts.

Table 1. Australia - Reported motorcycle theft by jurisdiction and area, Apr 00 - Mar 08

Jurisd-iction	Area*	Apr00 Mar01	Apr01 Mar02	Apr02 Mar03	Apr03 Mar04	Apr04 Mar05	Apr05 Mar06	Apr06 Mar07	Apr07 Mar08	Period % change
ACT	Total	66	84	83	70	61	79	68	108	+63.6
NSW	Non-metro	637	682	644	763	850	1,022	950	983	+54.3
	Metro	1,175	1,195	885	1,063	1,140	1,235	1,181	1,320	+12.3
	Total	1,812	1,877	1,529	1,826	1,990	2,257	2,131	2,303	+27.1
NT	Non-metro	25	32	36	43	27	45	45	45	+80.0
	Metro	72	83	63	69	44	62	92	102	+41.7
	Total	97	115	99	112	71	107	137	147	+51.5
QLD	Non-metro	601	577	543	555	518	539	557	701	+16.6
	Metro	444	422	431	387	390	369	442	555	+25.0
	Total	1,045	999	974	942	908	908	999	1,256	+20.2
SA	Non-metro	111	145	115	129	136	130	117	118	+6.3
	Metro	290	265	261	289	278	408	409	480	+65.5
	Total	401	410	376	418	414	538	526	598	+49.1
TAS	Non-metro	72	50	67	55	20	24	29	19	-73.6
	Metro	73	66	69	41	34	76	58	51	-30.1
	Total	145	116	136	96	54	100	87	70	-51.7
VIC	Non-metro	368	398	410	446	503	444	424	474	+28.8
	Metro	861	788	710	765	835	711	910	1,005	+16.7
	Total	1,229	1,186	1,120	1,211	1,338	1,155	1,334	1,479	+20.3
WA	Non-metro	376	376	333	375	263	401	326	336	-10.6
	Metro	897	911	827	860	835	987	1,090	978	+9.0
	Total	1,273	1,287	1,160	1,235	1,098	1,388	1,416	1,314	+3.2
AUS	Non-metro	2,190	2,260	2,148	2,366	2,317	2,605	2,448	2,676	+22.2
	Metro	3,878	3,814	3,329	3,544	3,617	3,927	4,250	4,599	+18.6
	Total	6,068	6,074	5,477	5,910	5,934	6,532	6,698	7,275	+19.9

*Metro. areas were defined by capital city Statistical Divisions from the ABS Australian Standard Geographical Classification 2006 (cat. 1259.0).

Nine out of every ten registered motorcycles stolen (90 per cent) had a valid Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) recorded by Police in the last year. This contrasts with a valid VIN for only two out of every ten unregistered motorcycles stolen (24 per cent).

Table 2. Australia – Summary of motorcycles stolen and registered, Apr 07 - Mar 08

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	AUS
Stolen Apr 07 to Mar 08									
Number of thefts	108	2,303	147	1,256	598	70	1,479	1,314	7,275
% of all thefts	5.4	8.8	17.6	13.4	8.6	5.1	9.7	18.4	10.5
Number not recovered	63	1,541	76	771	393	37	1,141	708	4,730
% recovered*	41.7	33.1	48.3	38.6	34.3	47.1	22.9	46.1	35.0
Theft rate per 1,000 registrations	11.20	16.09	30.03	8.79	13.26	5.37	10.33	17.20	12.58
% registered ^o	95.4	49.3	38.1	45.1	63.9	91.4	44.2	68.9	53.1
% registered ^o with valid VIN [~]	88.3	89.5	87.5	91.3	83.5	85.9	92.5	91.5	90.0
% unregistered ^o with valid VIN [~]	40.0	25.3	42.9	31.6	15.7	16.7	18.4	20.6	24.2
Registrations at Dec 07[^]									
Number registered	9,646	143,093	4,895	142,950	45,086	13,046	143,169	76,379	578,264
% of all registrations	4.1	3.2	4.0	4.4	3.7	3.1	3.5	4.3	3.7
10+ years old	3,127	43,437	1,190	44,879	12,065	5,017	46,831	27,448	183,994
<10 years old	6,518	99,656	3,704	97,957	29,308	8,022	95,995	48,928	390,088
Unknown age	1	0	1	114	3,713	7	343	3	4,182

*Recovery status as at 31st May 2008 for New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria and Mar 08 for Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia. The above table is based on State/Territory registration figures received as electronic extracts. Less than 10 years old=vehicles manufactured post-1997 for the 2007 registration snapshot. [~]Valid VINS were defined as those with 17 characters recorded by Police. ^o Percent registered is an estimate based on non-empty plate details supplied by Police. [^]Readers should use caution when interpreting these registration figures as a large number of off-road and farm bikes are not registered.

