



## The problem of steal from motor vehicle in New South Wales

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*The recorded incidence of steal from a motor vehicle increased by 4.3 percent in New South Wales, between 2005/06 and 2006/07. Money and registration plates are the items most commonly stolen. The increase in steal from motor vehicle incidents was limited to the statistical subdivisions of: Inner Sydney; Inner Western Sydney; Central Western Sydney; Blacktown; Central Northern Sydney and Lower Northern Sydney. More than 70 percent of the total NSW increase occurred in Inner Sydney and Central Western Sydney. Despite most steal from motor vehicle incidents involving cars parked in public streets, the increase has been largely confined to car parks. An analysis of victimisation in individual car parks found that a large number of incidents were concentrated in a small number of car parks. In Inner Sydney, ten car parks accounted for six percent of all incidents (569 incidents). These ten car parks accounted for 27 percent of the increase in Inner Sydney and 12 percent of the statewide increase. In Central Western Sydney, seven percent of all steal from motor vehicle incidents (256 incidents) occurred in a single car park. This car park was responsible for 30 percent of the increase in Central Western Sydney and eight percent of the statewide increase.*

*Keywords: Crime, theft, steal from motor vehicle, car parks, CCTV, crime prevention*

### INTRODUCTION

Motor vehicles are the target of a large amount of property crime in New South Wales. Each year NSW Police receive reports that more than 25,000 cars have been stolen and more than 50,000 cars have been broken into in order to steal their contents.

While the number of motor vehicles themselves that are stolen has fallen steadily since 2001, the most recent crime statistics for New South Wales show an increase in the incidence of thefts from motor vehicles reported to police. The number rose by 4.3 percent from 56,119 in the 12 months to June 2006 to 58,560 in the 12 months to June 2007. Figures to December 2007 show the incidence of this offence is still increasing.

There has been little research into steal from motor vehicle, its nature and spatial correlates in New South Wales. This paper focuses on the following questions about stealing from motor vehicles:

1. What is the nature of the offence, what items are stolen and how are they stolen?
2. Where are the increases concentrated geographically?
3. What premises are offences taking place in? For instance, are they occurring in residential locations or commercial car parks?
4. Are there some specific locations where vehicles are repeatedly victimised and which account for a disproportionate amount of the problem, or are the target areas dispersed?

### WHAT IS STOLEN FROM MOTOR VEHICLES AND HOW IS IT STOLEN?

In order to get a picture of the nature of steal from motor vehicle offences we investigated the circumstances of 150 randomly selected incidents that occurred in New South Wales in the first six months of 2007. This is only a very small fraction of the more than 50,000 incidents occurring each year, so results should be taken as indicative rather than definitive. We were interested in the types of items that were stolen and the modus operandi, or how the offenders conducted the offence.

Table 1 shows the frequency with which various items are stolen in these incidents. The single most common item stolen was money (stolen in 22% of the incidents studied), with the amounts

**Table 1. Items stolen in 150 randomly selected steal from motor vehicle incidents, Jan to Jun 2007**

<i>Items stolen from vehicles</i>	<i>Number<sup>^</sup></i>	<i>Percent<sup>*</sup></i>	<i>Average \$ value<sup>#</sup></i>
Money	33	22.0	206
Registration plates	32	21.3	31
Documents (credit and membership cards, papers, bank documents, driving licenses, E-Tags)	25	16.7	18
Car parts, wheels and spare tyres	18	12.0	597
Bags and luggage	16	10.7	98
Clothing/footwear/sunglasses	15	10.0	227
CDs	13	8.7	284
Wallets and handbags	13	8.7	188
Laptops	12	8.0	2333
Other electronic goods (chargers, radios, video games)	12	8.0	263
Mobile phones	11	7.3	217
CD players/car stereos	11	7.3	225
Tools/hardware	9	6.0	632
In-car navigation systems (GPS)	7	4.7	703
Cameras	7	4.7	471
iPods	6	4.0	305
Keys	5	3.3	0
Petrol and petroleum products	5	3.3	52
Other items (sports and medical equipment, toiletries etc)	6	3.3	87
No loss	14	9.3	0
Total incidents	150	-	603

<sup>^</sup> Sums to more than 150 because many incidents had more than one item stolen.

<sup>\*</sup> Sums to more than 100% since many incidents had more than one item stolen.

