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# Organised property crime markets in Queensland

## A strategic assessment

### Summary

The purpose of this strategic assessment is to describe the nature and extent of organised property crime markets in Queensland. This assessment follows the Crime and Misconduct Commission's (CMC) 2005 property crime intelligence assessment, and the previous two organised crime markets assessments published in 1999 and 2004.

### Previous assessments

In 1999 we conducted our first assessment of organised crime markets in Queensland, which included property crime (known as Project Krystal). We assessed the risk posed by organised property crime as MEDIUM.

In 2004 we conducted our second assessment of organised crime markets and also assessed the risk as MEDIUM. A MODERATE INCREASE in organised property crime was predicted as we suggested that the level of organised criminal involvement in property crime markets was increasing. Separately, we assessed the risk posed by motor vehicle rebirthing as LOW and predicted that this risk would remain STABLE in the short term.

In 2005, we published another assessment of property crime that expanded on the intelligence obtained during our 2004 assessment.

### Scope of our assessment

We define *organised property crime* as a criminal conspiracy involving repeated theft and subsequent receiving of high-value property by a number of people in a criminal network. The *property crime market* refers to the acquisition and subsequent disposal of stolen property. Opportunistic thieves — also termed 'conventional thieves' by Freiberg (1997) — are not the focus of this strategic assessment as they do not ordinarily engage in organised property crime. This report does not include a strategic assessment of armed robbery, nor does it deal with theft of firearms and explosives.

The aim of this strategic assessment is to:

- identify the extent of organised crime networks in specific property crime markets
- identify if there have been any significant differences in property crime markets since the 2004 organised crime markets assessment and the 2005 property crime assessment
- describe the characteristics of property crime markets
- identify the key drivers of property crime markets
- determine the supply and demand trends for specific property crime markets
- assess the risk of property crime markets in Queensland
- identify any challenges for law enforcement agencies in detecting and disrupting property crime markets

- identify any emerging trends within property crime markets (for example, types of property, movement of stolen goods, means of disposal).

The CMC has jurisdiction to examine organised property crime under s. 25 of the *Crime and Misconduct Act 2001*, which states that the CMC has a responsibility to investigate major crime as referred to it by the CMC Reference Committee.

## How we conducted our assessment

The assessment uses information from a variety of sources, including intelligence holdings, relevant research literature, recorded crime data, human sources and operational

information. We consulted with the Queensland Police Service (QPS), Australian Federal Police (AFP), Australian Crime Commission (ACC) and Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. We also consulted with other non-law enforcement stakeholders, including insurance, energy, construction, metal and retail industry representatives, the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council (NMVTRC), the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, the Queensland Office of Fair Trading and the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC).

Using Freiberg's (1997) Property Crime Market Model, our assessment analysed Queensland property crime markets as a series of interactions between the following individuals:

- *suppliers* — those who commit the initial property offence (for example, professional thieves and organised shoplifters)
- *distributors and retailers* — those who receive the property from the supplier in exchange for a commodity (for example, pawnbrokers and other legitimate businesses)
- *purchasers* — the ultimate consumer (this could be a member of the public purchasing stolen property through the internet).

## Abbreviations and acronyms

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| ABS    | Australian Bureau of Statistics   |
| ACC    | Australian Crime Commission   |
| AFP    | Australian Federal Police   |
| AIC    | Australian Institute of Criminology   |
| ASOC   | Australian Standard Offence Classification                                    |
| ATM    | automatic teller machine  |
| CCTV   | closed circuit television   |
| CM Act | <i>Crime and Misconduct Act 2001</i> (Qld)                                    |
| CMC    | Crime and Misconduct Commission   |
| CMEIG  | Construction and Mining Equipment Industry Group                              |
| CRAVED | Concealable, Removable, Available, Valuable, Enjoyable and Disposable (items) |
| DUMA   | Drug Use Monitoring in Australia  |
| DVD    | digital versatile disc  |
| GPS    | global positioning system   |
| MO     | modus operandi  |
| NLIS   | National Livestock Identification System                                      |
| NMVTRC | National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council                                |
| PCIU   | Property Crime Investigation Unit (of QPS)                                    |
| QCC    | Queensland Crime Commission   |
| QPRIME | Queensland Police Records and Information Management Exchange                 |
| QPS    | Queensland Police Service   |
| SARCIS | Stock and Rural Crime Investigation Squads (of QPS)                           |
| SCOC   | State Crime Operations Command (of QPS)                                       |
| SIM    | subscriber identity module  |
| SPIRS  | Stolen Property Investigation and Recovery System                             |
| VHS    | video home system   |
| WOVM   | whole of vehicle marking  |

## Acknowledgments

In preparing this document, officers from the Strategic Intelligence Unit of the Crime and Misconduct Commission consulted with various officers from the Queensland Police Service (including State Crime Operations Command and Regional Commands), the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, the Australian Crime Commission and the Australian Federal Police. We also consulted with the Australian Institute of Criminology, Cash Converters, CHEP Australia Limited, eBay Australia and New Zealand (Trust and Safety Division), the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries and the Office of Fair Trading (Queensland). We would also like to thank the national retailer, the major national insurer, the construction company, the energy company and the metal recycling company we consulted with. We wish to acknowledge the valuable assistance of all stakeholders and their officers.

Helene Wells (Research Officer, Research and Prevention Unit) was primarily responsible for writing the report and conducting the analyses presented.

The Strategic Intelligence Unit would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the Research and Prevention Unit. The report was prepared for publication by the Communications Unit.

## Reported property crime in Queensland

Overall, the number of reported property offences in Queensland (whether organised or not) has undergone a sustained decrease in recent years. According to QPS data, the following types of property crime have decreased:

- unlawful entry has decreased (about 42%) since 1999–2000, from 78 146 reported offences to 45 181 reported offences in 2007–08
- steal from dwellings has decreased (about 32%) since 2001–02, from 8727 reported offences to 5987 reported offences in 2007–08
- receiving stolen property has decreased (about 34%) since 2003–04, from 1781 reported offences to 1167 reported offences in 2007–08
- other stealing (for example, stealing from person, shop stealing and stealing things sent by post) has decreased (about 36%) since 2002–03, from 48 412 offences to 31 043 offences in 2007–08
- stock-related theft has decreased (about 17%) from 204 reported offences in 2004–05 to 169 offences in 2007–08
- the number of vehicles stolen each year in Queensland has halved (about 52%) since 1998–99, with 8780 offences reported in 2007–08 (compared with 18 463 offences in 1998–99).

The decrease in stolen vehicles is likely to have been influenced by greater attention to vehicle security, whole of vehicle marking (WOVM) and new regulatory policies in relation to registration. For example, Queensland Transport's written-off vehicle register aims to minimise the illegal use of vehicle identifiers and parts by keeping a record of vehicles, trailers, motorbikes and caravans that are 15 years or younger.

Some types of property crime in Queensland have remained relatively stable or increased slightly:

- bringing stolen goods into Queensland has remained relatively stable over the years, with only small numbers reported — 105 offences reported in 1998–99 and 108 offences reported in 2007–08
- possessing property suspected stolen has increased slightly, from 1058 reported offences in 2005–06 to 1338 in 2007–08
- tainted property offences increased in the last financial year (3155 offences) after a decrease from 4201 offences in 2003–04 to 2938 offences in 2006–07.

The majority of tainted property offences are detected through police tactical action for drug offences. The QPS *Annual statistical review* (QPS 2008a) states that the slight increases in possessing property suspected stolen and tainted property offences are most likely the result of greater law enforcement activity. This is because these offences tend to be detected by, rather than reported to, police.

## Characteristics of organised property crime markets

The characteristics of Queensland's property crime markets are similar to those outlined in our 2004 assessment:

- low rates of stolen property recovery — disposal route not entirely known
- some property suspected of being shipped to South-East Asian destinations
- large-scale break and enter of warehouses and distribution centres using a sophisticated *modus operandi* (MO) and pre-surveillance measures, as well as extensive knowledge of security systems and 'insider knowledge'
- problems of auditing and accountability with second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers (although no evidence of organised networks distributing stolen property on a large scale)
- evidence of organised shoplifting networks (for example, targeting 'high-end' retailers for expensive clothing and handbags)
- links between fraud offences and disposal of property (such as fraudulent recording of scrap metal receipts)
- drug–property crime nexus.

## Emerging trends and issues

The impact of the declining economy on organised property crime is difficult to calculate. The global economic downturn may be a driver of increased opportunistic property crime offending in the short term. The opportunistic theft of groceries (food, razors, baby items) and driving off without paying for fuel have recently been reported in the media (Hughes 2008; Vogler 2009). From the information we gleaned during our assessment, volatile global economic markets have, and will continue to have, an influence on opportunistic property crime in Queensland. The extent of that influence remains to be seen. Criminal networks, as well as legitimate businesses, may seek to take advantage of changing economic conditions. However, our consultations did not reveal any intelligence to suggest that organised networks have moved into property crime markets as a result of the changing economic environment.

The nexus between drugs and property crime is still evident, with stolen property (electronic equipment, clothing, vehicles) recovered during drug raids in Queensland. Southport and Brisbane watch-house data indicate that about three-quarters of property crime detainees tested positive to illicit drugs — again highlighting the association (AIC 2008).

There is no evidence of organised networks currently targeting stock (for example, cattle or sheep) in Queensland, or organised networks targeting large supplies of fuel or farm/earth-moving equipment.

The disposal of stolen property using the internet is occurring in Queensland, but the extent of this is not well known by law enforcement. The internet will continue to be exploited by both opportunistic and organised offenders as it facilitates rapid disposal of stolen property while offering offenders anonymity.

## Key findings

Intelligence suggests that small, organised criminal networks are committing property crime offences in Queensland. From our consultations with law and non-law enforcement stakeholders, organised networks are not controlling Queensland property crime markets. Reported (and suspected) organised property crime networks appear concentrated in South-East Queensland. From our consultations, it seems that organised networks target large-scale warehouses and distribution centres, 'steal to order' and commit organised shoplifting offences. However, there is little intelligence to date to suggest that the number of organised property crime networks has increased significantly since our 2004 assessment. Although organised networks are fluid and are motivated by financial gain, they do not significantly control Queensland property crime markets. Opportunistic offenders are the prevailing type of offender within Queensland property crime markets.

## Risk assessment

Despite any impact the global economic downturn may have on *opportunistic* offending, we believe that the risk posed by *organised* property crime in Queensland is MEDIUM and predict that the risk will remain STABLE in the short term. We believe that the risk posed by vehicle theft and rebirthing (and, to a lesser extent, theft and rebirthing of vessels) in Queensland is LOW and will remain STABLE in the short term.

## Strategies

In undertaking our strategic assessment, we have identified a number of general strategies that may enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts to reduce the incidence of property crime and its impact on the community. We encourage law enforcement to continue with the following strategies:

- continued monitoring of the online environment to target persons of interest and to determine disposal routes of offenders, as well as information-sharing forums used by opportunistic and organised offenders
- enhanced intelligence sharing between specialist units of the QPS and between the QPS regions
- use of CMC coercive hearings, when resources permit, to elicit additional information from key targets in order to determine the disposal route and receivers of stolen property, and the dynamics of the organised property crime network.

## Legislative and regulatory issues

Our assessment also highlights the following legislative and regulatory issues:

- consider the need to introduce compulsory electronic recording of second-hand and pawnbroker transactions in Queensland
- consider the need to amend the *Stock Act 1915* (Qld) so that forced musters can be undertaken by police to recover stray stock from a neighbouring landowner
- consider the need to introduce vehicle and vessel rebirthing legislation similar to that in New South Wales, should the risk of these crimes increase in Queensland.

# 1: Introduction

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**This chapter explains the scope of this strategic assessment, the reasons for our analysis of organised property crime markets in Queensland, the definitions used and the structure of the overall assessment.<sup>1</sup>**

## Scope of the assessment

The purpose of our assessment is to examine property crime markets in Queensland, primarily to reveal the nature and extent of organised criminal activity within this environment. As defined in Schedule 2 of the *Crime and Misconduct Act 2001* (CM Act), organised crime means criminal activity that involves:

- a. indictable offences punishable on conviction by a term of imprisonment not less than 7 years; and
- b. 2 or more persons; and
- c. substantial planning and organisation or systematic and continuing activity; and
- d. a purpose to obtain profit, gain, power or influence.

Our assessment focuses predominantly on significant organised crime networks and their involvement in specific property crime markets. We use a market-based approach to analyse the nature and extent of organised criminal activity in Queensland and assess the relative risk posed by property crime markets.

The aim of this assessment is to:

- identify the extent of organised crime networks in specific property crime markets
- identify if there have been any significant changes in property crime markets since the 2004 organised crime market assessment and the 2005 property crime assessment
- describe the characteristics of property crime markets
- identify the key drivers of property crime markets
- determine the supply and demand trends for specific property crime markets
- assess the risk of property crime markets in Queensland
- identify any challenges for law enforcement agencies in detecting and disrupting property crime markets
- identify any emerging trends within property crime markets (such as types of property, movement of stolen goods, means of disposal).

The assessment will inform stakeholders about state trends and significant issues, as well as drivers of specific markets and participants in those markets.

The Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) has jurisdiction to examine organised property crime through s. 25 of the CM Act, which states that the CMC has a function to investigate major crime referred to it by the CMC Reference Committee.

## Background

The CMC monitors the criminal environment in Queensland by means of an ongoing series of strategic assessments. The CMC has undertaken two strategic assessments (1999 and 2004) and the more recent 2005 intelligence assessment specific to organised property crime.

### The 1999 assessment of organised crime markets

The first strategic assessment was published in 1999 — *Project Krystal: a strategic assessment of organised crime in Queensland* (QCC 1999). It was a partnership between the then Queensland Crime Commission (QCC) and the Queensland Police Service (QPS). The assessment considered illicit drugs, property crime, money laundering and fraud, wildlife crime, prostitution and financial crime. Some examples of organised property crime were identified. However, consultations with law enforcement at the time did not reveal any networks to be controlling property crime markets within Queensland. The 1999 assessment defined the level of risk posed by organised property crime as MEDIUM. One of the recommendations implemented from the 1999 report included the proposed ongoing monitoring of organised crime markets in Queensland by the QCC/CMC (see QCC 1999 for the list of recommendations).

### The 2004 assessment of organised crime markets

We fulfilled our ongoing monitoring commitment in 2004 with the publication of our second assessment — *Organised crime markets in Queensland: a strategic assessment* (CMC 2004). The 2004 organised crime markets assessment defined the level of risk posed by organised property crime as MEDIUM. The same assessment indicated a MODERATE INCREASE in the organised property crime market trend. It was acknowledged that elements of the stolen property market, particularly high-value property and whitegoods,

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<sup>1</sup> A series of separate strategic assessments (property crime, illicit drugs, money laundering, fraud and emerging trends and issues) will be published throughout 2009.



were being targeted by organised crime networks. The organised component of the property crime markets was described as 'increasing in size', although the majority of property crime in Queensland was not considered 'organised' (CMC 2004, p. 32). The 2004 assessment separately assessed the risk of motor vehicle rebirthing as LOW and predicted that it would remain STABLE in the short term.

## The 2005 assessment of property crime

In 2005 the CMC published *Property crime in Queensland: an intelligence assessment* (CMC 2005). This report examined the property crime market for evidence of organised property crime activity. It differed from the 1999 and 2004 strategic assessments in that it focused exclusively on property crime. Because it expanded on the intelligence obtained during our 2004 strategic assessment of property crime, a risk assessment was not undertaken. Part of the 2005 assessment involved commissioning a Queensland University of Technology honours student to interview 47 property offenders incarcerated in Queensland prisons. This study gave some insight into the offenders' modus operandi (MO) and target selection, method of disposal and motivation to offend.<sup>2</sup>

The 2005 assessment confirmed the existence of organised criminal activity and a strong correlation between property offending and illicit drug use in Queensland. We found that property crime markets were viewed as organised in that there were established networks of suppliers and distributors/retailers. The report identified a considerable intelligence gap in terms of our understanding of property crime markets, with very little known about the motivations of the ultimate consumer — the purchaser of the stolen goods. The report noted an increase in the incidence of shoplifting and identified the online selling environment as a corner of the stolen property market that was ripe for exploitation.

## Definitions

We define *organised property crime* as a criminal conspiracy involving repeated theft and subsequent receiving of high-value property by a number of people in a criminal network. This definition was also used in our 2005 assessment. The *property crime market* refers to the acquisition and

subsequent disposal of stolen property. The opportunistic thief (the 'conventional thief'), as the name suggests, does not usually engage in organised property crime (Freiberg 1997). Because of this, our assessment does not focus on opportunistic offenders. This report does not include a strategic assessment of armed robbery, nor does it deal with theft of firearms and explosives.

We categorise the QPS property crime offences as shown in Appendix 1. For the purpose of this assessment, property crime includes the following:

- unlawful entry — includes burglary (with or without violence), enter with intent, break and enter of dwellings, shops and other premises
- steal from dwellings — includes removal of property from a dwelling where no breaking has occurred (for example, the theft of a television aerial)
- receive stolen property
- possess property suspected stolen
- bring stolen goods into Queensland
- tainted property — possess, receive or dispose of tainted property
- stock-related theft — includes cattle and equine stealing and unlawful use
- other stealing — includes shop stealing and stealing from a person.

Our risk assessment also separately considers:

- motor vehicle theft — unlawful use and possession
- motor vehicle (other) — includes attempting to steal, stealing from and enter with intent
- other theft — includes bicycle, vessel and aircraft theft.

We also include the theft, rebirthing and trading of small vehicle and marine vessel parts. This includes, but is not limited to:

- cars, motorcycles, campervans, trucks, buses and plant/earth-moving equipment
- boats, yachts and jet skis.

In keeping with our 2004 strategic assessment, we refer to the theft and rebirthing of vehicles and vessels separately from other property crime as these offences are sufficiently distinct to warrant a separate risk assessment.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> We did not interview incarcerated property offenders as part of our 2009 organised crime markets assessment.

<sup>3</sup> Although the 2004 assessment separately assessed property crime and motor vehicle rebirthing, it did not include marine vessel theft and rebirthing.

