

Herald Sun

Lock up tractors and equipment

Georgie Pilcher
August 13, 2007 11:06am

VICTORIA Police is urging farmers and owners of heavy machinery to store their equipment securely and record identification numbers.

Over five million dollars worth of machinery was stolen in Victoria between July 1, 2006 and 30 June 2007, most stolen on site or near the owner's house.

Only 17 per cent of the owners could tell police what the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) was, while just five per cent knew the engine number when reporting the theft.

Sen-Constable Brett Florence of the Organised Motor Vehicle Theft Squad said it was incredible that people take more care with a \$30,000 motor vehicle than with a piece of machinery valued at over \$100,000.

"It is essential that the owners of heavy machinery and agricultural equipment keep thorough and up-to-date records of all equipment they own," Snr Constable Florence said.

Sen-Constable Florence said motorcycles and quad bikes should also be stored safely so when not in use they are not visible to thieves.

"Owners should record the VIN, engine number and any other identifying feature of the equipment and store this information in a safe place.

"They should also take photos of the equipment and keep this on file should anything ever happen," he said.

There were 144 reported machinery thefts in Victoria in 2006, accounting for just over 28 per cent of the nation-wide total of 504.

Sen-Constable Florence said once the equipment has been stolen, it may be transported interstate for sale.

"Police are aware of incidents where stolen machinery such as bobcats have been sold on to building sites at a very cheap price, worked into the ground, then dismantled and formed part of the foundations of the car park of the building site," he said.

"In another incident, a thief in a stolen steam roller slid the machine off the edge of the road and was crushed to death."

Anyone with any information regarding the theft of agricultural equipment or heavy machinery is urged to contact their local police or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

STATISTICS

Type of equipment stolen

- 23 agricultural equipment such as farm tractors
- 27 skid steer such as bobcats
- 51 other types of machinery including heavy earth moving equipment and back hoes

Offenders charged

- 17 offenders charged
- Number of cases with multiple juvenile offenders charged with joy-riding

Location of theft

- 26 rural locations including those related to road works
- 63 thefts from built-up or fringe areas including building sites and road works