<sup>#</sup> NSW Police records an estimate of the value of items that are reported stolen. The average value shown here is calculated using this value for the 150 incidents analysed.

stolen ranging from \$2 to \$3,000. It is interesting that many thefts targeted the body of the car. Registration plates (stolen in 21% of the incidents studied), petrol (3%) and car parts such as wheels and bumper bars (12%) were all frequently stolen. Registration plates were the second most commonly stolen item. Registration plates, it should be noted, are often stolen by persons intending to engage in petrol theft (Moffatt & Fitzgerald 2006). The range of items stolen from within cars was wide. High value electrical goods, such as laptops, cameras, iPods, car stereos, mobile phones and in-car navigation systems, were all popular targets, as were many items with little resale value, such as clothing and CDs.

Table 2 shows the distribution of modus operandi employed across the sample incidents. In 35 percent of incidents, windows were smashed to gain entry to the interior of the car. In 30 percent of incidents, items such as number plates and car parts were stolen from the exterior of the car. Thirteen percent of vehicles had their locks tampered with and seven percent were subjected to other structural manipulation such as bending the doorframe or slicing the soft rooftop. Nine percent of vehicles in the study were unsecured when they were broken into.

## WHERE IS THE OFFENCE INCREASING?

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research regularly reports trends in eight major property crime categories; break and enter – dwelling, break and enter – non-dwelling, motor vehicle theft, steal from motor vehicle, steal from person, steal from dwelling, steal from retail store and fraud. Over the two years to June 2007, with the exception of steal from motor vehicle, the incidence of all these property crimes either fell significantly or remained stable.

**Table 2. Modus operandi employed by offenders in 150 randomly selected steal from motor vehicle incidents, Jan to Jun 2007**

<i>Modus operandi</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Window smashed	52	34.7
Item taken from exterior of vehicle	45	30.0
Lock forced open/lock manipulated	19	12.7
Access gained to unsecured vehicle	13	8.7
Other structural manipulation	11	7.3
Not described	10	6.7
Total incidents	150	100.0

Table 3 shows the distribution of, and trends in, steal from motor vehicle incidents across New South Wales in the 24 months to June 2007. In 2006/07, 68 percent of all incidents occurred in the Sydney Statistical Division.

Table 3 shows that the statewide increase is concentrated entirely in the Sydney Statistical Division. Sydney experienced an eight percent increase, while all other statistical divisions were either stable or, in the case of the North Western Statistical Division, trending downward.

### WHERE IS THE OFFENCE INCREASING IN SYDNEY?

Sydney Statistical Division comprises 14 subdivisions. Table 4 shows that, of these, six recorded an upward trend in steal from motor vehicle in the 24 months to June 2007. The number of steal from motor vehicle incidents increased by 33 percent in Inner Western Sydney, 27 percent in Lower Northern Sydney, 22 percent in Central Western Sydney, 13 percent in Inner Sydney, 12 percent in Central Northern Sydney and nine percent in Blacktown. Elsewhere in Sydney the offence was stable.

In addition to the percentage increase, it is also useful to consider the volume of additional incidents occurring in certain areas. The two locations with the highest volume of steal from vehicle incidents accounted for more than 70 percent of the statewide increase. In New South Wales there were 2,441 additional incidents of steal from motor vehicle occurring between 2005/06 and 2006/07; 44 percent of these occurred in Inner Sydney (with 1,077 extra incidents) and 27 percent occurred in Central Western Sydney (with 650 extra incidents). The analyses below, focuses on these two statistical subdivisions.

**Table 3. Steal from motor vehicle incidents in NSW by statistical division, 2005/06 to 2006/07**

<i>Statistical Division</i>	<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2006/07</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>24-month trend</i>
Sydney	36940	39921	2981	up 8.1%
Hunter	5664	5690	26	stable
Illawarra	2996	2953	-43	stable
Richmond-Tweed	1552	1683	131	stable
Mid-North Coast	1856	1842	-14	stable
Northern	1145	1227	82	stable
North Western	1433	862	-571	down 39.8%
Central West	1167	1153	-14	stable
South Eastern	1015	1120	105	stable
Murrumbidgee	1240	1041	-199	stable
Murray	925	875	-50	stable
Far West	180	190	10	stable
<b>Total NSW</b>	<b>56,119</b>	<b>58,560</b>	<b>2441</b>	<b>up 4.3%</b>

