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Spike in vehicle thefts triggers reminder to motorists: Guard your keys

The Insurance Council of Australia is reminding motorists to guard their car keys after statistics released by the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council (NMVTRC) show vehicle thefts have risen for the first time in a decade.

The vehicle theft council found that 57,540 vehicles were stolen in 2011, averaging 158 a day, an increase of 2.4 per cent on the total number of thefts reported in 2010.

The ICA's General Manager Policy, Risk and Disaster Planning, Mr Karl Sullivan, who is a council member of the NMVTRC, said the figures bucked the long-term downward trend of motor vehicle thefts since 2001, when 142,000 vehicles, or about 389 vehicles a day, were stolen.

"With the improvements in vehicle security, some thieves are now turning to the theft of keys and transponders as a means of stealing cars. Motorists should ensure they keep their keys secure," he said.

"Since 2001 there has been a decline in motor vehicle thefts of 5 to 10 per cent a year. 2011 is the first year since then in which we've seen a rise.

"It's alarming and should act as a wake-up call to motorists to make sure their car keys are left out of sight to avoid tempting opportunistic thieves.

"Most Australians rely on their cars, vans and trucks to get to work and back, take children to school, do the shopping or go on holiday.

"If you do not have an insurance policy or it does not cover you for theft, how would you cope without your vehicle and how much would it cost you to replace it?

"These are the tough questions people need to ask if they are not insured for vehicle theft."

NMVTRC Executive Director Ray Carroll said: "The turnaround from a decade of decline in vehicle thefts, to an annual increase serves as a clear warning to all motorists. There is no room for complacency."

The Insurance Council advises motorists to make sure they have more than just the compulsory third-party (CTP/Green Slip) insurance. CTP is mandatory in all states and territories and does not cover theft, nor damage to vehicles.

Some consumer tips are available here:

http://insurancecouncil.com.au/media/56220/consumer_tips_-_motor_vehicle_insurance.pdf