Australian Government
Australian Institute of Criminology

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Samantha Bricknell
Jenny Mouzos

Research and Public Policy Series

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Director's introduction

Stolen firearms represent a very real source of weapons for diversion into the illegitimate firearms market and hence, potential use in criminal activities. Over the past 10 years, the Australian Government has introduced legislation regarding the prohibition of certain categories of firearms, trafficking of firearms, and the licensing, registration and storage of new firearms. Furthermore, the Australasian Police Ministers' Council (APMC) identified the need for long-term monitoring of firearms theft in Australia. The National Firearms Theft Monitoring Program (NFTMP) was subsequently established at the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), funded by the Australian Government under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* for a period of four years, starting 1 July 2006. The purpose of the NFTMP is to provide relevant and timely information on the nature and characteristics of firearms theft occurring in Australia.

This report represents the first in the NFTMP series, and builds on earlier AIC research on firearms theft (Borzycki & Mouzos 2007; Mouzos & Sakurai 2006; Mouzos 2002).This report describes firearms thefts reported to police between 1 July 2005 and 30 June 2006 – 634 incidents, with a total of 1,445 firearms stolen. These results mark another decline in the number of firearms stolen yearly in Australia, down from an estimated 5,000 firearms in the period immediately prior to the implementation of the National Firearms Agreement, and a more modest drop from the 1,470 firearms reported stolen in 2004–05. Longarms (rifles and shotguns) remain the most common type of firearm stolen but the proportional theft of handguns has more than halved, from 14 to five percent, over the past 10 years. Most of the firearms reported stolen were registered, and the majority of firearms owners held appropriate licenses for their firearms. Nonetheless, one-third of firearms owners continue to store their firearms in unapproved receptacles or do not secure them at all. A recent increase in the prosecution of non-compliant owners may result in future improvements in firearm storage.

With the addition of three more years of data, a picture of the circumstances and characteristics of firearms theft will continue to evolve. This picture will provide an important source for police, policy makers and researchers in their understanding of the offence and in future development of policy and crime prevention initiatives. However, it is important to note that we do not have empirical data on the number of unregistered firearms that are available in the community, nor data on the number of people who have obtained firearms illegally. Collecting such data is outside the scope of this project.

AIC publications about firearm related crime and more general weapons offences can be found at http://www.aic.gov.au/research/weapons/publications.html

Toni Makkai
Director
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The research is funded by the Australian Government under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002*.

Disclaimer

This research report does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the Australian Government.

Note

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

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Executive summary

The National Firearms Theft Monitoring Program (NFTMP) was established following a recommendation by the Australasian Police Ministers' Council (AMPC) Firearms Policy Working Group (FPWG) for a long term examination and monitoring of firearms theft in Australia. The program is funded by the Australian Government under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* for a period of four years, commencing on 1 July 2006. This report represents the first in the NFTMP series and builds on earlier firearms theft research conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC).

This report provides information on all incidents of firearms theft reported to police in Australian states and territories for the period 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006. The report examines the characteristics of stolen firearms, circumstances of the theft incident, *modus operandi* of offenders, storage arrangements and compliance with firearms laws and regulations, recovery of firearms, prosecution of offenders, and use of stolen firearms in subsequent illegal activities.

Key findings regarding stolen firearms

- A total of 1,445 firearms were stolen in 634 reported incidents in 2005–06, a decrease of 25 firearms and 31 incidents from the previous year (2004–05).
- Stolen firearms represent 0.06 percent of all registered firearms in Australia.
- Just over half of all incidents involved the theft of a single firearm. The number of firearms stolen in multiple firearms thefts ranged from two to 16.
- Rifles comprised the majority (60%) of all reported stolen firearms, with bolt action rifles the most common type of rifle stolen. One-quarter of the stolen firearms were shotguns, primarily single or double barrel. Handguns accounted for five percent of stolen firearms, of which 41 percent were semi-automatic pistols and another 41 percent were revolvers.
- Two-thirds of stolen firearms were Category A firearms, one in four were Category B and five percent were Category H. Only two percent of firearms were classed as Category C. No Category D firearms were reported stolen in 2005–06.
- Nine in 10 firearms reported stolen were registered. Category A firearms comprised the majority (75%) of all unregistered firearms.