**Table 4. Steal from motor vehicle incidents in Sydney by statistical subdivision, 2005/06 to 2006/07**

<i>Statistical Subdivision</i>	<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2006/07</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>24 month trend</i>
Inner Sydney	8528	9605	1077	up 12.6%
Eastern Suburbs	2011	2134	123	stable
St George-Sutherland	2504	2566	62	stable
Canterbury-Bankstown	2517	2458	-59	stable
Fairfield-Liverpool	2887	2938	51	stable
Outer South Western Sydney	1964	1807	-157	stable
Inner Western Sydney	1319	1760	441	up 33.4%
Central Western Sydney	2923	3573	650	up 22.2%
Outer Western Sydney	2301	2186	-115	stable
Blacktown	2475	2694	219	up 8.8%
Lower Northern Sydney	1847	2351	504	up 27.3%
Central Northern Sydney	2090	2338	248	up 11.9%
Northern Beaches	1243	1300	57	stable
Gosford-Wyong	2331	2211	-120	stable
<b>Total Sydney SD</b>	<b>36940</b>	<b>39921</b>	<b>2981</b>	<b>up 8.1%</b>

### IS THE PROBLEM CONCENTRATED IN PARTICULAR PREMISES TYPES?

Table 5 shows the change between 2005/06 and 2006/07 in the frequency with which those stealing from motor vehicles targeted various types of premises in Sydney Statistical Division, Inner Sydney and Central Western Sydney Statistical Subdivisions. There are three important points to note about the table. The first (see column labelled ‘% of total’) is that, while most steal from motor vehicle incidents occur to cars parked in public streets, car parks account for a sizeable proportion of all incidents of steal from motor vehicle (32.3% in Sydney SD, 27.5% of Inner Sydney SSD and 49.8% of Central Western Sydney SSD). The second (see column labelled ‘Difference’) is that car parks accounted for the largest

numerical increases in incidents of stealing from a motor vehicle. The third (see ‘24 month trend’ column) is that all of the upward trends in steal from motor vehicle incidents occurred in car parks. The last column shows that, in the two statistical subdivisions with the largest volume of incidents, Inner Sydney and Central Western Sydney, the increase in incidents in car parks accounted for the majority of their total increases, 84 percent and 77 percent respectively.

NSW Police record information on the various types of car parks in which crimes occur. Table 6 shows the change between 2005/06 and 2006/07 in the frequency with which offenders stealing from motor vehicles targeted various types of car parks. For reasons already explained, the table is restricted to the Sydney Statistical Division and Inner Sydney and Central Western Sydney Statistical Subdivisions. The types of car parks that accounted for

the most steal from motor vehicle incidents in Sydney were, in order, residential car parks (31%), business/commercial car parks (22%) and shopping centre car parks (12%). Each of these, along with parking stations that accounted for 7% of steal from motor vehicle incidents, showed a significant upward trend.

The results vary slightly for the two statistical subdivisions with the largest volume of incidents. In Inner Sydney, the car parks with the greatest increases were parking stations (up 107% from 323 to 668), residential car parks (up 42% from 551 to 784) and business/commercial car parks (up 57% from 358 to 563). In Central Western Sydney the car parks with the greatest increases were residential car parks (up 56% from 464 to 724), shopping centre car parks (up 123% from 130 to 290) and business/commercial car parks (up 27% from 283 to 360).

**Table 5. Steal from motor vehicle incidents in Sydney SD, Inner Sydney SSD and Central Western Sydney SSD by premises type, 2005/06 to 2006/07**

<i>Statistical Division/ Subdivision</i>	<i>Premises Type</i>	<i>2005 /06</i>	<i>2006 /07</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>24-month trend</i>	<i>% of total increase in the SD/SSD</i>
Sydney SD	Business/commercial	1015	1107	2.8	92	stable	3.1
	Car park	10756	12877	32.3	2121	up 19.7%	71.2
	Outdoor/public place	15995	16390	41.1	395	stable	13.3
	Residential	8025	8492	21.3	467	stable	15.7
	All other premises	1149	1055	2.6	-94	stable	-3.2
	Total	36940	39921	100.0	2981	up 8.1%	100.0
Inner Sydney SSD	Business/commercial	102	85	0.9	-17	stable	-1.6
	Car park	1734	2643	27.5	909	up 52.4%	84.4
	Outdoor/public place	6013	6183	64.4	170	stable	15.8
	Residential	449	452	4.7	3	stable	0.3
	All other premises	230	242	2.5	12	stable	1.1
	Total	8528	9605	100.0	1077	up 12.6%	100.0
Central Western Sydney SSD	Business/commercial	93	142	4.0	49	stable	7.5
	Car park	1278	1781	49.8	503	up 39.4%	77.4
	Outdoor/public place	868	971	27.2	103	stable	15.8
	Residential	599	594	16.6	-5	stable	0.8
	All other premises	85	85	2.4	0	stable	0.0
	Total	2923	3573	100.0	650	up 22.2%	100.0

