

Youth Justice Reform Select Committee inquiry into youth justice reform in Queensland

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Committee Secretary
Youth Justice Reform Select Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
By email: youthjustice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

RE: Inquiry into Youth Justice Reform

Please accept a submission to the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee's Inquiry from LC Distributors.

LC Distributors is the Australian distributor of the CODE SAFE© secondary car immobiliser. Through accredited installers, LC Distributors has provided secondary car immobilisers through the Queensland Government's car immobiliser trial in the cities of Townsville, Cairns and Mount Isa.

LC Distributors notes the Select Committee's terms of reference for its Inquiry included the *"the efficacy of... evidence-based early intervention and prevention programs"*.

Secondary car immobiliser trial

The car immobiliser trial was first proposed by the Queensland Police Union (QPU) of Employees in its submission to the Transport and Resources Committee's Inquiry into Vehicle Safety, Standards and Technology, including Engine Immobiliser Technology. The Transport and Resources Committee report in September 2021 said the QPU proposal was *"worthy of further consideration and suggests that the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services scrutinise the proposal from QPUE once it is received."*

In December 2022, the Queensland Government announced *"to help prevent car theft in the first place, \$10 million will be provided to supply 20,000 engine immobilisers to be trialled in Mt Isa, Cairns and Townsville"*. The trial was launched on 2 August 2023.

QPU President Ian Leavers has said:

"The opportunity to prevent vehicles being stolen in the first place is a positive. We also do not want to see stolen vehicles used as weapons against frontline police, community members and any harm for those using stolen vehicles recklessly."

On 17 October 2023, the Government provided an update on the trial that:

“Eligible residents of Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa have obtained 11,926 vouchers since the launch on 2 August 2023.... So far, 1,832 car owners have redeemed their vouchers and had a secondary engine immobiliser installed in their vehicle, with many more booked in with approved installers.”

Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill’s submission

I note the submission to the Select Committee from Townsville Mayor Councillor Jenny Hill AM and her comments about the car immobiliser trial:

“While a number of Townsville residents have accessed this voucher, there is a large disparity between the number of people applying for the vouchers and the number of people actually getting the immobilisers installed. My view is that the Government has not adequately explained that this system is not for a "free" engine immobiliser, but is actually a \$500 voucher towards the cost of purchasing and installing the devices. I am also of the view that the Government has not adequately engaged with the vehicle insurance industry to link the installation of engine immobilisers with a reduction in car insurance or compulsory third party insurance premiums. Finally, due to the dearth of accredited suppliers in Townsville to install immobiliser devices, it is necessary to extend the use-by dates of the \$500 vouchers past 30 June 2024 to allow for maximum uptake of this trial.”

LC Distributors commends the Mayor on her comments and urge the Select Committee to take up her recommendations for the delivery of the current trial.

Recommendations

LC Distributors recommends the Select Committee consider:

1. Extend the current trial beyond 30 June 2024 with public awareness campaign

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) is to be congratulated for its management of the trial.

However, as the Government noted in October 2023, there remains a large portion of vouchers that have not been redeemed.

The Scheme should be extended a further six months until 31 December 2024, with a public awareness campaign to encourage vehicle owners in Townsville, Cairns and Mount Isa to access the scheme.

Those vouchers holders should be encouraged to redeem their vouchers as soon as possible.

With the launch of the trial, QPS retained 2100 vouchers for distribution to *“people across the three trial areas identified by police as individuals who would benefit from the installation of an immobiliser device (for example a pensioner who was unaware of the availability of the technology).”* QPS should provide an update on the distribution and redemption of those vouchers.

2. Extend the current trial to include seven additional local government areas

The Queensland Government has demonstrated national leadership by implementing a trial. The opportunity for the Queensland Government is to extend the trial to other local government areas (LGAs) where there is also a high incidence of car theft, and to move toward encouraging the adoption of secondary immobilisers State-wide.

According to Queensland Police Service data (6 January 2022 to 5 January 2024), the reported unlawful use of motor vehicle offences in the trial LGAs were Cairns (2999 offences), Townsville (2937) and Mount Isa (382).

Based on the number of dwellings with motor vehicles for these LGAs¹, the incidence of reported unlawful use of a motor vehicle offence over the last two years was at a rate of 15.5 dwellings with a motor vehicle in Mount Isa, 18.7 in Cairns and 22.5 in Townsville.

