

Designing crime out of your vehicle

By international standards NSW is a safe place to live.

Since 2000 there has been a reduction of over 5 per cent in thefts from cars in NSWⁱ. However in the 12 months to June 2008, the number of incidents in NSW rose above 60,000 p/a for the first time since 2004. For many of us our car is the single most expensive item that we own. We often park our car outdoors and sometimes leave valuables inside.

Having your car stolen can be very inconvenient and stressful, and so can having valuables stolen from your car. The cost of repair to windows or locks damaged by thieves can often exceed the value of the item stolen from your carⁱⁱ.

You can play an important part in maintaining the security of your car and reducing the likelihood of becoming a victim of theft.

THE FACTS ON STEAL FROM MOTOR VEHICLE:

- Most thefts are crimes of opportunityⁱⁱⁱ
- Items stolen are often visible from outside the vehicle
- The most common modus operandi is breaking a window^{iv}

The most commonly stolen items are^v:

- Registration plates that are not fastened with tamper resistant screws
- GPS devices left in view from outside the vehicle
- Money and other valuables left in view

CHECKLIST

- Keep belongings out of sight
- Lock your doors and close your windows
- If you park in a garage make sure it is locked
- When parking on the street look for a space that is well lit and is visible to pedestrians
- Use a high quality steering wheel lock
- Install a high quality electric alarm
- Install an engine immobiliser (immobilisers should meet Australian Standard 4601:1999)

MAKE YOUR VEHICLE SAFE:

- 1 When parking your car make sure all of the windows are up, and your car is locked.**
This will make it harder for anyone to enter your car.
- 2 Install tamper resistant registration plate screws.**
This will make it harder for anyone to steal your registration plates.
- 3 Remove your GPS from view, and wipe away any suction marks left on your windscreen.** Suction marks are a tell tale sign that you've left your GPS in your vehicle.
- 4 Disable Bluetooth on your GPS when not in use.**
Mobile phones can be used to detect the presence of Bluetooth devices, even if they are out of view, making it easier for thieves to find an easy target.
- 5 Keep your vehicle free of any valuables and personal items.** Even an old item of clothing on the back seat or loose change on the floor can be enough to tempt someone to break in.
- 6 Lock your garage.** If you park in a garage, make sure it is locked. This will make sure no one can access your car.
- 7 Park safe.** When parking on the street try to avoid quiet back streets and ensure that you park in an area that is well lit and free of any objects that may obscure your vehicle.
- 8 Keep your keys safe.** Keep your keys in a secure place. Your key ring should not have your home address or name on it; a mobile phone number is best.

ⁱ BOCSAR, Report 2008-68648-15, Crime Trends Tool; ⁱⁱ Mayhew, P. (2003) Counting the Costs of Crime in Australia, Australian Institute of Criminology; ⁱⁱⁱ Felson, M., Clarke, R.V. (1998) Opportunity Makes the Thief, Practical theory for crime prevention, Home Office; ^{iv} BOCSAR, data provided October 2008; ^v Varshney, A., Fitzgerald, J. (2008) The problem of steal from motor vehicle in New South Wales, BOCSAR