As with the 2005 assessment, we adopt Freiberg’s (1997) Property Crime Market Model (Figure 1). It describes the property crime market as a series of interactions between the following:

- *suppliers* — those who commit the initial property offence (for example, professional thieves and organised shoplifters)
- *distributors and retailers* — those who receive the property from the supplier in exchange for a commodity (for example, pawnbrokers and other legitimate businesses)
- *purchasers* — the ultimate consumer (this could be a member of the public purchasing stolen property through the internet).<sup>4</sup>

We use these terms throughout the assessment.

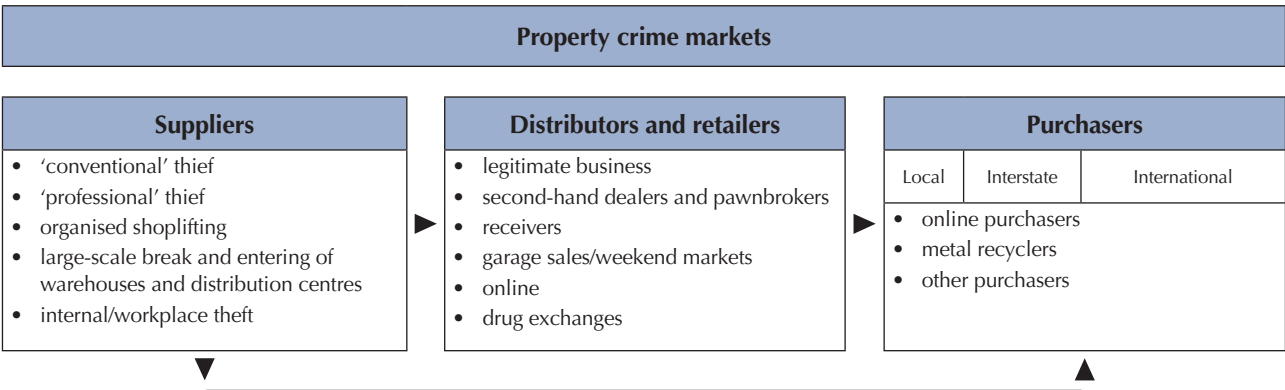
<sup>4</sup> According to Professor Arie Freiberg (personal communication, 10 November 2008) and Dr Don Weatherburn (personal communication, 12 November 2008), there has been no update or amendment to the Property Crime Market Model (Figure 1).

## Structure of the report

The assessment is presented in six chapters. The content of the remaining chapters is summarised below:

- **Chapter 2** explains how we conducted our strategic assessment, the methodology and the risk assessment used, as well as the associated limitations in our data collection.
- **Chapter 3** provides an overview of property crime and vehicle rebirthing in Queensland, using recorded data.
- **Chapter 4** describes and analyses the profile of organised property crime markets in Queensland with reference to information gleaned from our consultations.
- **Chapter 5** reviews the issues and emerging trends relating to organised property crime markets in Queensland.
- **Chapter 6** summarises the key findings, assesses the level of risk to the Queensland community posed by organised property crime markets, and outlines law enforcement strategies and regulatory issues.

**Figure 1: Freiberg’s (1997) Property Crime Market Model**



Note: Adapted from Freiberg 1997, p. 239.

## 2: How we conducted our strategic assessment

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**This chapter explains the methods used to gather information, the associated limitations and the risk assessment methodology used in our strategic assessment.**

### Methodology

Our assessment brings together information we obtained from:

- a review of relevant literature, including open source and classified material from Queensland, other Australian jurisdictions and international sources
- a review of relevant legislation
- a review of relevant law enforcement investigations<sup>5</sup>
- a review of intelligence holdings
- analysis of information obtained from semi-structured interviews during consultations with key law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders
- analysis of information obtained from Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) coercive hearings
- analysis of quantitative data.

### Consultations

Consultations involved a series of semi-structured interviews with representatives from the following organisations and law enforcement agencies:

- the Australian Crime Commission (ACC)
- the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service
- the Australian Federal Police (AFP)
- the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC)
- Cash Converters (Queensland)
- CHEP Australia Limited (pallet and container pooling service)<sup>6</sup>
- eBay Australia and New Zealand (Trust and Safety Division)
- the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries
- the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council (NMVTRC)
- the Office of Fair Trading (Queensland)
- the Queensland Police Service (QPS)
- a major national insurer
- a national retailer

- a construction company
- a major energy company
- a national metal recycler.

We conducted consultations with QPS representatives in each police region between August and October 2008 (see Appendix 2 for a geographical breakdown of police regions and districts). Where possible, the Regional Crime Coordinator, the Regional Intelligence Coordinator, district intelligence officers and investigators participated in the semi-structured interviews. All QPS districts were represented apart from Mt Isa (Northern Region), Longreach (Central Region), and Charleville and Warwick (Southern Region).<sup>7</sup> We also consulted with State Crime Operations Command (SCOC), including the Property Crime Investigation Unit (PCIU), Task Force Hydra (Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs), the Stock and Rural Crime Investigation Squads (SARCIS) and the Organised Crime Investigation Unit (Vehicle Crime).

Consultations with AFP representatives were undertaken in Canberra, Brisbane and Cairns. We also consulted with Customs officers in Townsville, Cairns, Brisbane and Canberra and ACC representatives in Canberra. As well, we consulted with other stakeholders as outlined in Appendix 3.

### Quantitative data

We analysed quantitative data from the following sources:

- Queensland Police Service
  - Total number of reported property-related offences (and rate of reported offences per 100 000 population) for each police region and district in Queensland (July 1998 – December 2008) — see Appendixes 1 and 5.
- A major national insurer
  - Total number of home theft claims (2002–03 to 2007–08) and motor vehicle theft claims (1998–99 to 2007–08).
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
  - Total number of reported property-related offences for Queensland and Australia (data cube 1998–2007).
- Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries
  - Total number of motorcycle sales in Queensland and Australia (2004–2008).

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<sup>5</sup> We are especially grateful to Intelligence Analyst Linda Lonton from the QPS Property Crime Investigation Unit (PCIU) for preparing the material for the majority of the PCIU operation summaries.

<sup>6</sup> See <[www.chep.com](http://www.chep.com)> for more information.

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<sup>7</sup> The Regional Crime Coordinators and Regional Intelligence Coordinators provided a coordinated regional perspective and an overview of district-level trends and issues. Therefore it was not always necessary to meet individually with each QPS district.



- National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council
  - Total number of vehicle-related offences for Queensland and Australia (1998–99 to 2007–08) — see Appendixes 7 and 8.
- Office of Fair Trading (Queensland)
  - Total number and location of Queensland licences for second-hand dealers, pawnbrokers and metal recyclers (2003–04 to 2007–08).

These quantitative data were analysed to gain a greater understanding of Queensland property crime markets (without regard for whether or not the property crime was organised). We triangulated these datasets with information obtained during our consultations in an effort to verify and validate our information sources. For the sake of brevity, not all analyses are presented in this report (such as insurance data analyses).

## Limitations of information used in our assessment

### Qualitative data

Our assessment involved semi-structured interviews with key law enforcement and non-law enforcement representatives. We considered this information, along with the data derived from intelligence databases and reviews of law enforcement operations, in light of its reliability and validity. Such information is dependent on a number of factors, including:

- the source of the information
- respondents' recollection of significant investigations
- in the case of human sources, the motivation of the provider in supplying such information.

Some of the comments during our consultations were anecdotal. We attempted to validate these comments by triangulating this information with other sources (for example, intelligence holdings, recorded crime data, and law enforcement operation summaries). This assists us in closing the intelligence gap between what is known and what remains unverified in relation to organised property crime markets in Queensland.

### Quantitative data

Recorded crime data should be treated with caution for the following reasons:

- recorded crime levels do not always reflect the actual level of crime occurring in a community
- not all crimes are reported to, or detected by, police — the public may deem an offence too trivial to report, or they may doubt that police will take action (ABS 2006; QPS 2008a)
- recorded crime can be significantly influenced by population density within each police region
- the detection of crime may be influenced by the number of police operating in a particular area (as well as the nature of the policing practices in the area)
- recorded crime may not necessarily reflect the proportion of organised criminal activity in Queensland as this may remain undetected.

The data provided by the QPS are extracted from the Queensland Police Records and Information Management Exchange (QPRIME). QPRIME consolidates information systems previously used by the QPS. When added together, police district statistics do not always agree with police region statistics, and nor do regional statistics sum to

Figure 2: Risk assessment methodology and scale

| The risk assessment matrix is essentially a series of formulae to determine level of risk:   |          |     |        |      |           |         |
|--|----------|-----|--------|------|-----------|---------|
| <p><b>Desire × confidence = intent</b></p> <p><b>Resources × knowledge = capability</b></p> <p><b>Intent × capability = likelihood of threat</b></p> <p><b>Likelihood of threat × harm / consequences = RISK</b></p> |          |     |        |      |           |         |
| Negligible   | Very low | Low | Medium | High | Very high | Certain |
|  |          |     |        |      |           |         |

Queensland totals. This is because the accuracy of an address may be unknown to police or the offence may be part of a covert operation and cannot be recorded to maintain security (QPS 2008a). For more information about the way the QPS counts offences, refer to the Annual statistical review (QPS 2008a).

Given the abovementioned methodological limitations, it is not possible to state conclusively that *all* emerging trends in relation to Queensland organised property crime have been successfully detected. Intelligence gaps remain.

## Risk assessment

The risk assessment process applied to criminal markets and networks follows the methodology used by the CMC. This provides consistency in strategic assessment processes and allows comparison with previous risk levels. The risk assessment is essentially a series of measures to determine level of risk. Figure 2 provides an overview of our risk assessment methodology and Appendix 4 gives a more detailed explanation.

### 3: What we know — recorded property crime in Queensland

This chapter provides a statistical overview of general property crime trends nationally and in Queensland. This chapter does not explore the organised nature of property crime; rather, it outlines the total number and rate of reported property crime offences in Queensland. Appendix 5 provides more graphs of the rate and total number of reported property crime offences in Queensland.

#### National trends in reported crime

The number of reported property crime offences in Australia has decreased since 2001. Data collated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2008) outline this decreasing trend for unlawful entry with intent, motor vehicle theft and other theft (see Figure 3).<sup>8</sup>

#### Queensland trends in reported property crime

If we look closely at the different types of Queensland-based property crime offences (see Appendix 5), we can see that most have decreased since 2001 (CMC 2005;

Queensland Government 2008). According to QPS data, the following types of property crime have decreased:

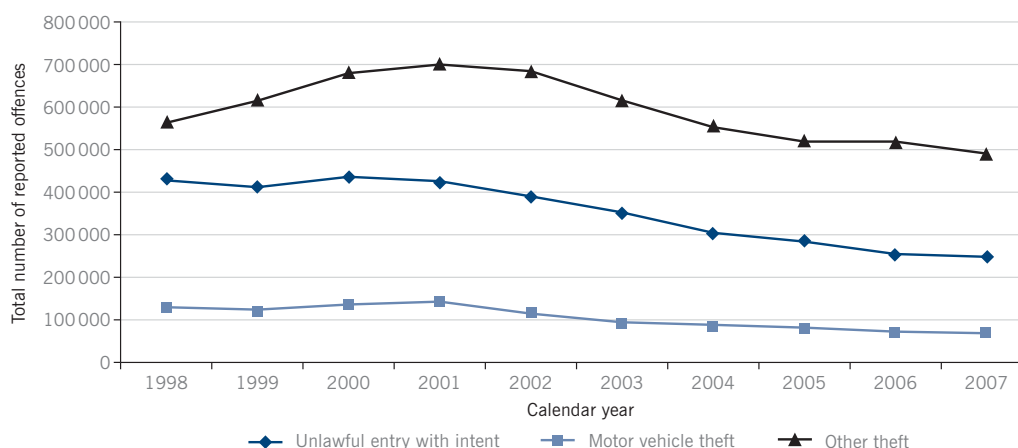
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- possessing property suspected stolen has increased slightly, from 1058 reported offences in 2005–06 to 1338 in 2007–08
- tainted property offences have only recently increased, with 3155 offences in the last financial year after a decrease from 4201 offences in 2003–04 to 2938 in 2006–07.

8 'Unlawful entry with intent', 'motor vehicle theft' and 'other theft' are national offence categories and have been mapped by the ABS to the Australian Standard Offence Classification (ASOC). *Unlawful entry with intent* (0711) = Unlawful Entry with Intent/Burglary, Break and Enter; *Motor vehicle theft* (0811, 0812) = Theft of a Motor Vehicle, Illegal Use of a Motor Vehicle; *Other theft* (0813, 0821, 0823, 0829, 0841) = Theft of Motor Vehicle Parts or Contents, Theft from a Person (Excluding by Force), Theft from Retail Premises, Theft (Except Motor Vehicles) not elsewhere classified, Illegal Use of Property (Except Motor Vehicles).

Figure 3: Reported crime in Australia (1998–2007)



Notes: Data sourced from ABS 2008 (4510.0 *Recorded crime* — per calendar year). See Footnote 8 for ABS definitions of unlawful entry with intent, motor vehicle theft and other theft.

The majority of tainted property offences are detected through police tactical action for drug offences.<sup>9</sup> The QPS *Annual statistical review* (QPS 2008a) states that the slight increases in possessing property suspected stolen and tainted property offences are most likely the result of greater law enforcement activity. This is because these offences tend to be detected by, rather than reported to, police.

Figure 4 outlines the reported rate of offences that relate to the distribution and handling market segment of Queensland property crime. A downward trend in the rate of tainted property and receiving stolen property is outlined (see also Appendix 5).

Figure 5 summarises the reported decreasing rate of unlawful entry, steal from dwellings and other stealing. Stock-related

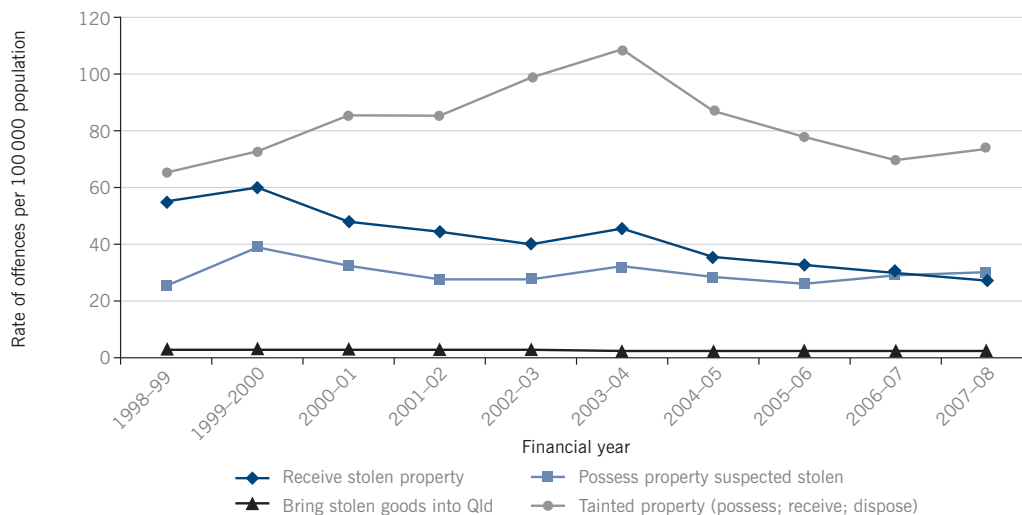
theft is not included in Figure 5 because of the low rate of offences; however, Figure 16 (in Chapter 5) outlines the rate.

The 'top ten' items involved in theft insurance claims (based on total numbers from 2002–03 to 2007–08) include jewellery, laptops, cameras and mobile phones. Crime prevention practitioners label such property as CRAVED items as they tend to be:

- Concealable
- Removable
- Available
- Valuable
- Enjoyable
- Disposable (Clarke & Eck 2005).

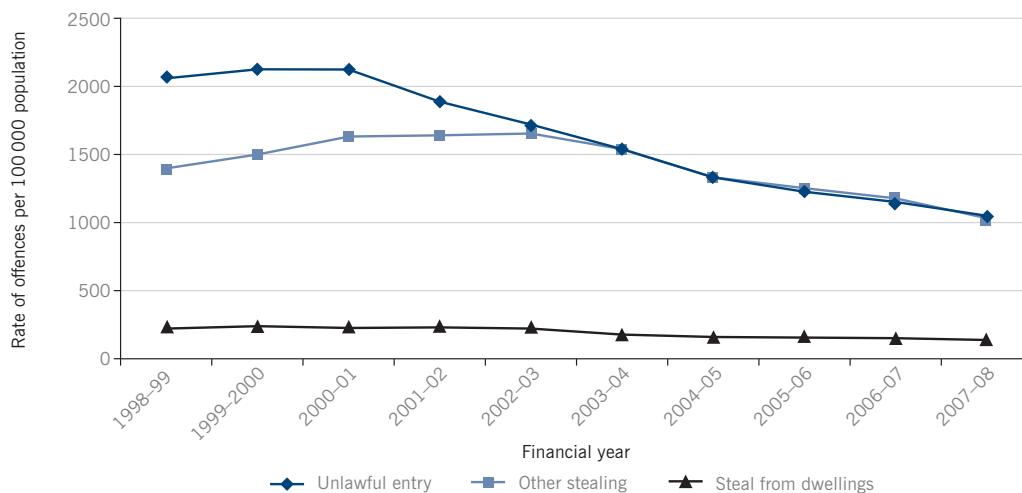
9 Liaison with the QPS State Intelligence Group (20 February 2009).

**Figure 4: Reported rate of Queensland property offences relating to the handling market segment**



Note: Data sourced from QPS. See also Appendix 5.

**Figure 5: Reported rate of additional Queensland property crime offences**



Note: Data sourced from QPS. See also Appendix 5.