Key findings regarding firearm owners

- Three-quarters of theft incidents were reported by the firearm owner.
- Nearly 90 percent of firearm owners who reported a firearms theft in 2005–06 held a valid licence for the stolen firearms.

- Firearm owners who reported a theft in 2005–06 represented less than one percent of all licensed firearm owners in Australia.
- Firearm owners held an average of 1.6 licences. The most common licences held were a Category A licence (80% of all firearms owners), followed by a Category B licence (63%).
- Recreational hunting and/or vermin control was the most common reason cited by firearm owners for acquiring a Category A or Category B firearm. Category C firearms were primarily required for primary production reasons (that is, for farmers and graziers), and Category H firearms for sport and target shooting.

Key findings regarding theft incidents

- Just over half the firearm theft incidents were reported within 24 hours of the incident occurring.
- The majority of thefts (86%) were the result of an unlawful entry.
- Three-quarters of thefts were from private residential premises. More than 80 percent of air rifles, rifles and shotguns were stolen from this type of location.
- One in 10 incidents involved the theft of a firearm from a parked vehicle. Handguns were the most common type of firearm stolen during these thefts.
- Less than one in 10 thefts occurred in business premises. Almost a quarter of all stolen handguns were stolen from this location.
- Firearms were predominantly stolen from locations in major cities and inner regional areas.
- Six in 10 incidents also involved the theft of other goods. Tools were stolen in 30 percent of such thefts, and cash and jewellery/watches in just over 20 percent. A higher proportion of incidents where multiple firearms were taken involved the theft of other, non-firearm goods, than incidents where single firearms were stolen.

Key findings regarding firearm storage, compliance and prosecution of firearm owners

- Firearms stolen in 55 percent of theft incidents were stored in a firearm safe or other secure receptacle.
- Just over half (53%) the firearm owners were found to be compliant with firearm storage requirements. Non-compliance was generally recorded when firearm owners had stored their firearms in unapproved receptacles (such as wardrobes) or unlocked receptacles, or in vehicles.
- A higher proportion of owners complied with storage requirements in incidents where multiple firearms were stolen.

- A quarter of firearm owners, regardless of storage compliance status, were found in breach of firearms laws and regulations, and 18 percent were subsequently charged or faced disciplinary action. The offence of not securing or correctly storing firearms accounted for 80 percent of charges laid.
- Ammunition was stolen in addition to firearms in 23 percent of incidents. Ammunition was stored separately to firearms in 32 percent of firearm plus ammunition thefts.

Key findings on related issues

- Some or all of the stolen firearms were recovered in around one in eight incidents. Firearms were returned to owners in just under two out of five of these cases.
- Offenders (those found to have stolen the firearms) were prosecuted in 14 percent of incidents. The most frequent charge laid was for the offence of break and enter (68%), followed by theft/stealing (60%).
- Previous thefts from the same location had occurred in three percent of incidents (n=16). All but two incidents involved the theft of firearms. Storage compliance at the time of the most recent incident was noted in 70 percent of these incidents.
- Firearms stolen in six incidents were later used in subsequent criminal activities. These included incidents of burglary with assault, domestic violence, armed robbery and firearm trafficking. One stolen firearm was later used in an attempted suicide.