**Table 6. Steal from motor vehicle incidents occurring in car parks, Sydney Statistical Division and selected statistical subdivisions, 2005/06 to 2006/07**

<i>Statistical Division/ Subdivision</i>	<i>Type of car park</i>	<i>2005 /06</i>	<i>2006/07</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>24-month trend</i>
Sydney SD	Beach parking area	227	224	-3	stable
	Business/commercial	2379	2787	408	up 17.2%
	Commuter (excl railway)	132	141	9	stable
	Entertainment premises	386	381	-5	stable
	Hospital	148	150	2	stable
	Parking station	515	883	368	up 71.5%
	Railway	1178	1040	-138	stable
	Residential	2760	4001	1241	up 45.0%
	Restaurant/take away	35	40	5	stable
	Shopping centre	1390	1593	203	up 14.6%
	Sports ground	153	148	-5	stable
	Other	1453	1489	36	stable
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10756</b>	<b>12877</b>	<b>2121</b>	<b>up 19.7%</b>
Inner Sydney SSD	Beach parking area	3	3	0	n.c.
	Business/commercial	358	563	205	up 57.3%
	Commuter (excl railway)	13	37	24	n.c.
	Entertainment premises	92	117	25	up 27.2%
	Hospital	21	6	-15	n.c.
	Parking station	323	668	345	up 106.8%
	Railway	18	40	22	n.c.
	Residential	551	784	233	up 42.3%
	Restaurant/take away	4	4	0	n.c.
	Shopping centre	77	102	25	stable
	Sports ground	19	14	-5	n.c.
	Other	255	305	50	up 19.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1734</b>	<b>2643</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>up 52.4%</b>
Central Western Sydney SSD	Beach parking area	0	1	1	n.c.
	Business/commercial	283	360	77	up 27.2%
	Commuter (excl railway)	13	12	-1	n.c.
	Entertainment premises	47	38	-9	stable
	Hospital	40	64	24	stable
	Parking station	49	57	8	stable
	Railway	77	70	-7	stable
	Residential	464	724	260	up 56.0%
	Restaurant/take away	4	6	2	n.c.
	Shopping centre	130	290	160	up 123.1%
	Sports ground	26	30	4	stable
	Other	145	129	-16	stable
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1278</b>	<b>1781</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>up 39.4%</b>

*n.c.* Indicates that no trend was calculated. No trend is calculated if there are less than 20 incidents in either 12-month period.

## ARE OFFENCES CONCENTRATED IN CERTAIN CAR PARKS?

This section examines the question of whether certain car parks account for a disproportionate share of incidents of stealing from a motor vehicle. To address this question, we calculated longitude and latitude of all incidents in car parks that had complete address information. This enabled us to identify the number of incidents occurring in specific car parks. It is important to note that the frequency of incidents we counted at each location may be an underestimate because some offences did not have reliable addresses and others had discrepancies in their recorded addresses.

Table 7 shows the distribution of steal from motor vehicle incidents across car parks in the two statistical subdivisions with the largest volume of incidents: Inner Sydney and Central Western Sydney.

In Inner Sydney in 2006/07, 2407 steal from motor vehicle incidents occurring in car parks were geocoded to a unique

location. These incidents occurred in 931 unique car parks. The incidents were not, however, evenly dispersed. Of the 931 car parks, just ten of them, or one percent, accounted for nearly a quarter of incidents occurring in car parks. The ten car parks were: Wilson Harbourside Car Park, Darling Harbour; Kings Parking Sydney, 383 Kent Street; Sydney Entertainment Centre Car Park; Domestic Airport Terminal Car Park; Broadway Shopping Centre Car Park; Opera House Car Park; Goulburn St Car Park, Sydney; Wilson Parking Station Sydney, 431 Kent Street; Her Majesty's Car Park, Ultimo and Cinema Centre Car Park, 521 Kent Street.