## National trends in reported vehicle theft and other related offences

Australia wide, the number of vehicles stolen each year has decreased, while the proportion of unrecovered vehicles has increased (NMVTRC 2009). Queensland is mirroring this national trend. The National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council (NMVTRC) has outlined five major drivers of the escalating proportion of unrecovered vehicles in Australia and, indeed, Queensland:

- repairable write-offs (uneconomical to repair) being used as a 'Trojan horse' for stolen parts
- higher prices for non-ferrous and precious metals (reports that vehicles could secure up to \$300 per tonne in 2008)
- unlicensed motor-vehicle traders involved in the 'end-of-life' processing chain (that is, a black market exists for stolen parts and replacements)
- the large number of vehicles dumped in waterways
- local government protocols (such as the process for contract removal) breaking down in the retrieval of abandoned vehicles (NMVTRC 2008b, 2008d).<sup>10</sup>

Total vehicle thefts in Australia have now declined by more than 50 per cent since 2001 (NMVTRC 2008b). Among the factors that may have produced this decrease in motor vehicle theft are:

- greater attention to vehicle security, such as the use of immobilisers — 54 per cent of passenger/light commercial vehicles in Australia are now fitted with immobilisers (NMVTRC 2008d)

<sup>10</sup> For example, Operation Council Liaison (Victoria Police Service) 'found that up to 10 per cent of abandoned vehicles designated for auction or crushing were in fact uncleared stolen vehicles' (NMVTRC 2008b, p. 20).

- whole of vehicle marking (WOVM) using, for example, DataDot<sup>11</sup> technology (Box & Taylor 2007)
- new regulatory policies in relation to registration, such as Queensland Transport's written-off vehicle register.<sup>12</sup>

Between 2002 and 2004, an Australia-wide ban on re-registering the most severely damaged written-off vehicles was introduced (MM Starrs Pty Ltd 2008). The NMVTRC states: 'The more effective management of written off vehicles' identities, improved vehicle identification and strong police responses have impacted significantly on the activities of criminal networks in Australia' (NMVTRC 2008d, p. 7).

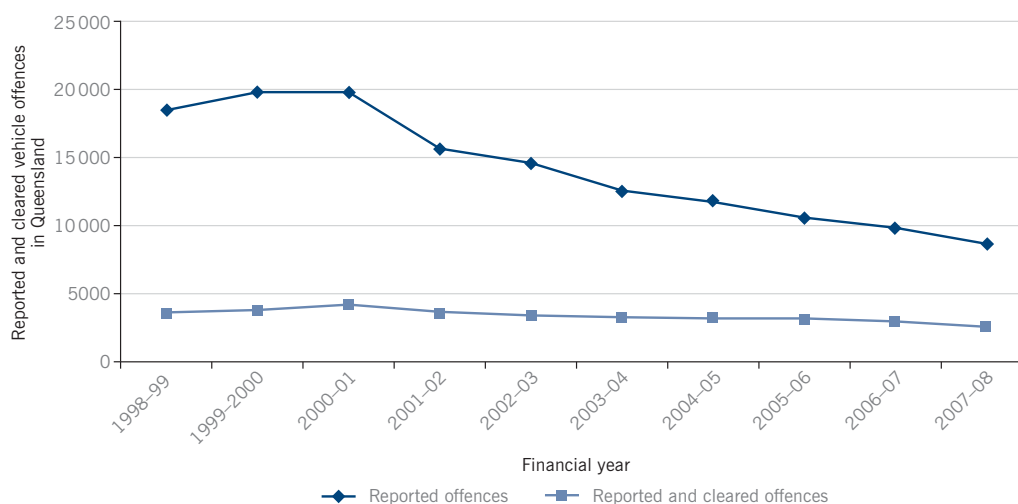
## Queensland trends in reported vehicle theft and other related offences

The number of vehicle thefts per day in Queensland has decreased from 49 per day in 2001–02 to 25 per day in 2007–08 (NMVTRC 2008c). Vehicle theft in Queensland has halved since 1998–99, with 8780 offences reported last financial year (compared with 18 463 offences in 1998–99). Figure 6 illustrates the decrease in reported vehicle theft in

<sup>11</sup> DataDot technology involves uniquely coded small disks (the size of a grain of sand) that can be applied to vehicles or other products to identify them. For more information, see <[www.datadotdna.com/australia/](http://www.datadotdna.com/australia/)>.

<sup>12</sup> Queensland Transport's vehicle written-off register is a database that records the details of vehicles, trailers, motorbikes and caravans 15 years or younger that have been classed as a statutory write-off (too badly damaged for safe use) or a repairable write-off (uneconomical to repair). The aim of this register is to minimise the opportunity for illegal use of vehicle identifiers and parts. For more information, see the Queensland Transport website, <[www.transport.qld.gov.au/Home/Registration/Motor\\_vehicles/Written\\_off\\_vehicle/Written\\_off\\_vehicle\\_register](http://www.transport.qld.gov.au/Home/Registration/Motor_vehicles/Written_off_vehicle/Written_off_vehicle_register)> (accessed 30 January 2009).

**Figure 6: Reported and cleared vehicle offences in Queensland**



Note: Data sourced from QPS (motor vehicle — steal; unlawful use; possess — 0811).



Queensland since 2000–01. It also outlines the number of reported and cleared offences, which has remained relatively stable since 1998–99.

As shown in Figure 7, the theft rate per 1000 vehicle registrations in Queensland has decreased since 2000–01, as has the theft rate per 1000 population.

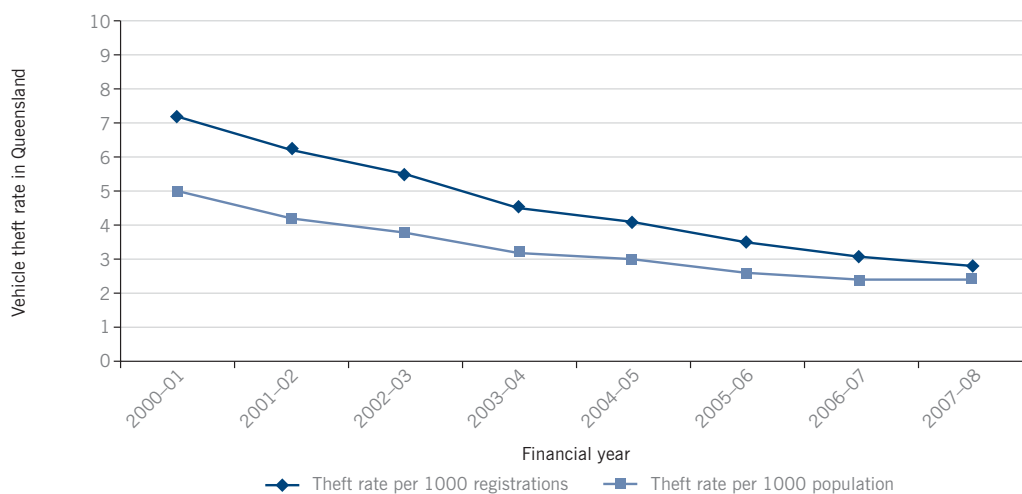
Despite the overall decrease in theft, the proportion of unrecovered vehicles in Queensland is increasing. Figure 8 shows the percentage of different classes of unrecovered stolen vehicles in Queensland (see also Appendix 6 for the NMVTRC's explanation of passenger/light commercial,

motorcycles, heavy/other and unknown vehicles). These data indicate the increase in the unrecovered percentage for:

- passenger/light commercial vehicles — 11.4 per cent in 1998–99 to 21 per cent in 2007–08
- motorcycles (includes sidecars, monkey bikes and quad bikes) — 52.4 per cent in 1998–99 to 63 per cent in 2007–08
- unknown<sup>13</sup> — 29.3 per cent in 1998–99 to 46.7 per cent in 2007–08.

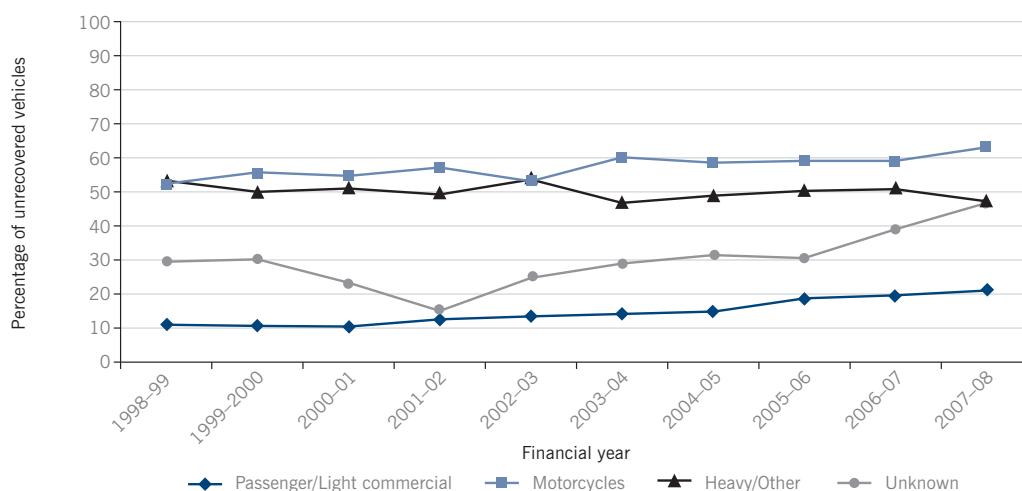
13 Vehicle type is not reported by all police jurisdictions for the NMVTRC to aggregate, hence the category 'unknown' — see Appendix 6.

**Figure 7: Queensland vehicle theft rate per 1000 registrations and population**



Notes: Data sourced from the Comprehensive Auto-Theft Research System website (NMVTRC 2008e). See <<http://ncars.on.net/analyse.asp>> (accessed 16 February 2009). Registration figures are from the Queensland registration database as at 31 December each year. Population figures have been obtained by NMVTRC from the ABS.

**Figure 8: Percentage of unrecovered vehicles in Queensland**



Notes: Data sourced from NMVTRC. Percentage of unrecovered vehicles represents the proportion of vehicles stolen in that financial year that are not recovered. Data received by NMVTRC from policing jurisdictions may be incomplete (hence the category 'unknown').

In contrast, a slight decreasing trend is noted with heavy/ other vehicles (such as trucks, buses, forklifts, prime movers): 53.7 per cent in 1998–99 to 46.8 per cent in 2007–08.

Theft of motorcycles continues to be problematic, as Australia-wide it represents one in 10 stolen vehicles and about one-quarter of all non recoveries (NMVTRC 2008b). The high unrecovered rate of motorcycles in Queensland (and Australia-wide) is influenced by:

- limited identification numbers on the body
- identification numbers usually not recovered on off-road and unregistered motorcycles
- the ease of disposal of (and high demand for) motorcycle parts.<sup>14</sup>

There are two factors that affect the high theft rate of motorcycles: 1) the increase in sales of motorcycles Australia-wide<sup>15</sup> and 2) how motorcycles are defined and the inclusion of different body types within the definition of a motorcycle.

The NMVTRC category ‘motorcycles’ includes, among other things, choppers, cruisers, pit bikes, monkey bikes, mopeds, trail bikes, quad bikes, moto cross bikes, enduro bikes and trial bikes. Registration is required for some of these bikes (for example, choppers). However, others — such as moto cross bikes and mini bikes — are not required to be registered as they can only be used on private property or authorised competition tracks. The popularity of these bikes (and their parts), coupled with lax registration and security, contributes to the increasing trend in high unrecovered rates.<sup>16</sup>

14 International Association of Auto Theft Investigators Conference presentation (August 2008): Detective Senior Constable Andrew Jackson (Organised Motor Vehicle Theft Squad, Victoria Police Service).

15 Data provided by the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries.

16 Vehicle Crime Conference presentation (February 2009): Detective Sergeant Peter Ziser (Organised Crime Investigation Unit, QPS).

Over the years there has been a slight increase in the offence of attempting to steal, stealing from and enter with intent (‘motor vehicle (other)’), although small numbers are reported. The theft of bicycles, vessels and aircraft (‘other theft’) has decreased from a high of 7999 reported offences in 1998–99 to a low of 3107 in 2007–08. The NMVTRC data for vehicle theft in Queensland and Australia are presented in Appendixes 7 and 8.

Table 1 outlines reported property crime offences (as defined in Appendix 1) during July–December 2008. As the data supplied in Table 1 involve an incomplete financial period (not the full year July 2008 – June 2009), we did not include the rates and total number of offences in our overall analysis shown in Appendix 5.

## Summary

In Queensland, there has been a decrease in most classes of reported property crime since 2001. Of particular note are the reported decreases in unlawful entry and steal from dwellings. The slight increases in tainted property and possessing property suspected stolen are most likely the result of law enforcement activity (such as police tactical action for drug offences) as this offence is often detected by, rather than reported to, police. The ‘top ten’ items involved in theft insurance claims include jewellery, laptops, cameras and mobile phones. Motor vehicle theft in Queensland has halved since 1998–99, with 8780 offences reported in 2007–08, compared with 18463 offences in 1998–99. This decrease has most likely been influenced by greater attention to vehicle security, whole of vehicle marking and new regulatory policies. The increasing trend in the unrecovered motorcycle rate (resulting from the popularity of these bikes, coupled with lax registration and security) remains problematic.

**Table 1: Property crime data July–December 2008**

|  | Reported | July–December 2008             |                                       | Rate (reported per 100 000 persons) |
|--|----------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|  |          | Reported and cleared in period | Cleared in period reported previously |                                     |
| Unlawful entry                               | 21 873   | 3 944                          | 1 540                                 | 511                                 |
| Steal from dwellings                         | 3 102    | 517                            | 206                                   | 73                                  |
| Receive stolen property                      | 566      | 549                            | 75                                    | 13                                  |
| Possess property suspected stolen            | 610      | 529                            | 28                                    | 14                                  |
| Bring stolen goods into Queensland           | 49       | 17                             | 5                                     | 1                                   |
| Tainted property (possess; receive; dispose) | 1 146    | 1 016                          | 62                                    | 27                                  |
| Stock-related theft                          | 65       | 12                             | 7                                     | 1                                   |
| Other stealing                               | 23 419   | 8 110                          | 1 216                                 | 549                                 |
| Motor vehicle theft                          | 4 325    | 1 106                          | 326                                   | 101                                 |
| Motor vehicle (other)                        | 13 245   | 1 519                          | 446                                   | 310                                 |
| Other theft (bicycle; vessel; aircraft)      | 1 525    | 199                            | 44                                    | 35                                  |

Note: Data sourced from QPS.

## 4: The profile of organised property crime markets in Queensland

This chapter outlines the profile of organised property crime markets in Queensland. The information presented is gleaned from our consultations with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and non-law enforcement stakeholders. Case examples of law enforcement operations are provided throughout to illustrate the interactions between participants in organised property crime markets.

In keeping with Freiberg's Property Crime Market Model, the chapter is divided into three sections — the suppliers, the distributors/retailers and the purchasers within organised property crime markets (see Figure 1).

### Who are the suppliers?

#### The 'conventional' thief

Routine Activity Theory suggests that, in order for property crime to occur (indeed, *any* crime), three things must happen at the same time and at the same place (Morgan & Cornish 2006):

- a motivated offender is present — an offender wanting to commit a crime for some type of gain
- a suitable target is available — a plasma television inside a house, an unlocked vehicle in a car park
- there is a lack of capable guardians to prevent the crime from occurring — absent home owners, lack of security guards patrolling a shopping centre.

The Problem Analysis Triangle in Figure 9 expands on this concept. It suggests that some offenders may be controlled by handlers (for example, an offender may be working as part of an organised network), that particular places are secured by managers and that targets are safeguarded by guardians (for example, home or business owners).

Information gleaned from law enforcement investigations and academic research suggests that the majority of property crime offenders are opportunistic, as opposed to operating in organised, sophisticated networks (CMC 2005). We cannot discount opportunistic offenders displaying some level of rudimentary surveillance (checking to see if there are closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras or employees watching) and a degree of planning (carrying a hammer to break into a dwelling, knowing their escape route or wearing a cap to disguise their face from camera surveillance).

Our consultations with law enforcement and non-law enforcement stakeholders reveal the following examples of opportunistic property crime offenders in Queensland:

- offenders targeting global positioning systems (GPS) in vehicles after seeing a suction cap mark on a windscreen and breaking into the vehicle, assuming that the owner may have secreted the item in the glove box
- an offender's bungled attempt to steal an automatic teller machine (ATM), using an angle grinder stolen from an unattended utility vehicle parked in close proximity
- offenders breaking into dwellings to steal electronic equipment, cash and alcohol (often to fund drug use)
- an offender loading copper wire into his utility vehicle from the basement of a construction site
- offenders stealing off-road bikes such as quad bikes from rural properties (often in sheds not locked or with keys left in the bike).

The 'conventional' opportunistic thief, as the name suggests, does not ordinarily engage in organised criminal activity as defined by the scope of this assessment. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the remainder of the report will not focus on 'conventional' thieves.

Figure 9: The Problem Analysis Triangle



Note: Sourced from the Center for Problem-Orientated Policing website <[www.popcenter.org/about/?p=triangle](http://www.popcenter.org/about/?p=triangle)> (accessed 4 February 2009).

## The 'professional' thief

The 'professional' thief, often labelled a 'career criminal', is usually a recidivist offender with the following characteristics:

- a sophisticated and developed modus operandi (MO)
- pre-surveillance and/or detailed knowledge of the area to be targeted
- an organised disposal route for stolen property
- 'stealing to order' (this may involve having 'shopping lists')
- knowledge of law enforcement strategies (for example, using multiple telephone numbers in an effort to avoid police detection).

Evidence from our consultations with police indicates that professional thieves are operating in a sophisticated manner

### CASE EXAMPLE 1

In November 2007, two recidivist break and enter offenders became the target of a Wynnum District Criminal Investigation Bureau investigation. Investigations into these two targets revealed that a number of burglaries with the same MO were occurring in the Metropolitan South and South Eastern Regions. The PCIU became involved in June 2008 (commencement of Operation Golf Ingot).

On 14 October 2008, Operation Golf Ingot closed with a series of raids. The targets were responsible for more than 70 break and enter offences, with over \$400 000 worth of property stolen. An extensive amount of property was recovered at the main receiver's house, including 30 plasma televisions, 8 laptop computers, 50 wristwatches, 10 mobile phones, surround sound systems and digital cameras. Additional raids were conducted on lesser identified property receivers and more property was recovered.

Eighty-five pillowcases were located at the main receiver's home and it was established that the offenders were using these pillowcases to carry stolen items from targeted dwellings. The images of the pillowcases were released to the public on the QPS website (QPS 2008e).