Trends over time

A comparison of the current data with that from 1 February 2004 to 30 June 2005 suggests a relatively consistent pattern in the nature of firearms theft, particularly with regard to the types of firearms stolen, where they are primarily stolen from, and the circumstances surrounding their theft. Some notable changes that have occurred include:

- An estimated 5,170 firearms were stolen in 1995–96, decreasing to 3,138 in 1998–99. Five years later this had halved again to 1,470 in 2004–05, with a similar number – 1,445 – in 2005–06.
- The proportional theft of rifles and shotguns has remained steady over the past 10 years but handgun theft has decreased. In the mid to late1990s, 14 percent of firearms stolen were handguns, down to seven percent in 2004–05, and declining further to five percent in 2005–06.
- There has been little change in storage compliance over the past 2½ years, despite some significant changes in a number of jurisdictions. Prosecution of non-compliant owners, however, has increased, up from 41 percent in 2004–05 to 53 percent in 2005–06.

Introduction

Background

Beginning just over 10 years ago, the Australian Government, in conjunction with the states and territories, introduced a series of schemes – the National Firearms Agreement 1996, National Handgun Agreement 2002 and the National Firearms Trafficking Policy Agreement 2002 – to promote better regulation of firearms in the Australian community. The purpose of these agreements was to prohibit and/or restrict certain categories of firearms, and introduce new penalties for trafficking firearms across borders. In addition, new firearm licensing, storage, registration and training requirements were established, supplemented by a government buyback of newly prohibited weapons.

In June 2002 the AIC published a *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* paper on the incidence of firearms theft in Australia between 1994 and 2000, which included information on the type of firearms stolen and the location of thefts (Mouzos 2002). Partly in response to the findings from this paper, the then APMC directed the FPWG to investigate measures to combat firearms theft.

The FPWG in turn recommended that the AIC prepare a report on firearms theft for the APMC. Following an agreement from the APMC for jurisdictions to provide firearms theft data covering a period of six months, a template for data collection was developed by the AIC in conjunction with the FPWG, and approved by the Senior Officers Group (SOG). This template was distributed to jurisdictions and populated with firearms theft data for the period 1 February 2004 to 31 July 2005.

The subsequent report, *Firearms theft in Australia: a six-month exploratory analysis* (Mouzos & Sakurai 2006), was prepared by the AIC on behalf of the FPWG, and submitted to the SOG and APMC. On considering the report, the FPWG agreed that further analyses would enhance the value of the research, particularly in the interpretation of incidence trends in firearms theft. A second wave of data collection followed, using the previously developed template, with data from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005 provided to the AIC. Results from these analyses were published in the report *Firearms theft in Australia 2004–05* (Borzycki & Mouzos 2007), and described:

- characteristics of stolen firearms
- location of firearm theft
- methods used to steal firearms
- security and storage arrangements of firearms at the time of theft
- theft of ammunition and other goods
- prosecution of non-compliance
- repeat victimisation

- recovery and return of stolen firearms
- use of stolen firearms in subsequent criminal offences.

An outcome of this process was the recommendation there be a longer term examination and monitoring of firearms theft in Australian states and territories. This resulted in the establishment of the NFTMP at the AIC. The NFTMP is funded by the Australian Government under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* and will run for a period of four years, starting 1 July 2006. As part of the monitoring program, the AIC is to prepare an annual report on firearms theft using financial year data supplied by state and territory police services. This report represents the first of the four report series.

Purpose of the report

This report summarises the findings of analyses of all incidents of firearms theft reported to Australian police during the period 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006. The report aims to:

- identify the characteristics of firearms that are commonly stolen
- identify the circumstances of firearm theft incidents
- assess the *modus operandi* of offenders involved in firearms theft
- assess the rate of compliance with safe storage requirements, and the prosecution of non-compliance.

Following a discussion of methods and issues related to data collection and analysis of the data, the report addresses the aforementioned purposes by discussing:

- the types of firearms stolen
- the incidents in which the firearms were stolen (location; circumstances of theft; method of entry; access to firearms)
- the level of compliance and prosecution of non-compliance
- recovery rate for stolen firearms, degree of repeat victimisation and the use of stolen firearms in crime.

These findings add to the knowledge base of the circumstances surrounding firearms theft. This in turn will assist the FPWG to develop evidence led policy, particularly in:

- developing initiatives to reduce the incidence of firearms theft
- developing a minimum standard for firearms storage across all sectors of the firearms community.

