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Carjackers becoming more ruthless, say police

Les Kennedy and Malcolm Brown
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AN increase in carjackings where cars are stolen for use in other offences shows a new ruthless streak in criminals, Peter Cotter, the head of the Police Robbery Squad, has warned.

The bumper ram-and-steal tactic, where criminals stage an accident to lure drivers from their cars, was becoming more frequent, he said.

At 12.10am yesterday a Chiswick dentist, Veronica Roller, was driving to Clovelly when three men in a red Subaru - later found to be stolen - crashed into her 2004 silver BMW convertible.

"I loved that car and the first thought was 'Oh! He hit my car!' and I didn't think of anything else as I was listening to an audio on the CD'," Dr Roller said.

"I got out to look at the damage. I only saw the driver really, and the next thing they all got out of the car, all three of them at once, brandishing weapons. They had baseball bats.

"It was fairly fierce, and the survival instinct kicked in. I didn't know I could actually run that fast or scream that loudly. I don't think I've been that frightened ever.

Dr Roller said she regretted getting out of the car, which had an automatic door locking system. "I know the law and I know you have to report it, but for a woman at midnight, to get out on her own is irresponsible and I am so sorry I just did it. I'm so grateful that I'm alive," she said.

Hours earlier a Subaru with a group of men, who police believe may have been Dr Roller's attackers, was involved in a similar collision in Chippendale. When the driver refused to get out of his car they drove off.

Detective Superintendent Cotter said Dr Roller's case was the ninth carjacking in six weeks. There had been 101 carjacking incidents in the past year and thieves who wanted vehicles to use in ram raids or robberies were using more violent tactics.

Late yesterday police charged a man, 20, from Punchbowl, with aggravated carjacking over three cases in August in which a pistol was used to steal vehicles at Roselands, Yagoona and Belmore. He is due to appear in Bankstown Local Court today.