**Outcome:** From the operation, eight people have been arrested on 142 charges (break and enter premises dwelling and commit, receiving stolen property, dangerous operation of motor vehicles, house breaking implements, possessing tainted property, supply dangerous drugs and possess dangerous drug). As a result of the property identification from public viewings and investigations, a further \$30 000 worth of property was returned to owners. The receiver was charged with 15 new offences. The operation is still continuing, with significant work being conducted by investigators in locating the owners of recovered property, linking located property to break and enter offences, and the subsequent obtaining of statements and other supportive evidence.

with experienced receivers/fences. A recent example of this is Operation Golf Ingot (case example 1), whereby a significant break and enter syndicate was dismantled by police (QPS 2008f). The main supplier of the stolen property was committing break and enter offences and delivering televisions, laptops and other items to the main receiver's residence.

Professional thieves operating in organised networks may also be involved in a diverse number of offences, including organised shoplifting, fraud offences (fraudulent use of credit cards, fraudulent production of receipts), burglaries and break and enters (see case example 2). A high degree of planning and sophistication is characteristic of the organised network discussed in this case example, which targeted various cities within Queensland and other states in Australia.

In summary, small concentrated networks of professional thieves (such as those identified in case example 1) are active throughout Queensland. Compared with the 2004 and 2005 assessments, there is little evidence that there has been an increase in the number of these types of organised networks operating in Queensland. The fluidity of the professional thieves working as part of an organised network, and the market in which they operate, contribute to spasmodic reductions and spikes in reported crime relating to those offences.

## Organised shoplifting

In our 2004 strategic assessment, we indicated that the level of organised criminal involvement in shoplifting was increasing. From our recent consultations, there is little to support the notion that organised shoplifting has increased

### CASE EXAMPLE 2

It is believed that this organised network has elements of a structure and is committing offences in Queensland, other Australian states and internationally. The network comprises people who are surveillance conscious, are highly professional in their MO and often undertake anti-surveillance measures. Police investigations suggest that this network may be responsible for an organised jewellery theft.

In 2006, four offenders distracted a security officer and stole a large quantity of cash. They did this by confronting the officer and telling him there was cash on the ground (whereupon he exited the vehicle and the offenders substituted a bag containing newspapers for the backpack containing cash). In addition to this offence, the network is linked to four other offences in which its members targeted security professionals handling cash and members of the public withdrawing money from banking institutions.

**Outcome:** A number of individuals have been arrested.

since the 2004 assessment. However, there is evidence to suggest that organised shoplifting networks continue to target Queensland retailers. Organised shoplifting is as much a national problem as it is a state issue.

Small, yet organised, shoplifting networks have been known to target various areas in Queensland, including the Gold Coast, Brisbane and Cairns. The following examples highlight this:

- Small networks targeting 'high-end' retailers in a sophisticated manner (using false credit cards and distraction techniques) to steal handbags, jewellery and T-shirts — this highlights the nexus between shoplifting and fraud offences.
- Small shoplifting networks who target shampoo and toothpaste products as they are easily disposed of (CRAVED items).

Shoplifting has rarely been regarded as a serious crime (Nelson & Perrone 2000), with 4 per cent of the total cost of crime in Australia attributed to shop theft (Rollings 2008). Figure 10 shows the recent trend in shoplifting offences in Queensland, with the rate of offences relatively stable since 2003–04. Our 2005 intelligence assessment reported a steady increase in reported shoplifting offences up until 2003–04 (CMC 2005).

Retailers are already reporting an increase in opportunistic theft as a result of recent economic hardship experienced by some Queenslanders (resulting from the global economic downturn, and rising petrol and food prices) (Palmer 2008). However, the extent to which the economic downturn will affect organised shoplifting networks remains uncertain.

## Large-scale break and enter of warehouses and distribution centres

Large-scale break and enter of warehouses and distribution centres is, in essence, a step up from organised shoplifting. Although there is no evidence to suggest that these types of crimes are on the increase in Queensland, several recent instances were reported during our consultations. The main characteristics that define these types of crimes are:

- a sophisticated MO — for example, offenders deactivating security systems
- a high level of pre-surveillance of the targeted premises
- an extensive knowledge of security systems
- the ability to store and dispose of a large number of products
- in some cases, 'insider knowledge'.

The QPS is currently investigating several break and enter offences of warehouses that demonstrate the abovementioned characteristics.

## Internal/workplace theft

Our consultations reveal that there is limited intelligence to suggest that organised property crime networks are seeking out employment in specific businesses primarily to conduct illegal activities. The following case study is not representative of organised criminal networks; however, it is included in our assessment as it raises several issues relevant to internal/workplace theft. Case example 3 involved an employee of a construction company who was ordering copper piping and then selling the 'clean metal' to local metal recyclers (QPS 2008b). The ease with which the employee was able to sell the copper piping (which was clearly brand new) highlights a weakness in regulation of the metal recycling industry (discussed in Chapter 5).

**Figure 10: Rate of shoplifting offences in Queensland**



Notes: Data sourced from QPS (0833: Shop stealing; unlawfully take away goods). These data are incorporated into our statistical analysis as 'Other stealing' — see Appendixes 1 and 5.



## Summary of suppliers

In summary, there is evidence to suggest that there are some suppliers within Queensland property crime markets who are operating in an organised, sophisticated manner. These organised networks do contribute to the spasmodic rise and fall of reported property crime offences in recent years. However, the networks tend not to control the supply side of property crime markets in Queensland.

### CASE EXAMPLE 3

This operation began in 2008 to target the activities of an employee suspected of the theft of a significant amount of copper piping from a construction company. It was identified through examination of company purchase orders that the target had ordered more than \$500 000 in copper piping for approximately 50 jobs in which copper piping was not used. Inquiries identified that the target had sold copper piping to several scrap metal dealers. This criminal activity was not linked to a criminal network and appears to have involved only the identified target.

**Outcome:** The target has been charged in relation to these offences and dismissed from the company.

## Who are the distributors and retailers?

### Second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers

There are currently 1782 licensed second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers operating in Queensland (Table 2). According to the Office of Fair Trading, the majority of second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers are located in South-East Queensland (Figure 11).<sup>17</sup>

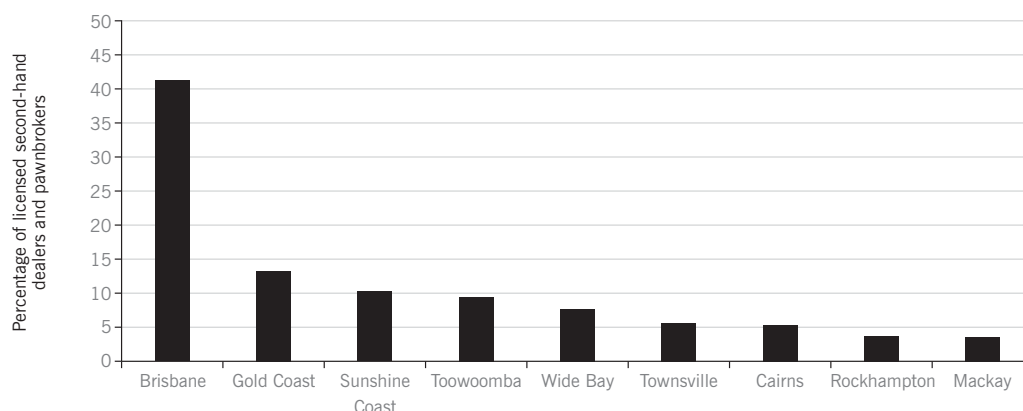
**Table 2: Licensed second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers in Queensland**

|                                   | 2003–04 | 2004–05 | 2005–06 | 2006–07 | 2007–08 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Pawnbroker                        | 203     | 15      | 14      | 7       | 8       |
| Second-hand dealer                | 2353    | 1698    | 1684    | 1613    | 1570    |
| Second-hand dealer and pawnbroker | —       | 182     | 194     | 196     | 204     |
| Total                             | 2556    | 1895    | 1895    | 1816    | 1782    |

Notes: Data sourced from the Office of Fair Trading. Data only available from 2003–04 to 2007–08. The large discrepancy between 2003–04 and 2004–05 for pawnbrokers results from a revision of the *Pawnbrokers Act 1984* and the *Second-hand Dealers Act 1984*. From 2004–05, the Licensing Branch of the Office of Fair Trading undertook a program of combining pawnbroker and second-hand dealer licences (hence no entry for 'Second-hand dealer and pawnbroker' in 2003–04).

17 A synopsis of the Yellow Pages phone book (online 3 February 2009) reveals 399 Queensland businesses listed under the *Secondhand Dealers* category and 15 Queensland businesses listed under the *Pawnbrokers* category; <[www.yellowpages.com.au](http://www.yellowpages.com.au)>.

**Figure 11: Geographical breakdown of the total number of licensed second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers in Queensland (2008)**



Notes: Data sourced from the Office of Fair Trading. Regional breakdown is based on postal addresses as at 15 August 2008. Total numbers for each area not provided, only percentage breakdown.

Organised criminal networks do not appear to be disposing of stolen property on a large scale through second-hand dealers or pawnbrokers. Rather, our consultations reveal that sellers of stolen property are more likely to be opportunists, often wanting to make 'quick cash'. An example of this is offenders stealing power tools from a large retailer and then immediately taking them (in original packaging) to a nearby pawnbroker to receive cash for drugs.

As with our previous assessments, there is evidence to indicate that there are some dubious second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers operating in Queensland who knowingly accept stolen goods. Case example 4 exemplifies this.

## Legitimate businesses

A legitimate business trading illegitimately is not a new concept. Legitimate businesses may seek a competitive advantage by purchasing stolen goods and either repackaging or legitimising the products (Freiberg 1997). Businesses may inadvertently accept stolen property; yet, from our law enforcement consultations, it was suggested that intentional trade in stolen property occurs (see case example 4). Our consultations indicate that Queensland organised networks do use legitimate businesses to distribute stolen property, including rebirthed vehicles.

### CASE EXAMPLE 4

The QPS became aware of suspected criminal activities of a jewellery store owner who was receiving stolen jewellery from a number of property offenders. The owner of the jewellery store had reported an armed robbery and during the police investigation a number of anomalies in relation to the merchandise were discovered.

Raids on the business and the offender's home address recovered a large amount of cash and jewellery. The target admitted he had been operating without a second-hand dealer's licence and had received stolen property.

**Outcome:** This operation concluded with one person charged with four offences.

## Receivers

There is evidence to suggest that organised receivers are operating within Queensland property crime markets. Operation Golf Ingot (see case example 1) is a recent example of a receiver 'ordering' property from a supplier. This property included CRAVED items such as plasma televisions, digital cameras and wristwatches. It is difficult for law enforcement to quantify the extent to which organised receivers are operating in Queensland, given the clandestine nature of their operations.

## Garage sales/weekend markets

Our consultations did not reveal that any known organised criminal network specifically uses the avenue of garage sales or weekend markets for stolen property distribution. Opportunistic offenders exploit this form of distribution to some extent (for example, for stolen power tools and grocery-type products) but the extent of this also remains unknown.

## Online disposal of stolen property

Online disposal of stolen property is a distribution route that has been, and will continue to be, exploited by property crime offenders. The QPS recognises the online distribution of stolen property and the PCIU has commenced an ongoing investigation to identify persons of interest. For example, a recidivist offender was stealing large volumes of ladies' fashion and accessories and selling them on eBay, describing the items as 'brand new with tags on' (some were merchandised exclusively by a national retailer). PCIU liaison with eBay identified over 450 transactions relating to this offender. This offender was charged with stealing items to the value of \$15 000.

## Drug exchanges

There is research to support the argument that there is a nexus between drug use and property crime (Nicholas 2001). The Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) data measure the prevalence of drug use among watch-house detainees (Adams et al. 2008). On average, three-quarters of detained property crime offenders from the Southport and Brisbane watch-houses (1999–2007) tested positive to a range of drugs, including cannabis, amphetamines, heroin and methylamphetamine (see Figure 12). It is important not to oversimplify the relationship between drugs and property crime just because they coexist in some population groups (Urbis Keys Young 2004). Other forms of crime such as violent crime and sexual assault are also associated with drug use and drug offences (CMC 2008b).

As in our 2004 and 2005 assessments, the nexus between property crime and drug exchange was highlighted during our consultations:

- An offender responsible for a series of break and enters was apprehended by police. His mobile phone had a stored text message reading 'Apple computer' — this message was sent to his associates presumably to exchange a laptop for drugs.
- Juveniles and recidivist offenders have stolen televisions and other property from dwellings and disposed of the goods through friends in exchange for drugs.
- A drug dealer was apprehended with a large amount of cash and a brand-new stove that was reported stolen a week earlier from a development site.

## Summary of distributors and retailers

From the intelligence gleaned during our consultations, Queensland organised property crime networks are 'stealing to order' and targeting property that can be easily distributed. Our analysis does not suggest that a 'Mr Big' is controlling the distribution of stolen property in Queensland. Rather, there are smaller networks of distributors, including legitimate businesses. Since our 2004 and 2005 assessments, there does not appear to have been a significant increase in activity by organised distributors and retailers in Queensland.

## Who are the purchasers?

A purchaser is anyone who obtains stolen property from a supplier, whether knowingly or inadvertently. This may include friends and family of receivers and distributors, strangers purchasing stolen property from newspaper advertisements or online auction sites, second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers onselling stolen property, and the proverbial 'man from the pub' buying a 'hot item'.

There is a dearth of research into the motivation of purchasers, largely because the identity of these buyers remains relatively unknown. Not having a true appreciation of a purchaser's motivation to intentionally acquire stolen goods limits our ability to identify the disposal route from receiver/fence to the ultimate purchaser.

## Online purchasing

Given the ease with which property crime offenders are able to sell stolen property online, the likelihood of the general public purchasing stolen items is quite high. Perhaps unwittingly, or choosing to ignore their suspicions, online purchasers of

stolen goods are no doubt part of the Property Crime Market Model's purchasing network. As outlined previously, online purchasers have bought stolen goods advertised as 'brand new with tags on'.

Online discussions, forums and auction sites allow purchasers to interact with distributors of stolen property. Intelligence suggests that vehicles, vehicle parts and vehicle registrations are purchased online to resell or rebirth vehicles.<sup>18</sup> The extent to which this is occurring in Queensland remains unestimated.

## Metal recyclers

According to the Office of Fair Trading, there are currently 35 licensed scrap metal dealers in Queensland (see Table 3 below and the accompanying notes). About half ( $n = 18$ ) are located in the Brisbane area, as shown in Figure 13. A synopsis of the Yellow Pages phonebook (online) reveals 210 separate Queensland businesses listed under the *Scrap Metal Merchants* category.

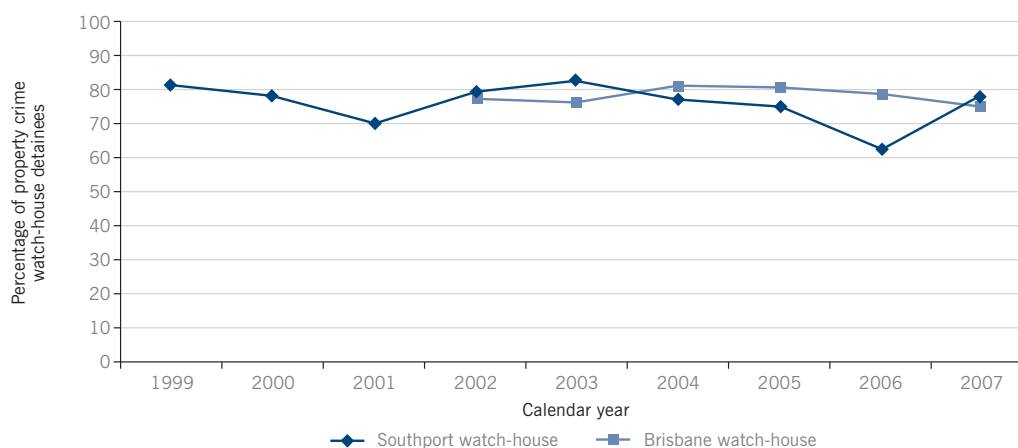
**Table 3: Licensed scrap metal dealers in Queensland**

|       | 2003–04 | 2004–05 | 2005–06 | 2006–07 | 2007–08 |
|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total | 18      | 14      | 16      | 22      | 31      |

Notes: Data sourced from the Office of Fair Trading. As at 12 January 2009, there were 35 licensed scrap metal dealers in Queensland.

18 International Association of Auto Theft Investigators Conference (4–7 August 2008).

**Figure 12: Percentage of Southport and Brisbane property crime watch-house detainees testing positive to any drug type**



Notes: Data sourced from the Australian Institute of Criminology interactive website <<http://data.aic.gov.au/duma/duma.html>>, accessed 14 January 2009. DUMA data: any drug type by offence type (property) by location (Southport, Brisbane). Data available from 2002 onwards for the Brisbane watch-house.

In November 2006, the PCIU commenced an ongoing investigation in response to the identification of an emerging crime trend of theft of non-ferrous metals, predominantly copper. The operation focused initially on the regulation of scrap metal dealers throughout Queensland to:

- a. ensure compliance with the *Second-hand Dealers and Pawnbrokers Act 2003* and
- b. collect transaction records for entry in the QPS Stolen Property Investigation and Recovery System (SPIRS). This has provided an investigative tool for identifying frequent sellers of non-ferrous metal.

Metal recyclers use the internet and Yellow Pages to advertise their services. These services include free removal of vehicles, ‘top dollar’ paid for vehicle bodies, and services to dispose of non-ferrous metals. Public advertising facilitates the disposal of stolen scrap metal by both opportunistic and organised offenders. The availability of willing purchasers (metal recyclers) facilitates the illegal market in non-ferrous trading. Examples of these market exchanges include:

- an employee stealing copper from a building company and selling directly to local metal recyclers for profit (see case example 3)
- a metal recycler accepting stolen vehicles for cash (ongoing QPS investigation).

Copper theft is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

## Other purchasers

Intelligence and anecdotal information presented during our law enforcement consultations indicate that some stolen property is being distributed to interstate and international

purchasers. The degree to which interstate and international purchasers seek out Queensland-based distributors is unknown. For example, there is a suggestion that scrap metal may be transported to South-East Asian countries.<sup>19</sup> As discussed previously, the motivation of purchasers is a poorly understood area of the property crime market segment.