In Central Western Sydney the concentration of incidents in a small number of car parks was even greater. In Central Western Sydney, 1620 steal from motor vehicle incidents occurring in car parks were geocoded to 672 unique car parks. Sixteen percent of steal from motor vehicle incidents occurring in car parks in Central Western Sydney occurred in a single car park, Westfield Parramatta, which had 256 incidents. A

quarter of incidents (413 incidents) were concentrated in only five car parks in Central Western Sydney. These car parks were Westfield Parramatta, Stocklands Merrylands, Lidcombe Railway Station, Westmead Hospital and Auburn Central Shopping Centre.

Many car parks with a high volume of incidents in 2006/07 have shown significant increases since 2005/06. The Westfield Parramatta car park in Central Western Sydney had 256 incidents in 2006/07 up from only 58 recorded incidents in 2005/06; this is an increase of 340 percent. Put another way, 30 percent of the total increase in steal from motor vehicle in Central Western Sydney, and eight percent of the total increase in New South Wales came from the Westfield Parramatta car park.

In Inner Sydney the ten car parks with the highest volume of offences showed increases of 104 percent between 2005/06 and 2006/07 (from 279 to 569). This accounted for 27 percent of the total increase in steal from motor vehicle in Inner Sydney and 12 percent of the total State increase for this offence.

The discussion above relates to problem car parks in Inner Sydney and Central Western Sydney where steal from motor vehicle has increased the most recently. However, there are also car parks with high volumes of steal from motor vehicle incidents across the rest of Sydney.

Table 8 below lists all the car parks in Sydney in which we identified 25 or more steal from vehicle incidents in 2006/07. The table also shows the volume of incidents in 2005/06 to indicate whether there has been an increase.

It can be seen that some car parks with a high volume of incidents have shown sizeable increases. For instance, Macarthur Square Shopping Centre, Campbelltown went from 66 incidents in 2005/06 up to 132 in 2006/07, an increase of 100 percent. In other car parks the offence has remained stable at a high level. This is the case with Westfield Liverpool, which had 96 incidents in 2005/06 and 95 incidents in 2006/07.

**Table 7. Number of steal from motor vehicle incidents occurring in unique car parks, Inner Sydney and Central Western Sydney, 2006/07**

No. of incidents in 2006/07	Inner Sydney SSD			Central Western Sydney SSD		
	Unique car parks	Total no. of incidents*	% of all incidents in Inner Sydney	Unique car parks	Total no. of incidents*	% of all incidents in Central Western Sydney
1	609	609	25.3	453	453	28
2 to 5	265	700	29.1	185	481	29.7
6 to 10	31	228	9.5	22	173	10.7
11 to 20	12	181	7.5	6	79	4.9
21 to 30	5	116	4.8	1	21	1.3
31 to 50	4	163	6.8	3	98	6.0
51 to 100	4	240	10.0	1	59	3.6
more than 100	1	139	5.8	1	256	15.8
Total	931	2407 <sup>^</sup>	100.0	672	1620	100.0

\* The total number of incidents occurring at any unique location is likely to be an underestimate as address information is not always accurate enough to determine precisely where an incident took place.

<sup>^</sup> The total includes 31 additional incidents recorded as having taken place at 'Wilson Car Park, Kent Street, Sydney'. There are two Wilson car parks on Kent Street and we could not establish the correct car park for these incidents due to the imprecise address.

**Table 8. Car parks in the Sydney Statistical Division with at least 25 incidents of steal from motor vehicle in 2006/07**

