

**INFORMATION  
BULLETIN**


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**LIGHT COMMERCIAL  
VEHICLES STOLEN IN  
AUSTRALIA, OCTOBER 2004 -  
SEPTEMBER 2005**

**JANUARY 2006**



**National Motor Vehicle  
Theft Reduction Council**  
*driving down vehicle theft*



This report presents data regarding the theft of light commercial vehicles in Australia for the 12 month period ending on 30 September 2005. In some instances, data regarding passenger vehicles is included for comparison.

## Method

Data is used from the Comprehensive Auto-Theft Research System (CARS) database. CARS collects police data on all motor vehicle thefts and vehicle registration data from all Australian states and territories. Police theft data is received from each jurisdiction on a regular basis, either quarterly or monthly. Each data extract includes a historical update of recovery status for vehicles recorded stolen in previous periods. Registration data is received in 6-monthly snapshots. CARS processes and cleans data received from police by removing duplicates and any non-motorised vehicles included in the data, and also refining the vehicle description by, where possible, matching the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to vehicle description data purchased from Polk Autospec.

In the current report, vehicles were classified as light commercial when either: the cleaned make and model description of the stolen vehicle was a known light commercial vehicle, regardless of the body type (eg. Ford Courier, Holden Rodeo, Toyota Hilux etc.); or the vehicle had a body type of utility or panel van (as described by police). Based on the make and model description provided, any obvious errors were removed.

For each state or territory, the most recent recovery data available at the time of writing was used. Data to 31 December 2005 was used for Northern Territory, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. For other jurisdictions, data to 30 September 2005 was used. For registration data, the 30 June snapshot was used.

## Findings

Table 1 shows that 8,234 light commercial vehicles were stolen in Australia between October 2004 and September 2005, with an overall recovery rate of 78 per cent. This is slightly lower than the recovery rate of 82 per cent for passenger vehicles during this period, suggesting that light commercial vehicles are somewhat more likely to be targeted by professional thieves than passenger vehicles. As with passenger vehicles, New South Wales had the lowest recovery rate for light commercial vehicles (73 per cent), while Tasmania had the highest (91 per cent).

New South Wales accounted for 42 per cent of light commercial thefts, followed by Victoria, accounting for 21 per cent. Compared to the distribution of passenger vehicle thefts, New South Wales accounted for a larger proportion of light commercial thefts, while South Australia accounted for a lower proportion. The high proportion of thefts and low recovery rate for NSW suggest that professional theft of light commercial vehicles is a larger problem in this state than in other jurisdictions.

**Table 1. Australia - Light commercial vehicles stolen and recovered, Oct 2004 - Sept 2005**

Jurisdiction	Light commercial vehicles					Passenger vehicles	
	Number of thefts	% of thefts	Number not recovered	% of non-recoveries	% recovered	% of thefts	% recovered
ACT	128	2	18	1	86	3	85
NSW	3,451	42	928	50	73	35	77
NT	100	1	11	1	89	1	87
QLD	1,253	15	220	12	82	15	84
SA	621	8	71	4	89	13	89
TAS	225	3	21	1	91	3	96
VIC	1,750	21	420	23	76	24	82
WA	706	9	160	9	77	8	79
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,234</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,849</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>82</b>

'Recovered' indicates vehicles recovered by end December 2005 for NT, Vic, NSW and Qld, and vehicles covered by end September 2005 for all other jurisdictions.

**Table 2. Australia - Light commercial vehicles stolen and recovered by year of manufacture, Oct 2004 - Sept 2005**

Year Of Manufacture	Number of thefts	% of thefts	Number not recovered	% of thefts recovered
<1970	41	0	9	78
1970-1974	174	2	55	68
1975-1979	456	6	135	70
<b>Subtotal - 1970s</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>69</b>
1980	125	2	29	77
1981	166	2	40	76
1982	184	2	44	76
1983	208	3	40	81
1984	367	4	73	80
1985	455	6	82	82
1986	337	4	61	82
1987	269	3	53	80
1988	428	5	72	83
1989	453	6	66	85
<b>Subtotal - 1980s</b>	<b>2,992</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>81</b>
1990	444	5	95	79
1991	333	4	71	79
1992	329	4	68	79
1993	251	3	44	82
1994	285	3	66	77
1995	307	4	79	74
1996	270	3	78	71
1997	272	3	89	67
1998	272	3	77	72
1999	290	4	76	74
<b>Subtotal - 1990s</b>	<b>3,053</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>743</b>	<b>76</b>
2000	228	3	57	75
2001	229	3	56	76
2002	269	3	68	75
2003	321	4	72	78
2004	329	4	62	81
2005	50	1	5	90
Unknown	92	1	27	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,234</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1849</b>	<b>78</b>

'Recovered' indicates vehicles recovered by end December 2005 for NT, Vic, NSW and Qld, and vehicles covered by end September 2005 for all other jurisdictions.