## Summary of purchasers

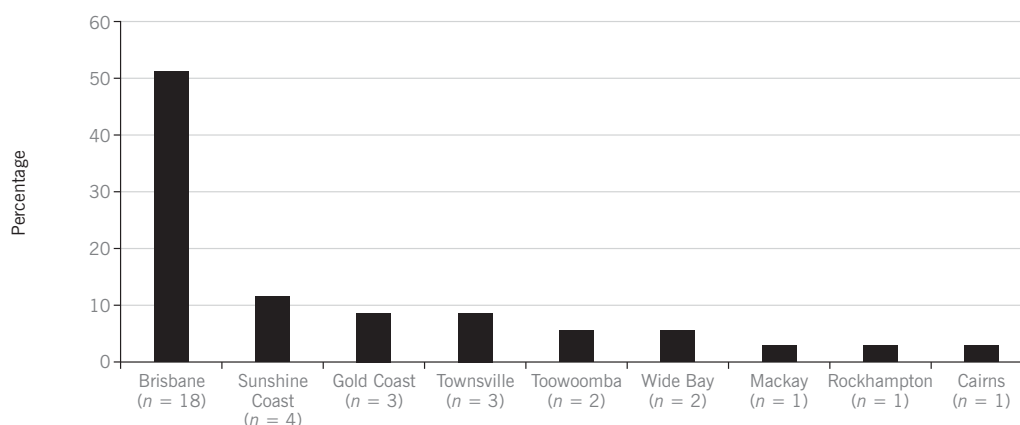
Online purchasers may unwittingly or knowingly purchase stolen goods from auction sites or use the internet to seek out vehicles and parts for the purpose of rebirthing vehicles. Legitimate businesses such as metal recyclers and second-hand dealers have been known to purchase stolen property to then onsell to other purchasers. Despite the dearth of research and intelligence, evidence does point to organised purchasers in the Queensland property crime market.

## Summary

There is evidence to suggest that smaller, organised criminal networks commit significant property crime offences in Queensland. These organised networks are fluid, are motivated by financial gain and operate independently — predominantly in South-East Queensland. However, our consultations suggest that these networks are not controlling property crime markets in Queensland. Opportunistic offenders are the prevailing type of offender within Queensland property crime markets.

19 For example, consultations with the QPS Organised Crime Investigation Unit (Vehicle Crime).

**Figure 13: Geographic breakdown of licensed scrap metal dealers in Queensland (2009)**



Note: Sourced from the Office of Fair Trading, as at 12 January 2009.

## 5: Emerging trends and issues in organised property crime markets

This chapter discusses emerging trends in Queensland property crime markets such as the global economic downturn and the theft of non-ferrous metals. It also highlights problems that merit attention, including the disposal of stolen property online.

### Global economic downturn

The impact of the declining economy on organised property crime is difficult to calculate. The global economic downturn may be a driver of increased opportunistic property crime offending in the short term. Historically, when the economy experiences a slump or decline, an increase in property crime may occur. The association between good economic conditions and lower rates of property crime, including vehicle theft, also points towards an economy–property crime nexus (NMVTRC 2008d).

The opportunistic theft of groceries (food, razors, baby items) and driving off without paying for fuel have recently been reported in the media (Hughes 2008; Vogler 2009). Despite the decreasing trend in reported property crime offences in recent years, our regional consultations reveal that some areas within Queensland are experiencing slight increases in property crime, such as break and enters and theft of petrol.

From the information we gleaned during our assessment, volatile global economic markets have, and will continue to have, an influence on opportunistic property crime in Queensland. The extent of that influence remains to be seen.

However, our consultations did not reveal any intelligence to suggest that organised networks have moved into property crime markets as a result of the changing economic environment.

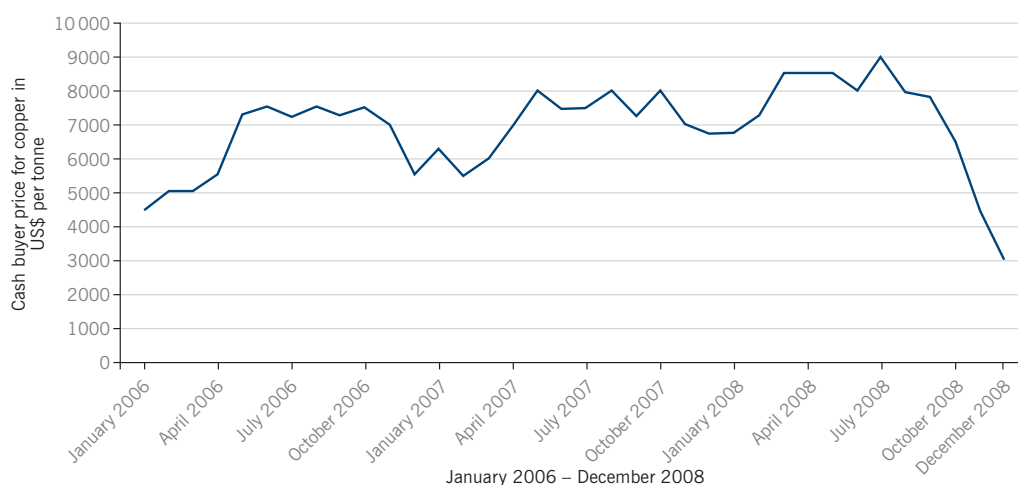
### Theft of copper and volatile non-ferrous prices

Theft of copper and other non-ferrous metals has been a problem in many Australian states, so much so that federal and state agencies commenced a national campaign, ‘Copper theft — don’t cop it’ (Crime Stoppers 2008; Roocke 2008). Theft of copper can disrupt the provision of services by businesses and utilities. It can also be dangerous for offenders. The following examples illustrate these problems:

- Two offenders rammed the perimeter fence of a holding yard in Mt Isa and allegedly used a backhoe to remove three bundles of copper sheets, each valued at around \$30 000 (QPS 2007).
- Offenders stole 100 metres of ‘live’ copper wire from three electrical pillars at a housing estate. Burn marks inside one pillar indicated the potential for electrical currents to cause serious injury (QPS 2008g).

Liaison with and regulation of the scrap metal industry should continue to ensure accurate reporting of suspicious non-ferrous transactions. Our consultations did not reveal any evidence of organised networks stealing significant amounts

Figure 14: Copper prices



Notes: Data adapted from online pricing graphs from the London Metal Exchange website <[www.lme.co.uk/copper\\_graphs.asp](http://www.lme.co.uk/copper_graphs.asp)>, accessed on 13 February 2009. Data from 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2008. ‘Grade A’ prices shown in cash buyer price (US\$) per tonne.



of copper wire on a regular basis within Queensland. However, a joint Customs and Victoria Police operation disrupted an organised network allegedly attempting to export 30 tonnes of stolen copper wire to Asia (Australian Customs and Border Protection Service 2008).

The price of copper is extremely volatile. A good indicator of copper prices is the London Metal Exchange. As can be seen in Figure 14, the price of copper was increasing steadily from January 2006. In 2008, there was a sharp decline in global copper prices.

Recent media reports suggest that offenders (most likely opportunists) are still targeting copper located on development sites (Sultanie 2008). It remains to be seen whether the decrease in price for copper and other non-ferrous metals will have an effect on organised networks' intent to steal these goods.

## Theft and rebirthing of vehicles and vessels

Currently, there is no Queensland legislation that deals specifically with organised vehicle and vessel rebirthing. The extent of *reported* vehicle and vessel rebirthing in Queensland is largely unknown as offenders tend to be charged with stealing a vehicle, receiving stolen property, unlawful use and fraud-related offences (for example, fraudulent receipts for vehicle parts).<sup>20</sup> New South Wales has recently amended its legislation to include vehicle and vessel rebirthing offences (*Crimes Act 1900* No. 40, Subdivision 5A, 154E — see Appendix 9).

From our consultations with police and the NMVTRC, it appears that vehicle rebirthing is concentrated in South-East Queensland. There is no evidence that organised networks are moving to other regions within Queensland to rebirth vehicles and vessels. There is some intelligence to suggest that vehicles have been transported interstate, although not on a large scale.

Vehicle thefts are usually opportunistic and are undertaken for the purpose of transport and joy-riding (Gant & Grabosky 2001). This was supported during our consultations, with NMVTRC and police officers stating that opportunistic and organised offenders steal vehicles to use in committing other offences, such as break and enter offences.

Theft of off-road bikes (such as quad bikes, monkey bikes and pit bikes) is a problem in Queensland. Factors contributing to this include owners not registering their bikes when required to or not taking adequate security measures (such as locking

bikes in a garage/shed, and removing the keys from the bike). Failure to register makes it extremely difficult to identify and locate the rightful owner if the bikes are ever recovered. Another problem is that some bikes (such as moto cross bikes) do not require registration, so when people report them stolen it is difficult to identify them.

The increasing value of 'muscle cars' (or high-performance vehicles) makes them attractive items to organised networks. Examples of 'muscle cars' include Valiant Chargers, Holden Monaros and Ford Falcon Cobras. Consultations with the QPS Organised Crime Investigation Unit (Vehicle Crime) suggest that these types of vehicles were targeted at the Wintersun Festival on the Gold Coast in 2008.<sup>21</sup> 'Muscle car' events are attractive to organised networks as owners tend to leave their vehicles unattended after hours. At various times, organised networks can also take advantage of situations where these high-value vehicles are being transported. The vehicles, or their parts, may be exported overseas, rebirthed with identification from old wrecked vehicles or stripped for parts.<sup>22</sup>

The availability of second-hand vehicle and boat yards, workshops, panelbeaters and wholesalers, where thieves may readily dispose of stolen vehicles and vessels, facilitates this type of crime. As an example, if an aluminium boat is stolen and is crushed, there is nothing left for police to identify it. Organised rebirthing networks have adapted to changes in regulations and exploit these gaps (NMVTRC 2008d) — for example, purchasing written-off vehicles to use for parts at auctions.

## Targeting of other items

As mentioned previously, property offenders target CRAVED items as they tend to be **C**oncealable, **R**emovable, **A**vailable, **V**aluable, **E**njoyable and **D**isposable (Clarke & Eck 2005). These are also known as 'hot products' (AIC 2005). Organised property networks target CRAVED items such as expensive clothing and electronic equipment (for example, Wii consoles, plasma televisions, DVD players). Other items with CRAVED characteristics include farm/earth-moving equipment as well as fuel.

## Construction and 'heavy' equipment theft

The theft of construction, farm, earth-moving and other 'heavy' equipment occurs in Queensland. Figure 15 provides an overview of 'heavy/other' vehicles stolen in Queensland from 1998–99 to 2007–08 — this, according to the NMVTRC, includes trucks, prime movers, tow trucks, buses and plant/farming equipment (see also Appendix 6).

20 Consultations with QPS Organised Crime Investigation Unit (Vehicle Crime).

21 See <[www.wintersun.org.au](http://www.wintersun.org.au)> for more details of the Wintersun Festival.

22 International Association of Auto Theft Investigators Conference presentation, 'Muscle car theft' (August 2008).

Elements of organisation are required to steal such large items, including access to keys,<sup>23</sup> transport to remove the equipment and adequate planning to conceal equipment before disposing of it to a receiver/purchaser. For example, two trucks parked in front of a Morayfield residence were stolen in 2008, each carrying excavators, bobcats and jerry cans of fuel (QPS 2008d).

The Construction and Mining Equipment Industry Group (CMEIG) states that 'organised crime gangs — with strong links to the construction industry — are behind most instances of heavy equipment theft in Australia' (CMEIG 2009, p. 1). These 'gangs' may not necessarily meet our criteria for an organised network; however, intelligence supplied during our consultations with police supports the notion of offenders' links to the construction industry.

Although there has been a slight increase in the number of 'heavy/other' vehicles stolen in Queensland, it is difficult to attribute the majority of these thefts to organised networks. The NMVTRC suggests that the factors contributing to plant and equipment theft include:

- lack of security for storage
- the majority of these vehicles operating 'outside of the registration system (making it difficult for police to adequately record stolen [plant and equipment] and facilitating easy disposal via the second-hand and black markets)'
- 'identification challenges posed by the absence of a universal numbering system and central system for prospective purchasers to check the machine's authenticity' (NMVTRC 2008a, p. 1).

23 Within the construction industry, it is common practice for 'master keys' to be used to operate various types of construction equipment (for example, one key could operate a backhoe loader, a forklift and a tracked dozer).

## Fuel theft

During our consultations, police noted sporadic petrol and diesel theft throughout Queensland. A likely driver of this type of theft is fluctuating economic conditions, including variations in fuel prices. For example, theft of diesel from council vehicles and bulldozers left on the side of the road during road works was reported. In another example, one offender had a well-set-up LandCruiser with pumps and hoses to siphon diesel. Police also commented on the number of petrol 'drive-offs' (not paying for fuel at petrol stations), and the theft of vehicle registration plates was attributed to opportunistic offenders using these to avoid detection in petrol 'drive-offs'.

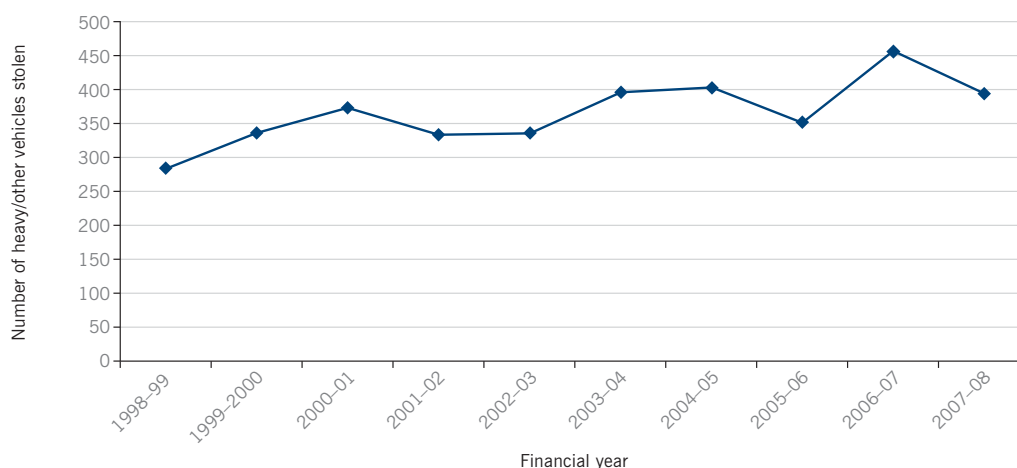
Apart from anecdotal information on theft of fuel from mining sites, there was scarce intelligence of Queensland organised networks specifically targeting large supplies of petrol or diesel. Rather, opportunists may stop alongside vehicles or tanks and siphon fuel for private use, especially farm use.

## Black-market trade for pallets

Consultations with the PCIU and CHEP Australia Limited<sup>24</sup> (Australia's leading pallet and container servicer) reveal a black-market trade for pallets throughout Queensland and other Australian states. The theft of hire pallets exacerbates the loss and perpetuates the demand within this property crime market. Case example 5 (page 26) is included in this assessment as it highlights how CRAVED items can influence supply and demand within an illicit market.

24 CHEP Australia Limited provides for hire distinctive blue-coloured pallets. These pallets can only be hired by companies who have an agreement with CHEP. Those clients pay a daily hire fee for each pallet they have on hire. CHEP pallets can only be hired; they are never sold. Ownership of these pallets remains with CHEP at all times. Each pallet attracts a daily hire charge until it is returned to CHEP. If the hirer loses a pallet, the compensation cost payable to CHEP is approximately \$30 per pallet.

**Figure 15: 'Heavy/other' vehicles stolen in Queensland**



Notes: Data sourced from NMVTRC. 'Heavy/other' defined by NMVTRC to include truck, prime mover, tow truck, bus, plant/equipment, other. See Appendixes 6 and 7.

The theft of CHEP pallets suggests they are CRAVED items as they are valuable and can be easily moved and distributed to willing purchasers. CRAVED items do change over time. A clear example of this is the move from video home system (VHS) recorders to digital versatile disc (DVD) players — and now to Blu-Ray disc players. Organised property crime networks will continue to seek out opportunities to exploit markets for CRAVED items ‘so long as there is a differential between legitimate and illegitimate prices’ (Freiberg 1997, p. 247).

## Stock theft

From our consultations with the QPS Stock and Rural Crime Investigation Squads (SARCIS), there is no evidence that organised stock theft networks currently operate in Queensland. Although trucks are required to move large numbers of stock, there is no evidence to suggest that trucking companies may be involved in any type of theft, be it opportunistic or organised. If anything, truck drivers are most likely oblivious to whether they are transporting legitimate or stolen stock (for example, they may not recognise the branding).

The willingness of people to report stock theft is problematic. Stock owners may be mistaken and miscount their stock (which can lead to over-reporting) or they may be reluctant to report a loss as they fear they may be wrong (stock can

wander onto a neighbour’s property).<sup>25</sup> Owners with limited experience in managing properties (for example, with poor knowledge of animal husbandry) are also a problem that SARCIS must deal with.

There is compulsory branding in Queensland. SARCIS relies heavily on brands for identification purposes. Recent introduction of the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) involves electronically tagging stock. However, offenders may circumvent this system by cutting the tag from the beast’s ear.

There are vulnerabilities along the Queensland–Northern Territory border in terms of limited law-enforcement capacity and immense distances. Offenders are aware of this and can use it to their advantage. Some offenders may target Indigenous communities as they regard them as ‘soft targets’.

The following case example highlights the broad category of offences SARCIS deals with (QPS 2008c). Two Queensland meat workers had stolen more than 40 gallstones from cattle. These gallstones can be traded in Asian markets to make herbal medicine, and investigations revealed their value to be approximately \$22 000 per kilogram (QPS 2008c). Although this case did not involve an organised network, it emphasises the CRAVED concept and the potential financial gain available from stealing stock in Queensland.

Figure 16 outlines the decrease in the rate of stock-related theft in Queensland. Since 2000–01, the rate has decreased from seven offences per 100 000 people to three offences per 100 000 people in 2007–08 (see also Appendix 5). Consultations with police suggest that this is most likely the result of a combination of good property management, adequate fencing and regular musters.

### CASE EXAMPLE 5

This operation investigates the organised theft and resale of hire pallets. Pallet traders seek to acquire hire pallets to sell to those who have pallets on hire but have lost them.

A black-market trade in CHEP pallets has evolved because some hirers seek to avoid the compensation cost charged by CHEP to replace the pallets they have lost. Some pallet traders, being aware of this opportunity, seek to profit by stealing or otherwise unlawfully acquiring possession of CHEP pallets and making them available for sale on the black market.