<i>Car park name and suburb</i>	<i>Street</i>	<i>Local Government Area</i>	<i>Statistical Subdivision</i>	<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2006/07</i>
Westfield Shopping Centre Parramatta	Campbell Street	Parramatta	Central Western Sydney	58	256
Wilson Harbourside Car Park, Darling Harbour#	100 Murray Street	Sydney	Inner Sydney	78	139
Macarthur Square Shopping Centre, Campbelltown	1 Gilchrist Drive	Campbelltown	Outer South Western Sydney	66	132
Castle Towers Shopping Centre, Castle Hill	8 Castle Street	Baulkham Hills	Central Northern Sydney	68	104
Westfield Shopping Centre Liverpool		Liverpool	Fairfield-Liverpool	96	95
Seven Hills Railway Station, Seven Hills	Prospect Highway	Blacktown	Blacktown	98	91
Westpoint Shopping Centre, Blacktown		Blacktown	Blacktown	51	82
Westfield Shopping Centre Mount Druitt	Carlisle Avenue	Blacktown	Blacktown	50	79
Kings Parking, Sydney	383 Kent Street	Sydney	Inner Sydney	21	76
Westfield Shopping Centre Hurstville	Park Road	Hurstville	St George-Sutherland	19	69
Leumeah Railway Car Park, Leumeah		Campbelltown	Outer South Western Sydney	78	67
Stocklands Shopping Centre, Merrylands	McFarlane Street	Holroyd	Central Western Sydney	35	59
Sydney Entertainment Centre Car Park, Haymarket	Darling Drive	Sydney	Inner Sydney	52	57
Domestic Airport Terminal Car Park, Mascot		Botany Bay	Inner Sydney	13	56
Broadway Shopping Centre, Broadway	Bay Street	Sydney	Inner Sydney	42	51
Wilson Opera House Car Park, Sydney		Sydney	Inner Sydney	10	48
Holsworthy Railway Station, Holsworthy		Liverpool	Fairfield-Liverpool	31	47
Goulburn St Parking Station Sydney	Goulburn Street	Sydney	Inner Sydney	18	45
Penrith Railway Station, Penrith		Penrith	Outer Western Sydney	67	44
Wilson Parking Station, Sydney###	431 Kent Street	Sydney	Inner Sydney	15	38
Westfield Penrith Plaza, Penrith	Riley Street	Penrith	Outer Western Sydney	29	37
Lidcombe Railway Station, Lidcombe	Bridge Street	Auburn	Central Western Sydney	35	35
Westfield Shopping Centre Miranda	Kingsway	Sutherland Shire	St George-Sutherland	38	33
Westmead Hospital, Westmead		Parramatta	Central Western Sydney	20	32
Her Majesty's Car Park, Ultimo	Thomas Street	Sydney	Inner Sydney	13	32
Auburn Central Shopping Centre, Auburn	Queen Street	Auburn	Central Western Sydney	8	31
Paddys Market Shopping Centre, Homebush West	Great Western Highway	Strathfield	Inner Western Sydney	22	30
Westfield Shopping Centre Tuggerah		Wyong	Gosford-Wyong	13	29
Macquarie Shopping Centre, Macquarie Park	197 Herring Road	Ryde	Lower Northern Sydney	48	29
Casula Mall, Shopping Centre Casula		Liverpool	Fairfield-Liverpool	17	29
Warwick Farm Railway Station, Warwick Farm	Remembrance Avenue	Liverpool	Fairfield-Liverpool	37	28
Cinema Centre Car Park, Sydney####	521 Kent Street	Sydney	Inner Sydney	17	27
Western Side Glenfield Railway Station Car Park, Glenfield	Roy Watts Road	Campbelltown	Outer South Western Sydney	12	27
Warringah Mall Shopping Centre, Brookvale	Pittwater Road	Warringah	Northern Beaches	11	27
Centro Bankstown Shopping Centre, Bankstown North Terrace		Bankstown	Canterbury-Bankstown	41	25

# This figure includes incidents occurring in the Novotel Hotel car park which is at the same address.

## This number is an underestimate. NSW Police recorded 31 incidents as occurring at 'Wilson's Car Park Kent St'. Since there are two Wilson car parks on Kent St we could not assign these incidents to a specific location. The two Wilsons car parks are at 431 Kent Street and Cinema Centre Car Park at 521 Kent Street.

### In NSW Police records this car park was recorded as 'Wilson Parking, 521 Kent Street'. By physical verification we found it to be called Cinema Centre Car Park. See also the above note about undercounting for this car park.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the 12 months to September 2007, NSW Police recorded 58,560 incidents of stealing from a motor vehicle. The prevalence of this offence is on the increase. The average value of items stolen in each incident of stealing from a motor vehicle is about \$600. The direct cost of all recorded incidents of steal from motor vehicle in the 12 months to September 2007 could, therefore, be in excess of \$35 million. The owners of victimised vehicles also face the inconvenience and expense of repairing broken windows and locks to their cars.