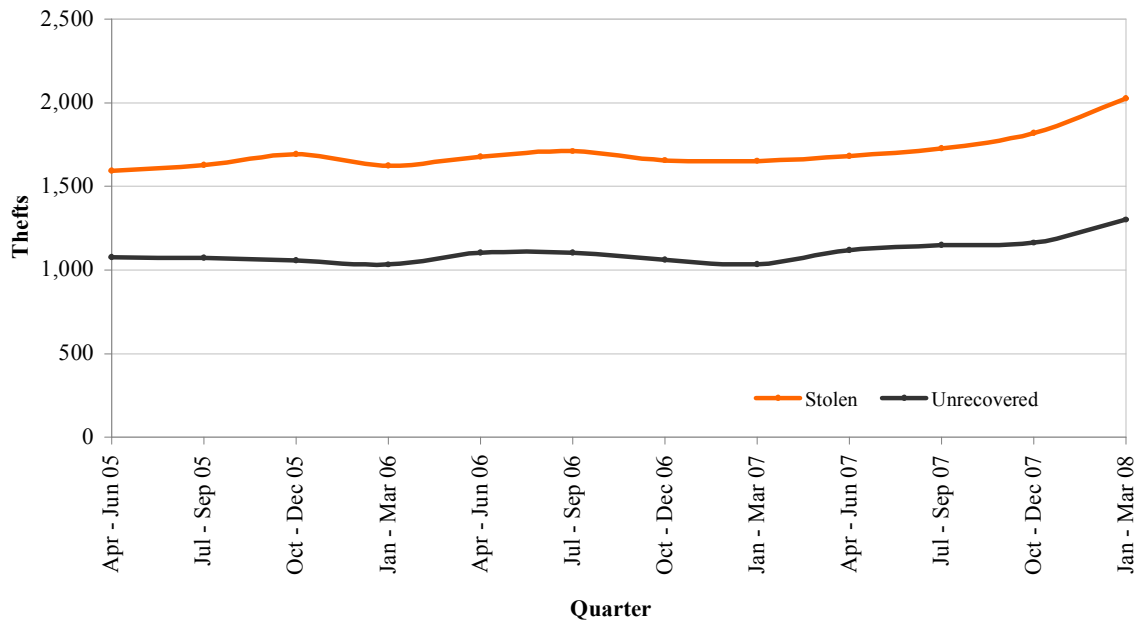
Australia has experienced a notable spike in thefts since 2005. In the 12 months to March 2008 motorcycle thefts have increased by 743 compared to the 12 months prior to March 2006. Recoveries have followed the same trend with an increase in non-recovered motorcycles in the past year.

Table 3. Australia - Reported motorcycle thefts and recoveries, Apr 05 - Mar 08

Quarter	Number of thefts	Number not recovered*	% recovered*
Apr - Jun 2005	1,592	1,075	32.5
Jul - Sep 2005	1,627	1,071	34.2
Oct - Dec 2005	1,691	1,058	37.4
Jan - Mar 2006	1,622	1,032	36.4
12 months to Mar 06	6,532	4,236	35.2
Apr - Jun 2006	1,679	1,103	34.3
Jul - Sep 2006	1,710	1,102	35.6
Oct - Dec 2006	1,657	1,060	36.0
Jan - Mar 2007	1,652	1,034	37.4
12 months to Mar 07	6,698	4,299	35.8
Apr - Jun 2007	1,683	1,119	33.5
Jul - Sep 2007	1,726	1,148	33.5
Oct - Dec 2007	1,818	1,162	36.1
Jan - Mar 2008	2,048	1,301	36.5
12 months to Mar 08	7,275	4,730	35.0

*Recovery status as at 31st May 2008 for New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria and Mar 08 for Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia.

Figure 1. Australia* - Number of motorcycle thefts recorded by quarter, Apr 05 -Mar 08



*Recovery status as at 31st May 2008 for New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria and Mar 08 for Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia.

Motorcycle theft characteristics

Newer motorcycles manufactured between 2000 and 2008 made up the large majority of thefts in the 12 months prior to March 2008 (55 per cent). There was also a large proportion of stolen motorcycles where the decade of manufacture was unknown (24 per cent).