The trial should be extended to seven LGAs of:

- Rockhampton (where total reported unlawful use of motor vehicle offences over the last two years was 1073 and there was an offence for every 26 dwellings with a motor vehicle)
- Logan (2930 offences, offence for every 36.6 dwellings with a motor vehicle)
- Toowoomba (1441 offences, offence for every 42.4 dwellings with a motor vehicle)
- Gold Coast (4510 offence, offence for every 48.5 dwellings with a motor vehicle)
- Mackay (730 offences, offence for every 56.5 dwellings with a motor vehicle)
- Ipswich (1257 offences, offence for every 58.9 dwellings with a motor vehicle)
- Fraser Coast, including Maryborough and Hervey Bay (597 offences, offence for every 69.3 dwellings with a motor vehicle).

The extension of the trial should be announced as soon as possible for installers to be accredited and for a public awareness campaign to be developed for those areas, particularly with local councils.

3. Engage with insurance industry on secondary car immobiliser

As Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill states in her submission to the Select Committee, the Queensland Government should engage with the insurance industry to encourage it to incentivise the adoption of secondary immobilisers through reduced premiums rather than a Queensland Government-funded voucher.

LC Distributors understands RACQ and Insurance Council of Australia did not support the QPU proposal for a secondary car immobiliser trial in their submissions to the Transport and Resources Committee Inquiry. RACQ publicly opposed the trial describing it in December 2022 as “pointless”.

¹ The number of dwellings without a motor vehicle is drawn from the LGA reports generated from 2021 Census data www.statistics.qgso.qld.gov.au/qld-regional-profiles

Yet in July 2023, RACQ Chief Executive Insurance Trent Sayers said car theft remains a key issue in Queensland, affecting thousands of car owners each year; further stating that:

“RACQ Insurance alone has seen a 10% increase in car theft claims over the past year, with Townsville, Cairns and Brisbane’s inner city experiencing the highest frequency of stolen vehicles. According to insurance claims data, one in three vehicles was stolen between 1am – 4am, and more incidents occurred on the weekend than any other day of the week. Unsurprisingly, our research also found more than half of Queenslanders are aware of rising car thefts in their area or nearby, and of those, 40% are very concerned about the growing risk.”

The Queensland Government should engage insurers, including RACQ, to seek their support for a wider roll-out to address – in RACQ words – the “key issue” that is car theft.

In those discussions with the Queensland Government, insurers should be encouraged to offer reduced premiums to policyholders who have installed a secondary car immobiliser for the additional security their vehicle has.

4. Other Queensland Government incentives for secondary car immobilisers

The Queensland Government should consider discounts on car registration and Compulsory Third Party (CTP) insurance for those vehicle owners with a secondary car immobiliser installed in their vehicle. Such discounts could replace the current voucher offered in the limited trial.

Last month, the Queensland Government announced it was freezing the registration fee and traffic improvement fee components of motor vehicle registration costs in 2024-25.

The Government already provides a registration concession for:

- Seniors Card holders
- Pensioner Concession Card holders
- current or former members of the Australian Defence Force that have an impairment
- special interest vehicles, such as classic and vintage cars, street rods or historic vehicles
- primary producers and co-operative associations
- charitable or community service organisations
- local governments
- restricted areas in Queensland
- vehicles used solely to cross roads within an agricultural or mining property
- vehicles used solely to travel between 2 agricultural properties or 2 mining properties, directly across the road from each other
- vehicles used solely for fencing of primary producer’s property
- vehicles built for mineral, oil or water exploration
- vehicles built to carry well boring equipment
- vehicles used solely as mobile workshops in beekeeping
- vehicles used by bona fide prospectors in a remote area (not miners).

Another registration concession could be created for those vehicles that a secondary car immobiliser had been installed.

Another registration concession could be created for those vehicles that are leased or owner leased /company-driven vehicles that have secondary car immobilisers installed. These vehicles are prime targets for theft.

In terms of CTP, the Government had commissioned a review of CTP Scheme, but prior to the conclusion of the review – on 13 October 2023 – RACQ exited the CTP Scheme. The CTP Scheme review had included a public underwritten scheme as an option for the future of the Scheme, and the review discussion paper noted that:

“Publicly underwritten schemes in other jurisdictions have simplified premium setting arrangements such as an annual CPI adjustment or premium oversight body. Premium subsidies are also more flexible and can be directed to specific community sectors/cohorts (i.e. discounts for pensioners, apprentices, etc).”

I would welcome the opportunity to provide more information to the Committee and arrange for a briefing from a Queensland-based installer.


for
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