The ‘value’ of a CHEP pallet on the black market is generally about half of the rate charged by CHEP to replace the lost unit. Pallets purchased on the black market are generally returned to CHEP and credited to the hirer’s account, thus reducing the quantity of pallets on hire and consequently the fees charged to that account. The theft and loss of hire pallets have created a strong demand for illegally acquired hire pallets, with a majority of the illicit trade taking place within the primary produce sector and the transport industry.

**Outcome:** In December 2008, one Queensland offender was charged with possession of tainted property.

## Online disposal of stolen property

A market ripe for exploitation is the online selling environment (CMC 2007). Using the internet, the fencing of stolen property can be borderless, creating difficulties for law enforcement investigations (AIC 2007). Websites such as eBay and Trading Post are simple to navigate and provide offenders with a rapid disposal avenue and anonymity. Online disposal of stolen property is a cause for concern as it provides a ready market with low apprehension risk for offenders.

The true extent of online disposal of stolen property by opportunists and organised offenders remains difficult to calculate. It is reasonable to assume that offenders will take full advantage of the internet and that this will be exacerbated by the numerous online sites and auctions available to the public.

<sup>25</sup> See Hedayati (2008) and Donnermeyer & Barclay (2005) for discussion of why farmers do not report crimes to police.

## Property offenders' use of prepaid mobile phones

From our consultations with law enforcement, property crime offenders still tend to use multiple mobile phone numbers and phones in an effort to avoid detection. This is not unique to property crime markets — other offenders, such as those involved in illicit drugs, money laundering or fraud offences, also use multiple prepaid phones. The following are problems faced by law enforcement when investigating offenders who use prepaid mobile phones:

- Not always requiring identification to be shown when connecting prepaid mobile services — this results in phones being connected in false names and to false addresses.
- The ease with which subscriber identity module (SIM) cards can be swapped and inserted into different mobile handsets — this allows criminal associates to use each other's SIM cards in their own phones.
- Low cost of SIM cards — prepaid SIM cards can be purchased for \$2 at major Australian retailers. SIM cards can also be purchased in bulk.
- The low cost of mobile phones — the reduction in the price of mobile phones has allowed offenders to regularly change their handset and SIM card.

## Summary

Our consultations did identify several problems and possible trends, including the theft of copper and other non-ferrous metal, the black-market trade in CHEP pallets, the online disposal of stolen property and the use of multiple mobile phones by property offenders in an effort to avoid detection. There is no evidence to show that Queensland organised networks target stock and other related property, fuel, or farm/earth-moving equipment to any significant extent. Rather, opportunists exploit these market segments. The global economic downturn may stimulate opportunistic offending. It is difficult to speculate whether this will be a significant driver of more organised networks entering property crime markets — there is scarce intelligence to indicate this.

**Figure 16: Stock-related theft in Queensland**



Note: Data sourced from QPS.

## 6: Discussion and conclusions

This chapter summarises the key findings from our strategic assessment of Queensland organised property crime markets. We outline the Crime and Misconduct Commission's risk assessment and predicted market trend of organised property crime markets (see the explanation of risk in Appendix 4). We also discuss strategies gleaned from our consultations with stakeholders.

### Key findings

#### Characteristics of organised property crime markets in Queensland

Evidence suggests that organised offenders separately operate in smaller networks throughout Queensland. Reported (and suspected) networks appear concentrated in South-East Queensland. Although organised networks are fluid and motivated by financial gain, they do not significantly control Queensland property crime markets. Opportunistic offenders are the prevailing type of offender dominating property crime markets in this state.

It appears that organised networks target large-scale warehouses, 'steal to order' and commit organised shoplifting offences — but again there is no intelligence to suggest that this is increasing significantly. Similarly to our 2004 assessment, property crime markets in Queensland are characterised by the following:

- low rates of recovery — disposal route not known
- some property suspected of being shipped to South-East Asian destinations
- large-scale break and enters of warehouses and distribution centres (theft of bulk supplies)

- problems of auditing and accountability with second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers (although no evidence of organised networks distributing stolen property on a large scale)
- evidence of organised shoplifting networks (for example, targeting 'high-end' retailers for expensive clothing and handbags)
- links between fraud offences and disposal of property
- drug–property crime nexus
- multiple use of mobile phones and subscriber identity module (SIM) cards (and high rates of mobile phone theft).

Overall, there have been no significant changes in the characteristics of organised property crime networks in Queensland from our previous strategic assessment.

### Risk assessment

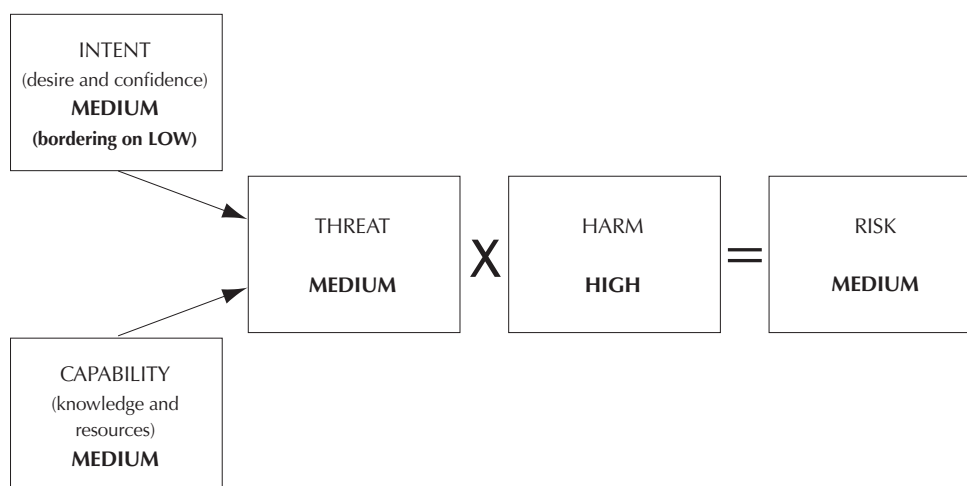
As discussed in Chapter 2, two separate risk assessments are provided: one for property crime generally and one for vehicle and vessel theft and rebirthing (see Appendix 4).

#### Organised property crime

The risk of organised property crime in Queensland is assessed as **MEDIUM**. We calculate this as follows (see Figure 17):

- The *INTENT* is assessed as **MEDIUM, bordering on LOW**. This relates to the desire and confidence of organised offenders. There is scarce evidence that organised networks have the desire to expand or move into property crime markets. The success of organised property crime offenders is evidence of their confidence. The majority of

Figure 17: Risk assessment for organised property crime in Queensland





property crime offenders are opportunistic and seek immediate gain. There are ample legitimate avenues for opportunistic offenders to distribute stolen property, including second-hand dealers, pawnbrokers, online auctions, garage sales and scrap metal recyclers.

- The *CAPABILITY* is assessed as **MEDIUM** and relates to the knowledge and resources available to organised property crime networks. There is evidence to suggest that organised networks conduct careful planning and surveillance of their targets (including the use of employees at targeted premises) and dispose of property in an organised, planned manner. Organised networks have the knowledge (as evidenced by their modus operandi) to carry out offences, as well as a relatively constant supply of resources (for example, mobile phones, vehicles and tools) to facilitate these crimes.
- The *THREAT* is assessed as **MEDIUM** given that it is a function of intent (**MEDIUM**, bordering on **LOW**) and capability (**MEDIUM**).
- The *HARM* is assessed as **HIGH** because of the financial costs associated with insurance claims, the high costs to individuals, businesses and insurance companies and the significant emotional effect on victims of property crime (feeling violated, frightened or angry). It is also assessed as high because of the large number of property crime offences in proportion to other crimes, as well as the sizeable amount of law enforcement resources required to investigate organised property crime.
- The *RISK* is therefore assessed as **MEDIUM**, as it is a function of threat (**MEDIUM**) and harm (**HIGH**).

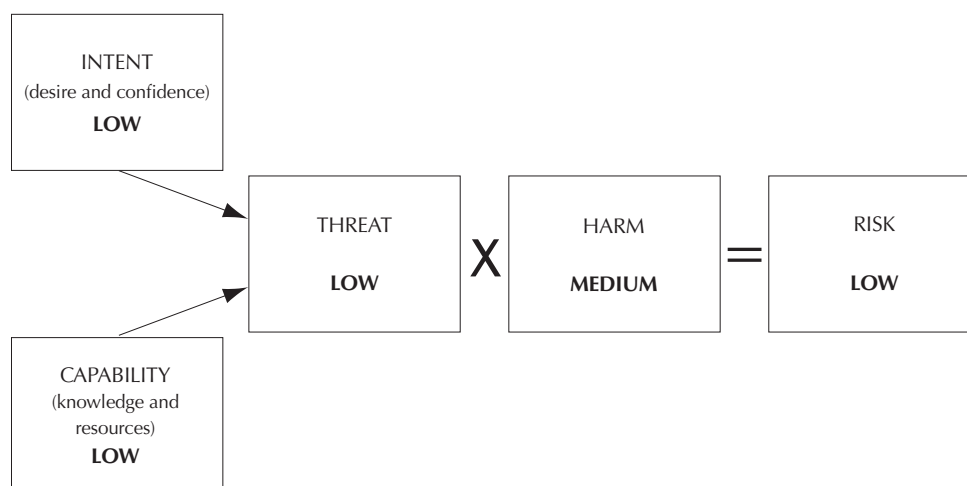
We predict the risk of *organised* property crime to remain **STABLE** in the short term (1–2 years) despite the impact that the global economic downturn may have on *opportunistic* property crime. The medium to long-term risk (3–5 years) is again predicted to remain relatively **STABLE**.

## Organised theft and rebirthing of vehicles (and vessels)

The risk associated with the theft and rebirthing of vehicles in Queensland is assessed as **LOW**. We also consider the risk of vessel rebirthing to be **LOW** and calculate the overall risk as follows (see Figure 18):

- The *INTENT* is assessed as **LOW** as vehicle rebirthing (and, to a lesser extent, vessel rebirthing) is not widespread throughout Queensland, even though a significant number of stolen vehicles are not recovered. The desire and confidence of organised networks to operate in Queensland appear low, especially in comparison with New South Wales and Victoria. The concentration and small number of organised networks involved in rebirthing and reselling vehicles and vessels are limited to South-East Queensland (with the threat to law enforcement being predominantly in this region). There is no evidence to indicate that organised networks are moving to other regions within Queensland to rebirth vehicles and vessels.
- The *CAPABILITY* is assessed as **LOW** as rebirthing a vehicle or vessel requires specialised knowledge not normally accessible to the general public. The familial ties and associations with interstate rebirthers (New South Wales and Victoria), the sharing of knowledge through these connections (and on the internet), and the means with which to carry out these offences (such as buying written-off vehicles, tools and expertise to alter identifiers on vehicles) all contribute to the capability of these organised networks.
- The *THREAT* is assessed as **LOW**, given that it is a function of intent (**LOW**) and capability (**LOW**).
- The *HARM* is assessed as **MEDIUM**, given the financial impact on insurance companies and owners of stolen vehicles. In addition, the police resources required to

**Figure 18: Risk assessment for theft and rebirthing of vehicles (and vessels) in Queensland**



investigate vehicle crime are considerable. Rebirthing does contribute to theft of vehicles and vessels in Queensland, but given the downward trend in vehicle theft (the majority of offences) this harm is not at an elevated level.

- The *RISK* is therefore assessed as **LOW**, as it is a function of threat (LOW) and harm (MEDIUM).

We predict the risk of *organised* theft and rebirthing of vehicles (and vessels) to remain **STABLE** in the short term (1–2 years), despite any impact the global economic downturn may have on the illicit sale of parts and vehicles crushed for scrap metal. The medium to long-term risk (3–5 years) is again predicted to remain relatively **STABLE**.

## Strategies

Our assessment is focused on organised crime involvement in property crime markets. We conclude that the organised component of property crime markets mainly involves small yet organised networks. These networks are fluid, are motivated by financial gain and operate independently — predominantly in South-East Queensland. Some of the strategies discussed in this section — most notably, proactive investigations, continued intelligence sharing and use of CMC coercive hearings — are likely to improve the capacity of law enforcement agencies to better understand and investigate this organised crime component.

As we have previously noted, the majority of property crime is committed by opportunists (the ‘conventional’ thief) and is therefore outside the scope of this assessment. But that does not diminish the negative impact of property crime on the Queensland community and on the QPS, which allocates considerable resources to the investigation of property crime. Property crime financially damages people; it increases the fear of crime in the community and is associated with a higher chance of repeat victimisation. Because of the high number of property offences and the impact of property crime on the community, the investigation of property crime in general is justifiably a high priority for the QPS.

In undertaking our strategic assessment, we have become aware of factors that impede the effective investigation of property crime offences and the successful prosecution of offenders. We note some strategies that may assist in overcoming these problems. We have also identified a number of general strategies that may enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts to reduce the incidence and impact of property crime on the community. These are discussed below.

## Continued monitoring of the online environment

Our strategic assessment identifies the disposal of stolen property using the internet. However, law enforcement still does not have a good understanding of the extent to which the internet is being used in an illicit manner. This is problematic as, not only do we not know the prevalence of stolen property distribution through the internet, but also we do not have a good understanding of buyers’ motivation to purchase stolen property.

Law enforcement must remain vigilant in relation to online forums and auction sites that facilitate distribution of stolen property and information sharing. There are numerous websites available to both opportunists and organised property offenders that afford them anonymity and low risk of apprehension. These websites can be readily viewed and searched as a source of intelligence by law enforcement agencies. The QPS is attempting to proactively monitor the internet by regularly checking websites for stolen property.

Monitoring online auction sites is a resource-intensive way of investigating property crime. There is limited capacity for proactive monitoring of the internet by local district police because of the volume of crime they deal with. We commend the PCIU and the Organised Crime Investigation Unit (Vehicle Crime) and encourage them to continue monitoring internet websites to determine disposal routes of offenders, as well as information-sharing forums used by opportunistic and organised offenders.

## Continued intelligence sharing

Many aspects of property crime investigations are reactive. Yet opportunities do exist for law enforcement to work proactively to prevent further property crime offences. As we suggested in our 2005 assessment, continued intelligence sharing is important, both between specialist units of the QPS and between the regions. This is particularly important when organised networks travel across Queensland regions to commit property crime offences.

The continued sharing of intelligence between the PCIU and the QPS Drug Squad is essential as it assists with identifying and prosecuting offenders. It also allows for a shared understanding of the dynamics of organised property crime networks and any association these groups may have with other organised networks, either locally or in other Queensland regions.

## CMC coercive hearings

The CMC joins with police in conducting hearings-based investigations into organised crime such as fraud, organised property crime and drugs (CMC 2003). Hearings are time consuming, resource intensive and costly. However, the CMC

is committed to enhancing our hearings services to assist our major crime investigations. This is evidenced by our total investigative hearing days having increased from 81 days in 2006–07 to 151 days in 2007–08 (CMC 2008a). Since 2007–08, the CMC has called 145 witnesses to hearings held over 130 days in relation to 25 investigations. CMC hearings have been used to elicit additional information from key targets in order to determine the disposal route of stolen property, the number of break and enter offences committed, the modus operandi of key targets and whether other key players were involved.

## Legislative and regulatory issues

### Electronic recording of second-hand dealer and pawnbroker transactions

The auditing and accountability of metal recyclers, pawnbrokers and second-hand dealers are subjects of concern for the law enforcement stakeholders we consulted with, particularly the PCIU. This concern was also expressed by the construction company, Cash Converters, the national retailer and the major energy company we consulted. Under s. 37(1) and s. 53(1) of the *Second-hand Dealers and Pawnbrokers Act 2003*, second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers must keep a printed or an electronic register of transactions. As noted during our consultations, illegible handwriting, mistakes with entering serial numbers, incomplete property descriptions and delays in providing police with transaction records thwart the ability of police to detect persons of interest and stolen property in a timely manner.

We consulted with Cash Converters, the world's largest dealer in second-hand goods, which has 45 stores throughout

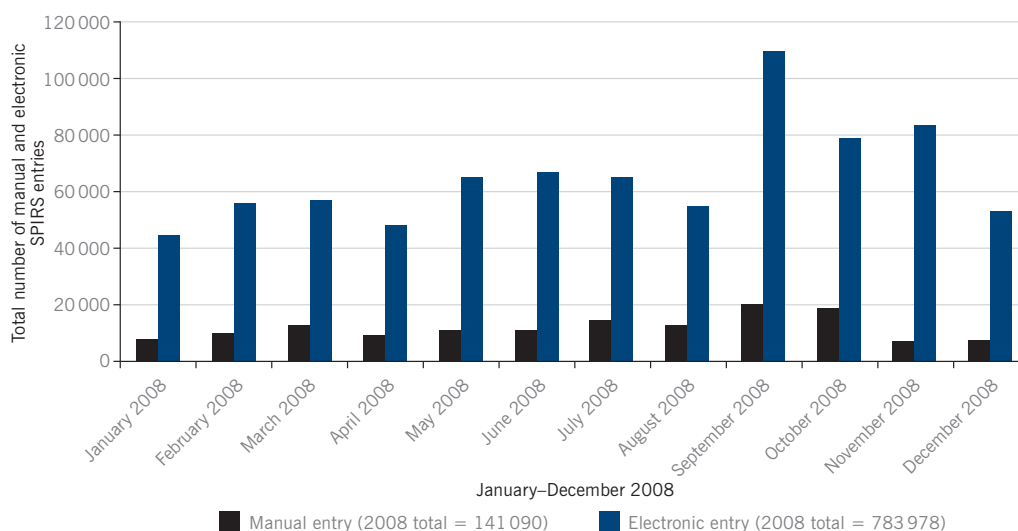
Queensland.<sup>26</sup> All stores electronically record every transaction, using a computer system. Once a transaction has been entered, it cannot be deleted by an employee. There are field options within the system that allow employees to explain that a transaction was terminated (for example, if a customer changed their mind) or that can be used if additional information needs to be entered. Cash Converters is supportive of compulsory electronic recording for all second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers throughout Queensland as it reduces human error and expedites the transfer of information to police.