Table 4. Australia - Motorcycles stolen and recovered by decade of manufacture, Apr 07 - Mar 08

Decade Of Manufacture	Number of thefts	% of thefts	Number not recovered	% recovered*
<1970	18	0.2	11	38.9
1970s	45	0.6	19	57.8
1980s	418	5.7	248	40.7
1990s	1,039	14.3	590	43.2
2000-2008	4,024	55.3	2,561	36.4
Unknown	1,731	23.8	1,301	24.8
Total	7,275	100.0	4,730	35.0

*Recovery status as at 31st May 2008 for New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria and Mar 08 for Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia.

Motorcycles with an engine capacity between 201-250 cc were the most commonly stolen over this same time period. Bikes in this category also had one of the lowest recovery rates. Motorcycles with an engine capacity of 50 cc or less were the next most commonly stolen, indicating a high number of thefts were of off-road motorcycles. Honda and Yamaha motorcycles were those most commonly targeted by thieves, followed by Suzuki and Kawasaki.

Table 5. Australia - Motorcycles stolen and recovered by engine size, Apr 07 - Mar 08

Engine Capacity	Number of thefts	% of thefts	Number not recovered	% recovered*
50 cc or less	894	12.3	432	51.7
51 - 100 cc	285	3.9	183	35.8
101 - 150 cc	566	7.8	309	45.4
151 - 200 cc	138	1.9	84	39.1
201 - 250 cc	1,036	14.2	665	35.8
251 - 500 cc	512	7.0	356	30.5
501 - 750 cc	472	6.5	279	40.9
751 - 1000 cc	287	3.9	172	40.1
1001 cc or more	143	2.0	84	41.3
Unknown	2,942	40.4	2,166	26.4
Total	7,275	100.0	4,730	35.0

*Recovery status as at 31st May 2008 for New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria and Mar 08 for Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia.

Table 6. Australia - Top motorcycle theft targets, Apr 07 - Mar 08

Ranking	Make	Number of thefts	Number not recovered	% recovered*
1	(1) Honda	1,636 (1,593)	1,015 (959)	38.0 (39.8)
2	(2) Yamaha	1,475 (1,511)	993 (1,073)	32.7 (29.0)
3	(3) Suzuki	713 (735)	461 (477)	35.3 (35.1)
4	(4) Kawasaki	573 (592)	372 (351)	35.1 (40.7)
5	(5) KTM	255 (244)	196 (183)	23.1 (25.0)
6	(6) Vmoto	202 (178)	84 (61)	58.4 (65.7)
7	(8) Bolwell	199 (128)	75 (46)	62.3 (64.1)
8	(7) Harley Davidson	125 (151)	94 (128)	24.8 (15.2)
9	(13) TGB	73 (33)	34 (18)	53.4 (45.5)
10	(14) Hyosung	60 (25)	22 (9)	63.3 (64.0)

*Recovery status as at 31st May 2008 for New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria and Mar 08 for Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia. Motorcycles have only been included in the above table if manufacturer information exists. Recovery rates are calculated based on percentage of a thefts in the 12 months to March 2008 that were recovered at 31st May 2008. Orange numbers in brackets indicate statistics recorded for the previous 12 months to March 2007.

Riders' Motorcycle use

It is important to gauge motorcyclists' use of their bikes to determine the most effective theft reduction strategies. Three-quarters of respondents to the NMVTRC's motorcycle riders' survey said that they used their motorcycle for recreational purposes only rather than being their daily mode of transport. Fourteen elaborated on their response, stating that they participated in touring or rally events while three said that their motorcycle use was weather dependent. If the majority of motorcycle use is recreationally rather than commuter based, theft reduction initiatives may need to focus on issues such as better home security as much as public infrastructure for commuters.

Insurance

Survey respondents indicated a high level of insurance coverage (82%) with the overwhelming majority of these riders (91% of those insured) reporting that they had comprehensive cover. A third of insured respondents indicated that their policy covered their motorcycle for market value but the highest proportion (59%) reported being covered for an agreed value.

When costs are adjusted according to Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases since 2001 to reflect current costs, eighty-two per cent (82%) of respondents indicated that they paid less than \$700 annually for motorcycle insurance with the median cost being between \$230 and \$460¹.

