



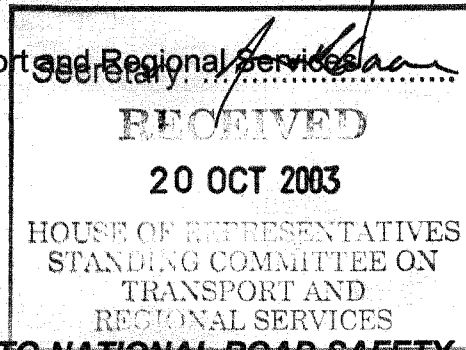
17 October 2003

E-MAILED
17.10.2003

Mr Paul Neville MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**Australian Security
Industry Association
Limited**

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Dear Sir,

INQUIRY INTO NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY

The Australian Security Industry Association (ASIAL) is the peak organisation representing the private security industry throughout Australia. Active since 1969, it has a membership comprising over 3,000 businesses.

ASIAL appreciates the opportunity to address the following submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services' Inquiry into National Road Safety.

Bearing in mind the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry, ASIAL seeks leave to request that the Standing Committee consider the ramifications of particular recent motor vehicle security innovations on road safety.

A major centre of operations within ASIAL is its National Electronic Security Committee, which advises the Association's National Executive Council on all aspects of electronic security including alarms, access control, electronic surveillance and motor vehicle security.

In matters relating to vehicle security, it delegates to an operational subcommittee entitled the National Vehicle Security Committee (NVSC).

Through the NVSC, ASIAL has been monitoring the many and varied new technologies emerging in vehicle security, bearing in mind in particular their relationship to the safety of road users and pedestrians.

The legislative requirement (Australian Design Rules 2001) for widespread fitment, by vehicle manufacturers, of conventional immobilisers has lead to an increase in vehicle thefts where vehicles' keys are stolen prior to the vehicle being stolen. This in turn is driving consumer demand for remote immobilisation.

One such new technology has been the Vehicle Tracking System (VTS).

While there is doubtless a majority of manufacturers and suppliers that are developing vehicle security systems and products with safety maintained as a primary consideration, we feel there may be reason to suspect that some companies may not be so focused on the need to consider safety as a priority.

Your mark of distinction

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Included in the general category of "VTS" are systems that may not actually track a vehicle's location, but are nonetheless able to communicate with its electronics and literally immobilise it whilst it is in motion.

In this context, such systems act to shut down the vehicle's engine in response to a remote digital command entered by, for example, the vehicle's owner when they become aware it has been stolen. In the case of some units, the immobilisation can be effected instantaneously.

There are companies that immobilise vehicles remotely with due professionalism, care and emphasis on considerations of safety.

These companies operate from a "control room" manned by trained personnel and will only immobilise a vehicle when instructed to do so under police authorisation following the reporting to them of its theft.

Police will ensure that they have the vehicle in sight, that road conditions are suitable, and that public safety can and will be maintained, prior to authorising an immobilisation by the control room.

ASIAL takes the view that the above situation is the only protocol capable of ensuring that public safety is duly protected.

The main issue with some VTS is the ability of the owner (or anyone with the system's PIN) to remotely shut down the engine of the vehicle using (in most cases) a mobile phone without prior knowledge of its location, speed or direction; or of the road conditions or any other relevant variables.

The following would be a feasible scenario:

A stolen vehicle is travelling at 100 km/h. The owner realises his/her car has been stolen, dials into the vehicle and instantly immobilises its engine.

The vehicle, now without power, loses:

- Power steering.
- Power assisted brakes.
- Any other devices that may be installed to ensure/enhance control and safety.

The vehicle is now unable to be controlled in the manner for which it was designed, and despite the fact that its theft has been effectively halted, a potential major hazard to the safety of pedestrians and other motorists has now been created.

Stolen vehicles are rarely driven at the speed limit. Should one be about to take a turn at an excessive speed at the moment it receives a signal from a remote immobilisation source, the instant shutdown of the engine will transform it from a "vehicle on the feathered edge of control" to a one-tonne-plus missile capable of causing potentially horrendous (and possibly fatal) injury and/or damage.

Further to the general public safety issues, it is important to note the grave risks posed by stolen vehicles being pursued by police are a danger to public, emergency services, and vehicle occupants that are greatly mitigated by real-time remote immobilisation.

Public policy should encourage remote immobilisation capabilities, but ensure that the facility can only be used in appropriate circumstances.

ASIAL believes that "remote immobilisation" should only be effected in a controlled manner by persons or organisations suitably trained and authorised, as opposed to individual vehicle owners.

Some vehicle security alarm systems also offer a facility where a mobile vehicle may be immobilised without supervision. These have the function of immobilising a moving vehicle should a set of protocols be achieved, e.g. engine running; door open and then closed; start shutdown procedure after sounding siren for +/-30 seconds, etc.

It is noted that some systems do immobilise sequentially. This means that the entire immobilisation process takes 30 – 60 seconds to completely bring the engine to a stop. This is irrespective of whether the vehicle is still in motion or stationary.


It is also noted that none of the "VTS" systems that have the ability to allow members of the public, including the owner, to remotely shut down a vehicle's engine, currently comply with relevant Standards (in this case AS/NZS 4601 and AS/NZS 3749).

ASIAL requests that the Inquiry considers:

1. Its position on security systems that remotely immobilise mobile vehicles *per se*.
2. Its position on remote immobilisation of vehicles *by the public*.
3. Its position on protocols to mitigate the risk of remote and unsupervised immobilisation, e.g. instantaneous versus a timed process, or delayed till ignition-off.
4. Any other considerations the Committee sees as relevant.

ASIAL appreciates this opportunity to draw the Standing Committee's attention to this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information if required.

Yours faithfully



Terry Murphy
Executive Director