The PCIU has also indicated its support for mandating electronic recording of transactions of second-hand dealers and pawnbrokers in Queensland. The Stolen Property Investigation and Recovery System (SPIRS) is a database used by the PCIU to monitor second-hand dealer, pawnbroker and metal recycler transactions. In 2008, the PCIU entered 925 068 Queensland transactions onto SPIRS (Figure 19). About 15 per cent (141 090) of these transactions were handwritten, which means they had to be manually loaded onto the system. It is a time-consuming process to manually verify the handwritten transactions; an electronic system would overcome this problem. As suggested in our previous property crime assessment, there is scope to improve this situation by introducing electronic recording of transactions, similar to the system in Western Australia<sup>27</sup> and the Australian Capital Territory (CMC 2005).

26 Consultations with Cash Converters, 28 January 2009. See also <[www.cashconverters.com.au](http://www.cashconverters.com.au)>.

27 Section 79 of the *Pawnbrokers and Second-hand Dealers Act 1994* (WA) outlines the information that is required to be given to the Commissioner in accordance with Western Australian legislation.

**Figure 19: Manual and electronic transactions uploaded to SPIRS in 2008**



Note: Data supplied by the PCIU (QPS).

Improved transparency, expeditious transaction searches and increased targeting of persons of interest may outweigh the short-term cost associated with implementing a Queensland-based electronic system. This should be considered by the Office of Fair Trading in collaboration with the PCIU and key representatives of the second-hand dealer and pawnbroker industry.

### Stock and other related theft

Disputes between neighbours about theft or missing stock are difficult and time consuming for police to investigate. An ongoing problem for SARCIS is recovering stray stock that have entered a neighbour's land when the landowner refuses to cooperate with police. There is no legislation that permits an owner of stock to enter another landowner's property to recover stray stock (such as cattle or sheep). According to SARCIS, 'good will' is relied upon in order to retrieve stock. SARCIS is unable to force a muster if mediation fails between the landowners or if SARCIS has no reasonable suspicion that any offence has occurred. An amendment to the *Stock Act 1915* (Qld), similar to legislation in the Northern Territory and Tasmania, would assist SARCIS in investigating stock and related theft in Queensland (regardless of its organised nature).

### Vehicle and vessel rebirthing

As mentioned in Chapter 5, there is no Queensland legislation that deals specifically with organised vehicle and vessel rebirthing. Queensland rebirthing offenders tend to be charged with unlawful use and/or unlawful possession. They may also be charged under s. 398 of the *Criminal Code Act 1899* (stealing vehicle), receiving stolen property and fraud-related offences. Should the level of risk posed

by vehicle (and vessel) theft and rebirthing increase in Queensland, it may be necessary to evaluate the introduction of legislation similar to that in New South Wales (see Appendix 9). This legislation specifically outlines offences relating to theft, rebirthing and interfering with vehicle and vessel identification. If the QPS had the capacity to charge offenders with an offence that more accurately reflected the nature of the crime, it would assist in identifying the extent of organised vehicle/vessel rebirthing throughout Queensland.

## Summary

Evidence indicates that organised offenders operate in smaller property crime networks throughout Queensland — the majority in South-East Queensland. There is scant evidence that organised networks control Queensland property crime markets. The risk posed by organised property crime is assessed as MEDIUM and is predicted to remain STABLE in the short term. The risk posed by organised vehicle theft and rebirthing is assessed as LOW and is predicted to remain STABLE in the short term. A number of general strategies may enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts to reduce the incidence of these crimes and their impact on the community. These include the ongoing proactive investigations, the ongoing monitoring of the online environment, continued intelligence sharing between QPS specialist units and regions, and the use of CMC coercive hearings when appropriate. The introduction of compulsory electronic recording of second-hand dealer and pawnbroker transactions should be evaluated — and, to a lesser extent, amendments to legislation relating to stock theft and vehicle/vessel theft and rebirthing.

## Appendix 1: QPS offence definitions

| Terminology used in this assessment          | Offence class  | Specific offence groups (used in QPS <i>Annual statistical review</i> )    | QPS crime class code |
|--|--|--|----------------------|
| Unlawful entry                               | Unlawful Entry without Violence — Dwelling   | Burglary; with breaking  | 0711                 |
|  |  | Burglary   | 0712                 |
|  | Unlawful Entry with Violence — Dwelling  | Burglary; with violence or threats; with breaking                          | 0713                 |
|  |  | Burglary; with violence or threats   | 0714                 |
|  | Unlawful Entry with Intent — Shop  | Enter with intent; shop; with breaking                                     | 0715                 |
|  |  | Enter with intent; shop  | 0716                 |
|  | Unlawful Entry with Intent — Other   | Enter with intent; other premises; with breaking                           | 0717                 |
|  |  | Enter with intent; other premises  | 0718                 |
|  |  | Break and enter; unspecified building                                      | 0720                 |
| Steal from dwellings                         | Stealing from Dwellings  | Stealing from dwelling houses  | 0834                 |
| Receive stolen property                      | Receiving Stolen Property  | Receiving stolen property  | 0821                 |
| Possess property suspected stolen            | Possess Property Suspected Stolen  | Possession of property suspected stolen                                    | 0822                 |
| Bring stolen goods into Queensland           | Other Handling Stolen Goods  | Bring stolen goods into Queensland   | 0825                 |
| Tainted property (possess; receive; dispose) | Possess etc. Tainted Property  | Possess; receive; dispose of tainted property (including money laundering) | 0824                 |
| Stock-related theft                          | Other Stealing   | Stock — kill with intent to steal  | 0827                 |
|  |  | Stock — steal; unlawfully use; suspicion of stealing                       | 0828                 |
|  |  | Stock — steal cattle   | 0830                 |
|  |  | Stock — steal equine   | 0831                 |
|  |  | Stock — steal equine equipment   | 0832                 |
| Other stealing                               | Other Stealing<br>Shop Stealing<br>Other Stealing  | Steal from the person  | 0826                 |
|  |  | Shop stealing; unlawfully take away goods                                  | 0833                 |
|  |  | Stealing from other buildings (including ATM transactions)                 | 0835                 |
|  |  | Stealing things sent by post   | 0838                 |
|  |  | Stealing goods in transit  | 0839                 |
|  |  | Stealing by conversion or by trick   | 0840                 |
|  |  | Stealing (other)   | 0841                 |
|  |  | Stealing from other unspecified buildings                                  | 0842                 |
| Motor vehicle theft                          | Unlawful Use of a Motor Vehicle  | Motor vehicle — steal; unlawful use; possess                               | 0811                 |
| Motor vehicle (other)                        | Unlawful Use of a Motor Vehicle<br>Vehicles (steal from/enter with intent)<br>Other Stealing | Motor vehicle — attempted steal/unlawfully use                             | 0812                 |
|  |  | Vehicles — stealing from/enter with intent                                 | 0836                 |
|  |  | Vehicles — other; steal; unlawfully use                                    | 0816                 |
| Other theft (bicycle; vessel; aircraft)      | Other Stealing   | Bicycle — steal; unlawful use  | 0813                 |
|  |  | Vessel — steal; unlawfully use; remove from mooring                        | 0814                 |
|  |  | Aircraft — steal; unlawfully use   | 0815                 |

Offence data requested, but excluded from our statistical analyses:

- Other Handling Stolen Goods — Possession of skin or carcass suspected stolen (0823)
- Miscellaneous Offences — Possession of things for unlawful entry (0719)
- Good Order Offences — Fare evasion; refuse to pay (0837)





## Appendix 3: Consultation participants

| Stakeholders                                     |  | Date of meetings*            |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| <b>QPS regions</b>                               | <b>QPS districts</b>                         |                              |
| Far Northern Region                              | Cairns                                       | 18 September 2008            |
|  | Mareeba                                      | 19 September 2008            |
|  | Innisfail                                    | 30 October 2008 (telephone)  |
| Northern Region                                  | Townsville                                   | 16 September 2008            |
| Central Region                                   | Mackay                                       | 2 September 2008             |
|  | Rockhampton                                  | 3 September 2008             |
|  | Gladstone                                    | 5 September 2008             |
| North Coast Region                               | Bundaberg                                    | 11 September 2008            |
|  | Gympie                                       | 10 September 2008            |
|  | Sunshine Coast                               | 8 September 2008             |
|  | Redcliffe and Caboolture                     | 21 October 2008              |
| Southern Region                                  | Toowoomba and Dalby                          | 1 August 2008                |
|  | Ipswich                                      | 2 August 2008                |
| Metropolitan North Region                        | Pine Rivers / Brisbane West / North Brisbane | 22 October 2008              |
| Metropolitan South Region                        | Oxley  | 23 October 2008              |
|  | Upper Mt Gravatt                             | 29 September 2008            |
| South Eastern Region                             | Gold Coast and Logan                         | 1 September 2008 and         |
|  |  | 12 November 2008             |
| <b>State Crime Operations Command (QPS)</b>      | <b>QPS unit/division</b>                     |                              |
| SCOC   | PCIU   | 22 August 2008 and           |
|  |  | 30 October 2008              |
|  | Taskforce Hydra                              | 28 October 2008              |
|  | SARCIS                                       | 9 October 2008               |
|  | Organised Crime Unit (Vehicle)               | 10 October 2008              |
| <b>Other law enforcement agencies</b>            | <b>Unit/area</b>                             |                              |
| Australian Crime Commission                      | Canberra                                     | 30 July 2008                 |
| Australian Federal Police                        | Canberra                                     | 29 July 2008                 |
|  | Brisbane                                     | 8 October 2008               |
|  | Cairns                                       | 17 September 2008            |
| Australian Customs and Border Protection Service | Canberra                                     | 29 July 2008                 |
|  | Brisbane                                     | 17 July 2008                 |
|  | Townsville                                   | 16 September 2008            |
| <b>Other stakeholders</b>                        | <b>Unit/area</b>                             |                              |
| Australian Institute of Criminology              | Australia                                    | 31 July 2008                 |
| Cash Converters                                  | Queensland                                   | 28 January 2009 (telephone)  |
| CHEP Australia Limited                           | Australia                                    | 24 December 2008 (telephone) |
| Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries         | Australia                                    | 3 March 2009 (telephone)     |
| National retailer                                | Queensland                                   | 16 October 2008              |
| Office of Fair Trading                           | Queensland                                   | 2 November 2008              |
| Construction company                             | Queensland                                   | 18 and 19 December 2008      |
|  |  | (telephone)                  |
| eBay (Trust and Safety Division)                 | Australia                                    | 4 August 2008                |
| National energy company                          | Queensland                                   | 7 January 2009 (telephone)   |
| National metal recycler                          | Queensland                                   | 9 January 2009 (telephone)   |

\* Does not include data request discussions.

# Appendix 4: Risk assessment methodology

The risk assessment process applied to criminal markets and networks follows the methodology used by the CMC. This provides consistency in strategic assessment processes and allows comparison with previous risk levels.

The risk assessment is essentially a series of measures to determine level of risk:

| The risk assessment matrix is essentially a series of formulae to determine level of risk:   |
|--|
| <div>Desire × confidence = intent</div> <div>Resources × knowledge = capability</div> <div>Intent × capability = likelihood of threat</div> <div>Likelihood of threat × harm / consequences = RISK</div> |

*Threat* is effectively a measure of how likely it is that a person or group will succeed in carrying out some activity that may cause harm; and the likelihood of success depends on their intent and capability. *Intent* is the desire (motives and wishes) of the subject to engage in activities and their confidence that the activities will be successful. *Capability* is the availability or possession of the necessary resources as well as sufficient knowledge to engage in the activities.

The measurement of intent is essentially qualitative and relies on the analyst’s judgment. The measurement of capability, in contrast, lends itself more readily to quantitative assessment: the number and mix of people with the relevant skills and knowledge, and with access to the prerequisites for a particular type of criminal activity.

*Harm* refers to the magnitude and type of impact that would occur should a threat be realised. Such impact includes physical, psychological (including perception of harm), economic and political damage.

Harm is a factor that stakeholders are involved in determining because it refers not only to fact but also to perceptions. This is particularly relevant to the psychological, economic and political components of harm. Depending on the crime market, stakeholders may include politicians, law enforcement agencies, government departments and agencies, the health and financial sectors, private industry, professional groups and members of the general public. It is now recognised that law enforcement needs to engage more frequently and intensively with external stakeholders to counter organised crime; the views and perceptions of those stakeholders are therefore crucial to any assessment of harm.

It is also important that governments and law enforcement agencies acquire detailed knowledge of harm levels, both direct and indirect, to help them design policies to combat the causes and effects of organised crime. For example, although a threat may be significant, it may not be worthwhile allocating resources to reduce the threat if the harm it might cause would be slight.

The importance attributed to the various components of harm varies according to the category of criminal activity being considered. Despite any assessment of threat, some issues will still be given prominence (or lack of it) by political and public perceptions.

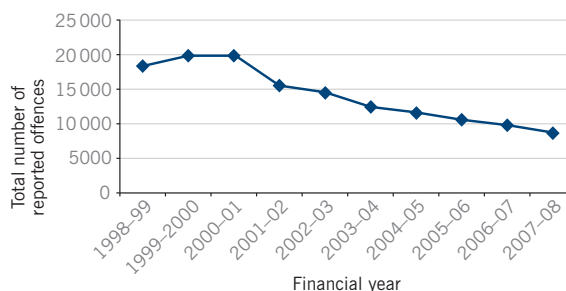
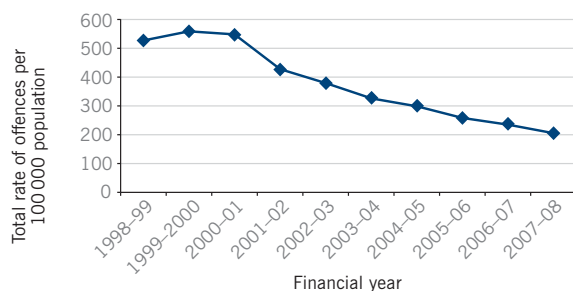
Risk is a function of the threat of activity occurring and the harmful consequences of that activity. Risk is commonly given a probability rating that is expressed in qualitative terms.

| Negligible | Very low | Low | Medium | High | Very high | Certain |
|------------|----------|-----|--------|------|-----------|---------|
|            |          |     |        |      |           |         |

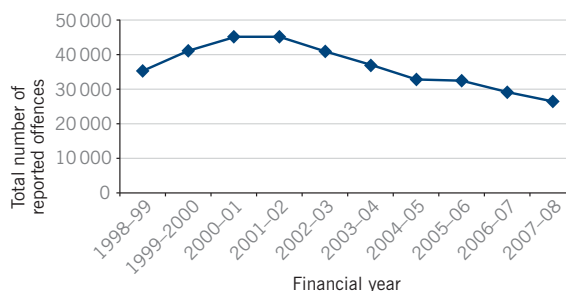
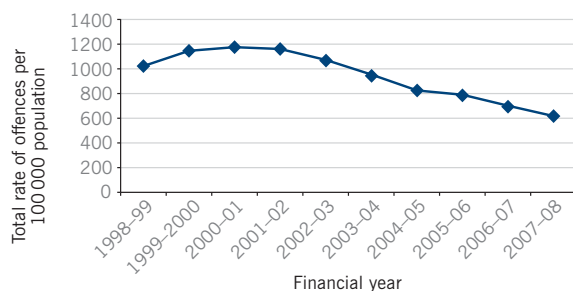
## Appendix 5: Rate and total number of offences, Queensland

The following graphs show the rate of offences (per 100 000 people) and the total number of offences in Queensland from 1998–99 to 2007–08. As noted in Chapter 2, the Queensland total may not be the sum of all the regional statistics. This is because the accuracy of an address may be unknown to police or the offence may be part of a covert operation and cannot be recorded to maintain security (QPS 2008a).