A high majority (95 per cent) of motorcycle dealers also reported being insured against motorcycle theft. The small number of dealers who did not have insurance reported the reason as the high cost or the inability to get insurance. Over two-thirds of motorcycle dealers reported that discounted insurance premiums would be the measure most likely to influence them to upgrade the security at their dealership, with 95 per cent of respondents also indicating that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the notion of reduced insurance premiums as an incentive for owners to secure their motorcycle against theft.

Security devices used

Security locks were the most frequently used method of security among respondents, with the large majority indicating that they secured their motorcycle using the bike's steering lock (85 per cent) and over half using a manual locking device such as a disc lock, U-Lock or chain and padlock. After market security products such as alarms and immobilisers were only used by a small proportion of respondents.

A high number of respondents (61 per cent) indicated that they never locked their bike to an immovable object or anchorage when parking at home. The reasons given for this were the use of other security, such as the steering lock (30 per cent), as well as the lack of suitable anchorages (20 per cent). The difficulty of parking motorcycles securely away from home due to a lack of well-lit, visible designated parking areas and anchorage points was also noted.

There is clear acknowledgement among riders of the portability of motorcycles, with many respondents commenting on the ease at which a bike can be stolen. This acknowledgement is likely to account for the low uptake of aftermarket security such as alarms and immobilisers among respondents.

Importance of security features when purchasing a motorcycle

Given the belief amongst many riders that theft is difficult to prevent, it is not surprising that motorcycle security was given a low priority when buying a new bike. The motorcyclists were asked how important certain features were when purchasing a new motorcycle, with 5 being the highest level of importance and 1 the lowest. Handling was considered by motorcyclists as the most important feature to look for when purchasing a bike, followed by price and look and colour. Anti-theft security was rated as one of the lowest considerations at an average of around 3.3.

What features are important to buyers of new motorcycles?

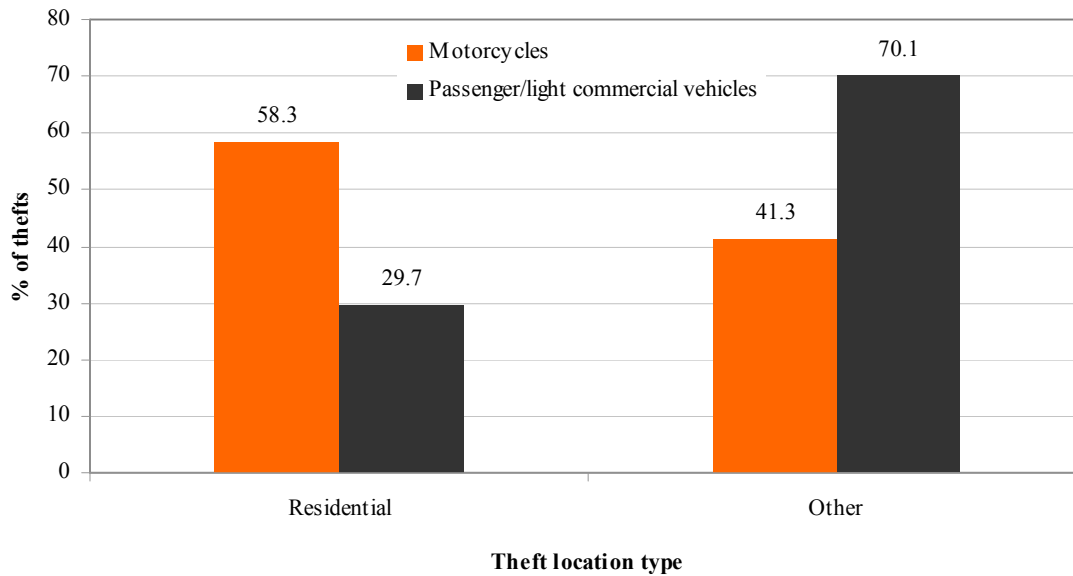
When dealers were asked to rank how important different features were to their customers when buying a new motorcycle, 'security' was ranked as the least important feature. This corresponds with the riders' responses that placed security as the second-least important feature.

¹ CPI figure is based on the ABS publication 6401.0 that shows a 13.8% increase in the CPI between March 2001 and March 2008. This does not account for structural changes in insurance premiums.

Location of theft

Six out of every ten motorcycles stolen (58.3%) were taken from a residential location compared to three out of every ten PLC vehicles stolen (29.7%) over the last three years, reflecting the prominent recreational use indicated in the riders' survey.