Table 2 shows that three quarters of stolen light commercial vehicles were manufactured in the 1980s or 1990s (36 per cent and 37 per cent respectively), while an additional 17 per cent of vehicles were manufactured from 2000 onwards. For comparison, among stolen passenger vehicles 50 per cent were manufactured in the 1980s, 34 per cent were manufactured in the 1990s and only 10 per cent were manufactured from 2000 onwards. This indicates that stolen light commercial vehicles tend to be newer than stolen passenger vehicles.

One likely reason for this is that the Australian Design Rule (ADR) requiring new passenger vehicles to be fitted with Australian Standard immobilisers does not apply to most light commercial vehicles. Therefore fewer new light commercial vehicles are immobilised, making them a softer theft target. Table 3 illustrates this and shows that among registered vehicles aged less than 10 years, 75 per cent of passenger vehicles but only 34 per cent of light commercial vehicles are fitted with Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) Australian Standard immobilisers.

UPDATE: Preliminary analysis as at October 2006 indicates that most new light commercial vehicles are now fitted with an Australian Standard engine immobiliser as standard. Exceptions are some Ford Courier models, Mazda Bravo (optional), Mitsubishi Express and Nissan Navara. The NMVTRC is currently liaising with non-complying manufacturers about the expected timeframes for moving to standard fitting.

**Table 3. Australia - Passenger and light commercial vehicles aged less than 10 years registered at 30th June 2005, by immobiliser type**

Immobiliser status	Light commercial vehicles aged <10 years		Passenger vehicles aged <10 years	
	Number registered	% of registered	Number registered	% of registered
Australian Standard	344,743	34	4,465,351	75
Non-Australian Standard	46,120	5	568,893	10
No Immobiliser	633,478	62	939,485	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,024,341</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5,973,729</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table is based on all jurisdictions registration figures received as an electronic extract. Less than 10 years old = vehicles manufactured post-1995 for the 2005 registration snapshot.

Table 4 shows that Toyota, Ford and Holden accounted for the largest proportions of stolen light commercial vehicles throughout the 12 month period. Amongst these makes, the large majority of stolen vehicles did not have any form of immobiliser fitted. Amongst makes with 50 or more thefts, Volkswagen showed the lowest recovery rate of 60 per cent, which suggests that Volkswagen are a popular target among professional thieves.

**Table 4. Australia - Light commercial vehicles stolen and recovered by manufacturer, Oct 2004 - Sept 2005**

Manufacturer	Number of thefts	% of thefts	Number not recovered	% of thefts recovered	Immobiliser status - Number (%) of thefts		
					Aust. Stand.	Non-Aust. Stand.	None
BEDFORD	8	<1%	4	50	0	0	8 (100%)
CHEVROLET	6	<1%	2	67	0	0	6 (100%)
CHRYSLER	3	<1%	1	67	0	0	3 (100%)
CITROEN	3	<1%	0	100	3 (100%)	0	0
DAIHATSU	26	<1%	4	85	2 (8%)	0	24 (92%)
DODGE	3	<1%	1	67	0	0	3 (100%)
FORD	2,113	26	456	78	351 (17%)	146 (7%)	1,616 (76%)
FPV	2	<1%	0	100	2 (100%)	0	0
GMC	1	<1%	0	100	1 (100%)	0	0
HOLDEN	1,699	21	441	74	422 (25%)	221 (13%)	1,056 (62%)
HSV	24	<1%	7	71	21 (88%)	0	3 (13%)
IVECO	4	<1%	1	75	2 (50%)	0	2 (50%)
JEEP	2	<1%	1	50	0	0	2 (100%)
KIA	19	<1%	1	95	1 (5%)	0	18 (95%)
LADA	1	<1%	0	100	0	0	1 (100%)
LAND ROVER	7	<1%	3	57	1 (14%)	0	6 (86%)
LEYLAND	5	<1%	4	20	0	0	5 (100%)
MAZDA	468	6	90	81	16 (3%)	0	452 (97%)
MERCEDES-BENZ	33	<1%	8	76	21 (64%)	0	12 (36%)
MITSUBISHI	770	9	142	82	70 (9%)	0	700 (91%)
NISSAN	450	5	81	82	15 (3%)	0	435 (97%)
PROTON	1	<1%	0	100	1 (100%)	0	0
SUBARU	60	1	12	80	4 (7%)	0	56 (93%)
SUZUKI	46	1	10	78	6 (13%)	0	40 (87%)
TATA	8	<1%	3	63	0	0	8 (100%)
TOYOTA	2,369	29	539	77	77 (3%)	0	2,292 (97%)
VOLKSWAGEN	72	1	29	60	29 (40%)	0	43 (60%)
UNKNOWN	31	<1%	9	71	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,234</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,849</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1,047</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>6,820</b>