The major findings of this bulletin are:

- A large proportion of steal from motor vehicle incidents involved the theft of car parts from the exterior of the vehicle (30% of our small sample). The most common items stolen from the body of the car are registration plates.
- Where the theft is directed towards items in the interior of the car, entry is usually achieved by smashing a window or forcing the lock. In such situations the targets are extremely varied. They range from valuable electronic goods to items with little resale value such as clothing. Bags, handbags, wallets and personal documents are all popular targets. Money is the item most commonly stolen.
- The increase in steal from motor vehicle is quite geographically centralised. Not only was the increase limited to the Sydney Statistical Division (up 8.1%), the increase was concentrated in the six statistical subdivisions of Inner Sydney, Inner Western Sydney, Central Western Sydney, Blacktown, Lower Northern Sydney and Central Northern Sydney. Of these, Inner Sydney and Central Western Sydney had the highest volume of incidents and were responsible for 44 percent and 27 percent of the total State increase respectively.
- While most incidents of steal from motor vehicle involve vehicles parked outdoors in public streets (41% of total) the increase in the offence has come from a sharp rise in incidents in car parks. This is true of Sydney Statistical Division (increase of 19.7% in incidents occurring in car parks), Inner Sydney Statistical Subdivision (increase of 52.4%) and Central Western Sydney (increase of 39.4%). The problematic car parks were residential car parks, business commercial car parks, parking stations and shopping centre car parks.
- A small number of car parks account for a large proportion of all incidents and much of the increase. The car park at Westfield Parramatta shopping centre had 256 incidents in 2006/07, up from just 58 in the previous year. The increase in this one car park accounted for eight percent of the total State increase in the offence. In Inner Sydney ten car parks had 569 incidents in 2006/07, up from 279 in 2005/06. This increase of 290 incidents accounted for 12 percent of the State increase.

There is no space here for a detailed discussion of how to reduce the incidence of this kind of crime. Interested readers are referred to research and discussion by Geason and Wilson (1990); Webb, Brown and Bennett (1992); Gill and Spriggs (2005) and Welsh and Farrington (2002). We conclude the bulletin simply by listing some of the avenues that might be explored to reduce the incidence of stealing from a motor vehicle:

- Develop more secure methods for fixing number plates to vehicles
- Conduct public education campaigns in high crime areas designed to alert the public to the dangers of leaving valuable goods in parked vehicles
- Install CCTV surveillance cameras in high-risk car parks

- Encourage vehicle owners to invest in better vehicle security (e.g. car alarms)
- Increase surveillance by private security in high risk car parks
- Increase police patrols in public areas/locations of high risk.

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**NOTES**

1. In the 12 months to September 2007 NSW Police recorded 27,181 incidents of motor vehicle theft and 58,560 incidents of steal from motor vehicle. Of the 58,560 incidents of steal from motor vehicle 7,886 (13.4%) were recorded as 'attempted'.
2. Inner Sydney Statistical Subdivision includes the Botany Bay, Leichhardt, Marrickville and Sydney Local Government Areas.
3. Central Western Sydney Statistical Subdivision includes the Auburn, Parramatta and Holroyd Local Government Areas.
4. Appendix A shows results for the other four statistical subdivisions that showed significant increases in steal from motor vehicle: Inner Western Sydney, Blacktown, Central Northern Sydney and Lower Northern Sydney.
5. Results for the other four Sydney subdivisions exhibiting significant increases can be found in Appendix B.
6. Nine percent of the total 2643 incidents of steal from motor vehicle in Inner Sydney could not be geocoded.
7. The actual number of unique car parks in which cars were broken into is likely to be smaller than this as the names and addresses of several car parks were recorded in multiple forms by the police, making it difficult to establish if they were distinct premises.
8. Nine percent of the total 1781 incidents of steal from motor vehicle in Central Western Sydney could not be geocoded.
9. Based on our sample of 150.

**APPENDIX A**

**Recorded incidents of steal from motor vehicle by premises type in selected statistical subdivisions<sup>^</sup>, 2005/06 to 2006/07**