Figure 2. Australia*: Motorcycle and passenger/light commercial vehicle thefts by location type, Apr 05 to Mar 08



*Excludes data from Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, Tasmania and Victoria as these jurisdictions do not provide suitable theft location data. "Residential" location examples include house, driveway and garage. "Other" location examples include business/commercial, car parks and outdoor/public places. The "Unknown" theft location type for both groups was < 1%.

Respondents of the riders' survey provided details of 36 motorcycle thefts. Of these incidents, the largest proportion of thefts occurred from the owners' homes (over 60 per cent), reflecting theft statistics over the last year. Interestingly, while motorcycles stolen from the street accounted for six of the thefts perpetrated before 1990, none of the later thefts were reported as having occurred from this public location. Other theft locations included the owners' work location (five thefts) and a public car park, petrol station and motel car park (one theft per location).

Single Versus Multiple thefts

In the 12 months to March 2008, 94 per cent of theft incidents involved the theft of a single motorcycle. The theft of two motorcycles accounted for the bulk of multiple thefts with only one incident reported where a large number of motorcycles were stolen, in which there were 102 thefts in one incident².

² This incident related to the theft of a container of 'monkey bikes' (also referred to as pocket bikes)—a scaled down motorcycle.

Table 7. Australia - Number of motorcycles stolen per incident report, Apr 07 - Mar 08

Number of motorcycle thefts per reported incident	Number of incidents	Total number of motorcycle thefts
1 motorcycle	6,187	6,187
2 motorcycles	312	624
3 motorcycles	70	210
4 motorcycles	23	92
5 motorcycles	5	25
6 motorcycles	2	12
7 motorcycles	2	14
9 motorcycles	1	9
102 motorcycles	1	102
Total	6,603	7,275

Based on incident report numbers supplied by Police. In September 2007 there were 102 motorcycles and a Volvo prime mover stolen from Yennora Distribution Park, NSW (driven to another location where container was broken into and dirt bikes/parts stolen).

Security measures in place at time of theft

Steering locks and manual locks were the most common forms of security in place at the time of theft. The least number of motorcycles had an alarm fitted at the time of theft, reinforcing the view that after-market security is not considered as an effective anti-theft measure for motorcycles. In all categories except ‘alarm’, motorcycles stolen from 1990 onwards had a greater level of security in place compared to thefts in all years. Almost 20 per cent of respondents did not indicate whether any security measure was in place when their motorcycle was stolen.

Preparedness to pay for recovery of vehicle and prosecution of theft

Although respondents rated security as less important than features such as look, performance and price when buying a new motorcycle, most reported that they would be prepared to pay extra to increase the chances of recovery if the bike was stolen, and to increase the likelihood of the thief being caught. Over half of the 393 respondents to this question answered that they were prepared to pay over \$100 while only 5 per cent were unprepared to pay extra for these security features.

This indicates that while motorcyclists feel particularly vulnerable and somewhat helpless when it comes to protecting their motorcycle from theft, recovery of their vehicle and prosecution of the offender is particularly important to riders and considered valuable security measures. It suggests that riders would be eager to pay extra for security measures if they could be guaranteed that their idea of justice would be done.

Who is responsible for addressing motorcycle theft?

Manufacturers and owners of motorcycles were considered by riders as the two groups or organisations that could do the most to reduce motorcycle theft, with 90 per cent of respondents indicating that they ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the statement ‘Motorcycle manufacturers should take responsibility for producing secure and identifiable motorcycles.’

The courts were considered the third most influential group in addressing motorcycle theft and were the group that received most criticism from riders, with many respondents being of the view that tougher penalties are necessary to reduce motor vehicle theft.

Riders and dealers responses were also similar in terms of who they believe is responsible for addressing motorcycle theft. Dealers believed that motorcycle owners were the group most able

to help reduce motorcycle theft, with manufacturers and the courts also nominated as influential groups.

Criminal Justice System as a Deterrent

Studies by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) indicate that the criminal justice system only produces a “small deterrent” effect on criminal activity. The AIC observes that the optimal strategy is to focus on repeat offenders that are known to the police.³



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The National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council acknowledges all police services, registration authorities, participating insurers, the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, Glass's Information Services and Insurance Australia Group for the supply of the data on which this report is compiled. Theft incident data may be subject to later revision by the data providers.

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³ Conference paper by Carlos Carcach of the Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, NMVTRC/AIC Conference Reducing Car Theft: How Low Can We Go, Adelaide, December 2000