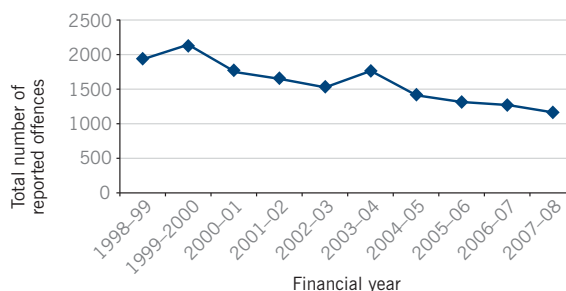
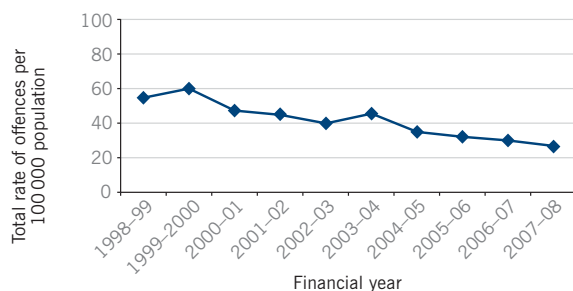
### Motor vehicle theft



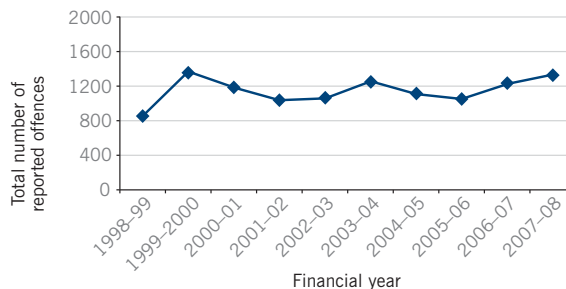
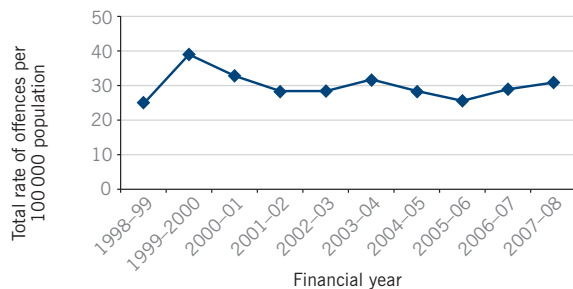
### Motor vehicle (other)



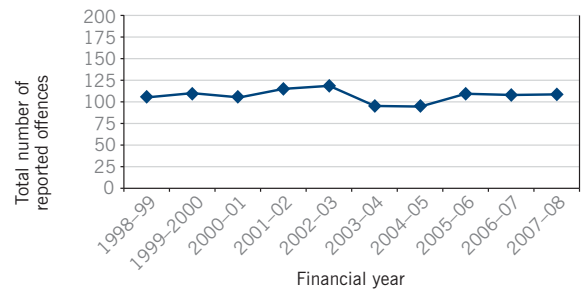
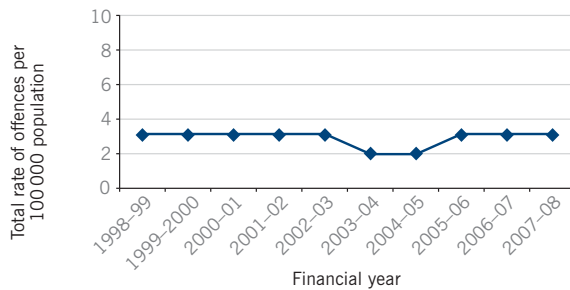
### Receive stolen property



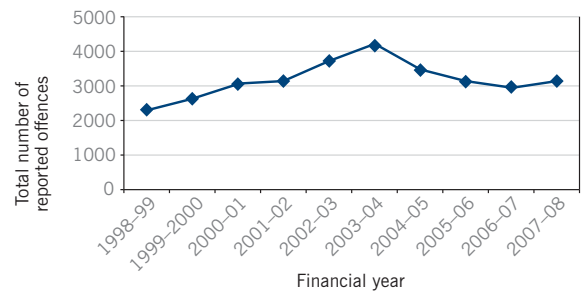
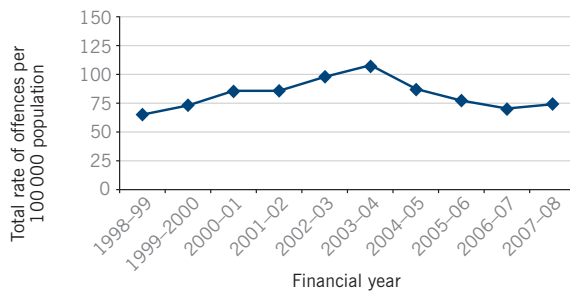
### Possess property suspected stolen



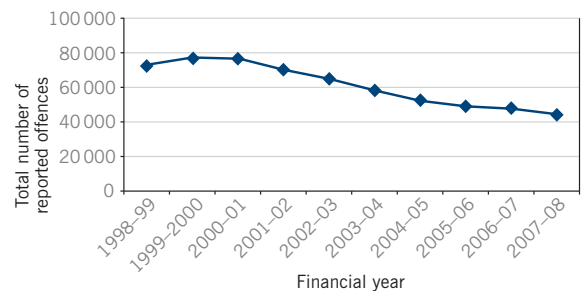
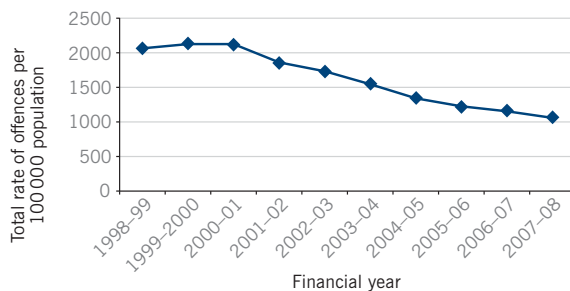
### Bring stolen goods into Queensland



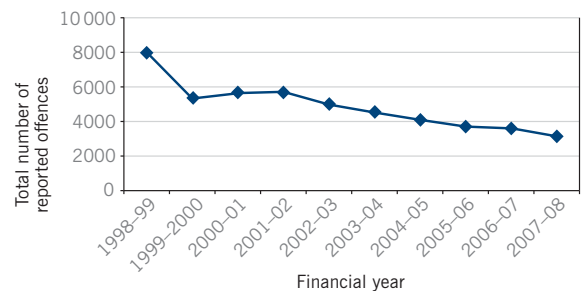
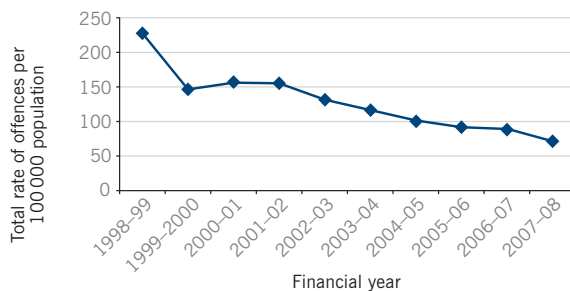
### Tainted property (possesses; receive; dispose)



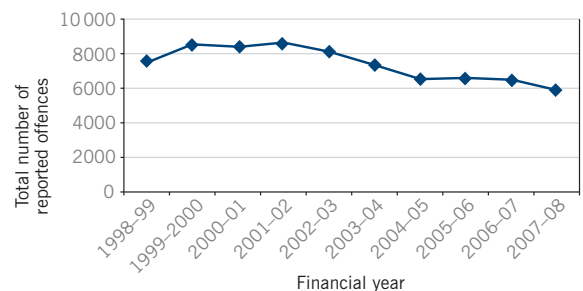
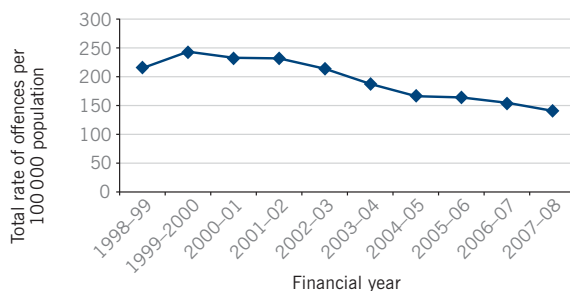
### Unlawful entry



### Other theft (bicycle; vessel; aircraft)

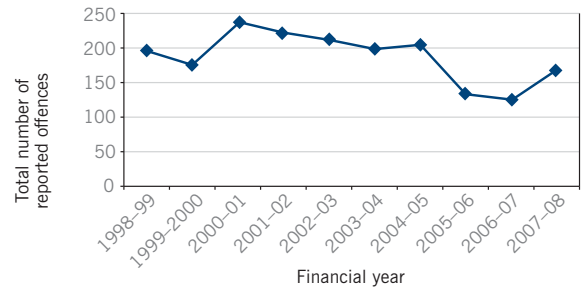
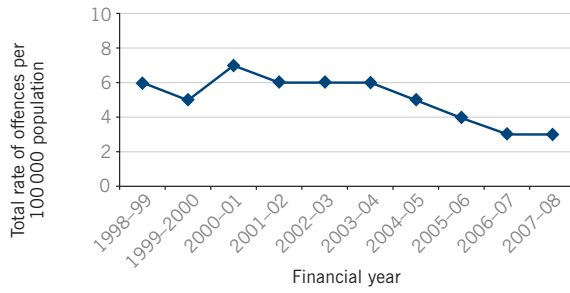


### Steal from dwellings

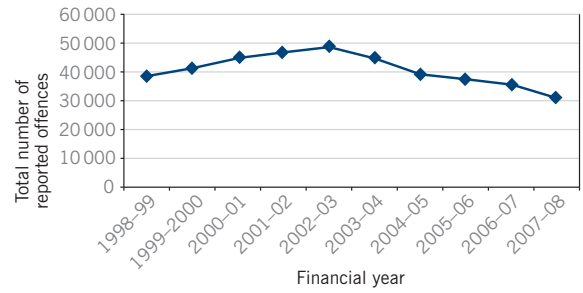
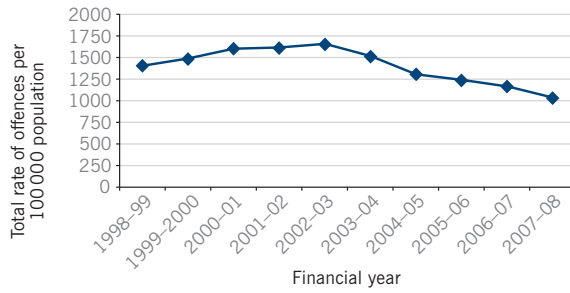




### Stock-related theft



### Other stealing



Notes: Data sourced from QPS. Offence definitions outlined in Appendix 1.

## Appendix 6: Vehicle body codes (NMVTRC data)

| Body group                 | Body code | Body type description   |
|----------------------------|-----------|---|
| Passenger/light commercial | 1         | <b>Sedan</b> — external boot or no boot<br>Includes Convertibles, Coupes, Jeeps, Roadsters, Cabriolets, Soft Top, Targa Top   |
|                            | 2         | <b>Station Wagon</b> — internal boot<br>Includes Hatchbacks, Hearse<br>Examples are LandCruiser, Patrol, Discovery  |
|                            | 3         | <b>Forward Control Passenger Vehicles</b><br>Includes Limousine, Stretch Limousine, Mourning Coach<br>Example are Limousines, Tarago, Voyager, Starwagon  |
|                            | 4         | <b>Utilities</b><br>Includes Dual Cab, Cab Chassis, Tray Top, Bolster, Tray & Sides<br>Examples are Hilux, Navara, Triton, Rodeo, Falcon, Commodore   |
|                            | 5         | <b>Panel Van</b><br>Includes Ambulance, Mobile Workshop, Forward Control Load Carrying Vehicle<br>Examples are Falcon, Hiace, Urvan, Express, Ambulance   |
|                            | 9         | <b>Motor Home</b><br>Includes Camper Vans, Self-propelled Caravans  |
| Heavy/other                | 6         | <b>Truck</b><br>Includes all trucks not special purpose (code 12) Tray Top, Flat Top, Tipper, Tip Truck, Stock Truck, Refrigerated Van  |
|                            | 7         | <b>Prime Mover</b><br>Includes B-Double, Jinker   |
|                            | 8         | <b>Tow Truck</b><br>Includes anything designated as a tow truck of any class  |
|                            | 10        | <b>Bus</b><br>Includes Omnibus, Coach, Personnel Carrier, Troop Carrier   |
|                            | 12        | <b>Plant/Equipment</b><br>Includes truck mounted equipment where the sole purpose of the truck is to move the equipment — Crane, Dozer, Fire Tender, Compacter, Street Sweeper, Skeleton. Also includes tractors and forklifts. |
|                            | 13        | <b>Other</b> — anything known but unable to categorise<br>Examples are Golf Buggy, Beach Buggy, Wheelchair, Hovercraft, Snow Mobile, Shunter, Stretcher Vehicle   |
| Motorcycles                | 11        | <b>Motorcycle</b><br>Includes Sidecars  |
| Other                      | 14        | <b>Unknown</b>  |

## Appendix 7: NMVTRC data (Queensland), July 1998 – June 2008

| Queensland            | Passenger/light commercial |                   |             | Motorcycles   |                   |             | Heavy/other   |                   |             | Unknown       |                   |             | TOTAL         |                   |             |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|
|                       | No. of thefts              | No. not recovered | % recovered | No. of thefts | No. not recovered | % recovered | No. of thefts | No. not recovered | % recovered | No. of thefts | No. not recovered | % recovered | No. of thefts | No. not recovered | % recovered |
| July 1998 – June 1999 | 14 530                     | 1 656             | 88.6        | 989           | 518               | 47.6        | 283           | 67                | 76.3        | 41            | 12                | 70.7        | 15 843        | 2 253             | 85.8        |
| July 1999 – June 2000 | 15 906                     | 1 804             | 88.7        | 1 029         | 575               | 44.1        | 335           | 78                | 76.7        | 53            | 16                | 69.8        | 17 323        | 2 473             | 85.7        |
| July 2000 – June 2001 | 16 296                     | 1 838             | 88.7        | 1 046         | 573               | 45.2        | 373           | 82                | 78.0        | 17            | 4                 | 76.5        | 17 732        | 2 497             | 85.9        |
| July 2001 – June 2002 | 13 884                     | 1 751             | 87.4        | 1 008         | 575               | 43.0        | 333           | 74                | 77.8        | 143           | 22                | 84.6        | 15 368        | 2 422             | 84.2        |
| July 2002 – June 2003 | 13 038                     | 1 777             | 86.4        | 977           | 522               | 46.6        | 337           | 84                | 75.1        | 117           | 29                | 75.2        | 14 469        | 2 412             | 83.3        |
| July 2003 – June 2004 | 10 936                     | 1 545             | 85.9        | 887           | 532               | 40.0        | 396           | 111               | 72.0        | 110           | 32                | 70.9        | 12 329        | 2 220             | 82.0        |
| July 2004 – June 2005 | 10 301                     | 1 538             | 85.1        | 893           | 522               | 41.5        | 404           | 134               | 66.8        | 104           | 33                | 68.3        | 11 702        | 2 227             | 81.0        |
| July 2005 – June 2006 | 9 210                      | 1 703             | 81.5        | 956           | 564               | 41.0        | 351           | 81                | 76.9        | 85            | 26                | 69.4        | 10 602        | 2 374             | 77.6        |
| July 2006 – June 2007 | 8 281                      | 1 631             | 80.3        | 1 000         | 592               | 40.8        | 458           | 145               | 68.3        | 115           | 45                | 60.9        | 9 854         | 2 413             | 75.5        |
| July 2007 – June 2008 | 7 354                      | 1 548             | 79.0        | 1 388         | 875               | 37.0        | 393           | 125               | 68.2        | 137           | 64                | 53.3        | 9 272         | 2 612             | 71.8        |

Notes: Data sourced from the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council. See National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council website for further information.

Passenger/Light Commercial (sedan, station wagon, forward control passenger vehicles, utilities, panel van, motor home);  
Motorcycle (off-road and on-road motorcycle, sidecars, scooters, all-terrain); Heavy/Other (truck, prime mover, tow truck, bus, plant/equipment, other); Unknown (unknown). See Appendix 6.

Percentage of recovered vehicles represents the proportion of vehicles stolen in that year that are then recovered. July 1999 – June 2000 does not include theft and recovery data for the first six months of the financial year (i.e. July 1999 – December 1999).

## Appendix 8: NMVTRC data (Australia), July 1998 – June 2008

| Australia             | Passenger/light commercial |                   |             | Motorcycles   |                   |             | Heavy/other   |                   |             | Unknown       |                   |             | TOTAL         |                   |             |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|
|                       | No. of thefts              | No. not recovered | % recovered | No. of thefts | No. not recovered | % recovered | No. of thefts | No. not recovered | % recovered | No. of thefts | No. not recovered | % recovered | No. of thefts | No. not recovered | % recovered |
| July 1998 – June 1999 | 95508                      | 11167             | 88.3        | 4259          | 2495              | 41.4        | 1839          | 458               | 75.1        | 451           | 175               | 61.2        | 102057        | 14295             | 86.0        |
| July 1999 – June 2000 | 121492                     | 14509             | 88.1        | 5508          | 3386              | 38.5        | 2594          | 648               | 75.0        | 681           | 310               | 54.5        | 130275        | 18853             | 85.5        |
| July 2000 – June 2001 | 129497                     | 15267             | 88.2        | 6224          | 3925              | 36.9        | 3068          | 739               | 75.9        | 559           | 277               | 50.4        | 139348        | 20208             | 85.5        |
| July 2001 – June 2002 | 115228                     | 14652             | 87.3        | 5935          | 3736              | 37.1        | 2838          | 653               | 77.0        | 790           | 369               | 53.3        | 124791        | 19410             | 84.4        |
| July 2002 – June 2003 | 92810                      | 12635             | 86.4        | 5524          | 3495              | 36.7        | 2561          | 605               | 76.4        | 749           | 433               | 42.2        | 101644        | 17168             | 83.1        |
| July 2003 – June 2004 | 79546                      | 12302             | 84.5        | 5833          | 3908              | 33.0        | 2669          | 671               | 74.9        | 663           | 379               | 42.8        | 88711         | 17260             | 80.5        |
| July 2004 – June 2005 | 72868                      | 12369             | 83.0        | 6077          | 4094              | 32.6        | 2613          | 745               | 71.5        | 473           | 257               | 45.7        | 82031         | 17465             | 78.7        |
| July 2005 – June 2006 | 66015                      | 12107             | 81.7        | 6619          | 4262              | 35.6        | 2727          | 753               | 72.4        | 505           | 290               | 42.6        | 75866         | 17412             | 77.0        |
| July 2006 – June 2007 | 61831                      | 12200             | 80.3        | 6717          | 4306              | 35.9        | 2976          | 883               | 70.3        | 567           | 337               | 40.6        | 72091         | 17726             | 75.4        |
| July 2007 – June 2008 | 57316                      | 14191             | 75.2        | 7796          | 5063              | 35.1        | 2837          | 923               | 67.5        | 569           | 339               | 40.4        | 68518         | 20516             | 70.1        |

Notes: Data sourced from the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council. See National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council website for further information.

Passenger/Light Commercial (sedan, station wagon, forward control passenger vehicles, utilities, panel van, motor home); Motorcycle (off-road and on-road motorcycle, sidecars, scooters, all-terrain); Heavy/Other (truck, prime mover, tow truck, bus, plant/equipment, other); Unknown (unknown). See Appendix 6.

Percentage of recovered vehicles represents the proportion of vehicles stolen in that year that are then recovered.

July 1998 – June 1999 does not include theft and recovery data from the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. July 1999 – June 2000 does not include theft and recovery data for the first six months of the financial year (i.e. July 1999 – December 1999).

## Appendix 9: The New South Wales Crimes Act

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The *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW) provides for the following new offences and penalties:

| Subdivision 5A — offences relating to theft of motor vehicles and vessels   | Section | Penalty  |
|---|---------|----------|
| Stealing a motor vehicle or vessel.   | 154F    | 10 years |
| Knowingly facilitating a car or boat rebirthing activity that is carried out on an organised basis.   | 154G    | 14 years |
| Improper interference with, copying, making or using identification information marked on, attached to, or stored in a motor vehicle or vessel for the purpose of distinguishing it from other motor vehicles or vessels. | 154H    | 7 years  |
| Dishonestly having possession of a motor vehicle or vessel, or part of a motor vehicle or vessel with a unique identifier.  | 154I    | 5 years  |
| Being in possession of a vehicle identification plate not attached to the vehicle for which it relates.   | 154J    | 5 years  |



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- Crime Bulletin no. 1, June 1999, *Organised crime in Queensland*, which describes the nature, extent and impact of organised crime activity in Queensland, and generally explains the law enforcement strategies developed to tackle the problem.

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