<i>Statistical Subdivision</i>	<i>Premises</i>	<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2006/07</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Diff</i>	<i>24 month trend</i>	<i>% of total increase in the SD/SSD</i>
Inner Western Sydney SSD	Business/ Commercial	68	57	3.2	-11	stable	2.5
	Car park	384	675	38.4	291	up 75.8%	66.0
	Outdoor/Public Place	559	680	38.6	121	stable	27.4
	Residential	287	323	18.4	36	up 12.5%	8.1
	All other premises	21	25	1.4	4	stable	0.9
	Total	1319	1760	100.0	441	up 33.4%	100.0
Blacktown SSD	Business/ Commercial	78	93	3.5	15	stable	6.8
	Car park	822	1012	37.6	190	up 23.1%	86.8
	Outdoor/Public Place	663	574	21.3	-89	stable	-40.6
	Residential	825	911	33.8	86	up 10.4%	39.3
	All other premises	87	104	3.9	17	stable	7.8
	Total	2475	2694	100.0	219	up 8.8%	100
Lower Northern Sydney SSD	Business/ Commercial	53	90	3.8	37	up 69.8%	7.3
	Car park	611	778	33.1	167	up 27.3%	33.1
	Outdoor/Public Place	808	1046	44.5	238	up 29.5%	47.2
	Residential	330	399	17.0	69	stable	13.7
	All other premises	45	38	1.6	-7	stable	-1.4
	Total	1847	2351	100.0	504	up 27.3%	100.0
Central Northern Sydney SSD	Business/ Commercial	61	77	3.3	16	up 26.2%	6.5
	Car park	688	789	33.7	101	stable	40.7
	Outdoor/Public Place	688	710	30.4	22	stable	8.9
	Residential	581	707	30.2	126	up 21.7%	50.8
	All other premises	72	55	2.4	-17	stable	-6.9
	Total	2090	2338	100.0	248	up 11.9%	100.0

<sup>^</sup> Inner Sydney and Central Western Sydney figures can be seen in Table 5.

## APPENDIX B

Steal from motor vehicle incidents occurring in car parks, in selected statistical subdivisions<sup>^</sup>, 2005/06 to 2006/07

<i>Statistical sub-division</i>	<i>Type of car park</i>	<i>Jul 2005 - Jun 2006</i>	<i>Jul 2006 - Jun 2007</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>24 month trend</i>
Inner Western Sydney SSD	Beach Parking Area	1	1	0	n.c.
	Business/Commercial	69	89	20	Stable
	Commuter (excl Railway)	0	2	2	n.c.
	Entertainment Premises	5	7	2	n.c.
	Hospital	0	1	1	n.c.
	Parking Station	3	3	0	n.c.
	Railway	5	5	0	n.c.
	Residential	228	452	224	up 98.2%
	Restaurant/Take Away	0	1	1	n.c.
	Shopping Centre	43	74	31	stable
	Sports Ground	3	7	4	n.c.
	Other	27	33	6	stable
	<b>Total</b>		<b>384</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>291</b>
Blacktown SSD	Business/Commercial	161	241	80	up 49.7%
	Commuter (excl Railway)	15	16	1	n.c.
	Entertainment Premises	37	36	-1	stable
	Hospital	10	8	-2	n.c.
	Parking Station	15	5	-10	n.c.
	Railway	199	182	-17	stable
	Residential	170	252	82	up 48.2%
	Restaurant/Take Away	1	3	2	n.c.
	Shopping Centre	127	169	42	stable
	Sports Ground	4	13	9	n.c.
	Other	83	87	4	stable
<b>Total</b>		<b>822</b>	<b>1012</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>up 23.1%</b>
Lower Northern Sydney SSD	Beach Parking Area	0	2	2	n.c.
	Business/Commercial	144	149	5	stable
	Commuter (excl Railway)	6	4	-2	n.c.
	Entertainment Premises	8	10	2	n.c.
	Hospital	6	15	9	n.c.
	Parking Station	37	40	3	stable
	Railway	2	5	3	n.c.
	Residential	194	328	134	up 69.1%
	Restaurant/Take Away	1	2	1	n.c.
	Shopping Centre	131	113	-18	stable
	Sports Ground	7	4	-3	n.c.
	Other	75	106	31	up 41.3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>611</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>up 27.3%</b>
Central Northern Sydney SSD	Beach Parking Area	3	2	-1	n.c.
	Business/Commercial	187	188	1	stable
	Commuter (excl Railway)	6	8	2	n.c.
	Entertainment Premises	23	14	-9	n.c.
	Hospital	3	5	2	n.c.
	Parking Station	2	3	1	n.c.
	Railway	51	66	15	stable
	Residential	145	223	78	stable
	Restaurant/Take Away	2	4	2	n.c.
	Shopping Centre	169	148	-21	stable
	Sports Ground	10	11	1	n.c.
	Other	87	117	30	stable
	<b>Total</b>		<b>688</b>	<b>789</b>	<b>101</b>

<sup>^</sup> Inner Sydney and Central Western Sydney figures can be seen in Table 6

n.c. – Indicates that no trend was calculated. No trend is calculated if there are less than 20 incidents in either 12-month period.

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