\*Recovered' indicates vehicles recovered by end December 2005 for NT, Vic, NSW and Qld, and vehicles covered by end September 2005 for all other jurisdictions.

Table 5 shows that almost half of the stolen passenger/light commercial vehicles (47 per cent) have an estimated value of \$5,000 or less. The mean value of unrecovered vehicles is higher than that for all light commercial vehicles, which is consistent with the theory that professional thieves are more likely to target more valuable vehicles.

**Table 5. Australia - Light commercial vehicles stolen and recovered by value categories, Oct 2004 - Sept 2005**

Estimated value	Number of thefts	% of thefts	Number not recovered	% of thefts recovered
Up to \$1000	1,176	14	261	78
\$1,001 to \$5,000	2,689	33	474	82
\$5,001 to \$10,000	1,051	13	269	74
\$10,001 to \$15,000	861	10	236	73
\$15,001 to \$20,000	711	9	187	74
\$20,001 to \$25,000	546	7	135	75
\$25,001 to \$ 30,000	442	5	92	79
\$30,000 +	85	1	19	78
Unknown	673	8	176	74
Total value of stolen LC vehicles = \$67,127,830		Total value of unrecovered LC vehicles = \$15,984,969		
Mean value of stolen LC vehicles = \$8,878		Mean value of unrecovered LC vehicles = \$9,555		

Vehicle value information was derived from the Glass' Guide electronic research data service. The value for vehicles up to ten years old was the last recorded manufacturers recommended retail price or the median value achieved by a franchise dealer. For vehicles older than ten years, the price was for an average condition vehicle that is in original, but not perfect condition throughout. Where a Glass' value was unable to be assigned to the stolen motor vehicle data, but the vehicle was in a known market segment, the segment average was applied. For the remaining unknown vehicles, an arbitrary \$500 was allocated. 'Recovered' indicates vehicles recovered by end December 2005 for NT, Vic, NSW and Qld, and vehicles covered by end September 2005 for all other jurisdictions.

A random sample of 200 thefts occurring in South Australia was drawn (representing 32 per cent of thefts), and these cases were examined to investigate what other property was stolen along with the vehicle. Overall, other property was also stolen in 46 cases (23 per cent). Table 6 shows that the most common property stolen with the vehicle was tools, power tools and/or work equipment (30 cases), most of which was likely to be already in the vehicle. In 3 cases, a large number of household appliances and equipment was stolen suggesting that the vehicle may have been stolen, at least in part, to transport the other stolen goods. However, the majority of property stolen with the vehicles appeared to be stored either in or near the vehicles, suggesting that the vehicle was the main theft target.

**Table 6. South Australia - Other property stolen with vehicles; random sample of 200 thefts occurring between Oct 2004 - Sept 2005**

Property	No. of cases	Details
Tools/work equipment	30	Includes power tools, ladders, wheelbarrows etc.
Other vehicle/parts	11	Includes motorcycles (3 cases), a passenger vehicle, a 4-wheel drive, tyres and/or mag wheels (3 cases), car batteries (2 cases), one set of number plates and an engine.
Personal items	9	Includes clothing and sunglasses. In one case the clothing was taken from the house.
Household items/appliances	5	In 3 cases, a large number of household appliances and equipment was stolen suggesting that the vehicle may have been stolen, at least in part, to transport the other stolen goods. One case included jewellery from within the house.
Caravan/trailer	4	
Cash	3	In amounts of \$20, \$30 and \$300.
Vehicle keys	2	
ID/Credit cards	2	
CDs	1	
Other	1	Military equipment, rifle and ammunition.
<b>Total number of cases where other property stolen = 46 (23%)</b>		



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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