Methodology

Firearms theft data were supplied by state and territory police using a purpose-designed template. The template used was revised from the previous version to improve the consistency of data supplied by the jurisdictions as well as to introduce new data variables for the collection. Redrafting the template was undertaken in conjunction with the FPWG, and designed to capture a broad spectrum of information regarding the theft incident while promoting the supply of consistent responses from jurisdictions. The latter was largely achieved by creating more pre-coded response categories and reducing the number of free text responses, thus reducing the amount of interpretative recoding of data by the AIC. Free text responses, however, were retained in parts of the template to:

- ensure information was supplied where it was not captured or adequately described in pre-coded response categories
- allow jurisdictions to provide additional detail of relevance to the theft incident.

An explanatory document was also developed to assist jurisdictions in completing the information template, providing a guide as to the types of incidents and firearms that should be included (and excluded) in submitted data and to describe data items and response categories. Jurisdictions were provided with an electronic copy of the template and explanatory notes, plus an Excel spreadsheet collection form. The spreadsheet was distributed to jurisdictions who chose to enter all theft data into the one form rather than provide an individual information template for each theft incident. One jurisdiction provided data as incident reports rather than transcribing to the information template.

Data were provided to the AIC in a single response sheet for each incident of firearms theft in paper or electronic form, or compiled in the Excel collection form. Logic checks were performed on jurisdictional data during the quality control process, and the data were cleaned using the STATA software package before being compiled into a single national dataset. Additional integrity checks of the stolen firearms data were undertaken by the Australian Crime Commission.

Each case in the dataset represents a single theft incident. As 46 percent of incidents resulted in the theft of more than one firearm, the total number of firearms stolen exceeds the total number of theft incidents.

The dataset includes only those cases of firearms theft reported during the period 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006. All incidents of reported theft data provided by the jurisdictions fell into this reference period, and all but 12 referred to a genuine theft incident. In three of these 12 incidents, firearm owners located their firearms shortly after reporting the theft and it was concluded by the attending police officer(s) that the owner had temporarily misplaced the firearm. These cases were removed from the dataset. The remaining nine incidents described more ambiguous incidents of theft:

- two incidents involved firearms lost while boating or camping
- two involved owners lending firearms to others but the firearms were not returned
- two incidents involved owners misplacing their firearms after they had stayed with friends or relatives
- one involved an owner who thought he had sent his firearm in for repairs but had not seen the firearm since
- one involved an owner losing his firearm while on his private property
- one involved the police suspecting the firearm owner had hidden his firearms rather than them being stolen but no formal proof was discovered.

Twelve firearms were reported as missing in the above incidents. Despite not being able to verify if the firearms were actually stolen, it was decided to retain the cases in the final analyses since each firearm was still unaccounted for, and therefore still represented a potential source of firearms for diversion into the illegal market.

A total of 674 incidents of firearms theft were reported to police in 2005–06, involving 1,517 firearms. To ensure consistency with analyses undertaken with 2004–05 theft data, 40 cases which described the theft of firearms that were not categorised as firearms for the current purposes were extracted from the final dataset. These cases described incidents where:

- unregistered replica or imitation firearms were stolen and no charges were laid against their owners (19 incidents)
- firearms were antique, deactivated or inoperable (6 incidents)
- items stolen were starting pistols and paintball markers, or some other non-firearm such as captive bolt guns and gas scare guns, and no firearms charges were laid against their owners (15 incidents).

Five cases in which both firearms and non-firearms (as per the current criteria) were listed as stolen were retained in the dataset but information regarding the non-firearms was removed from the analysis. The final, amended dataset comprised valid records describing 634 incidents of firearms theft, with a loss of 1,445 individual firearms.

Data quality

Jurisdictional data were examined using logic checks to ensure that consistent information was provided for each incident case. Any detected inconsistencies were generally resolved by referring to the information provided by the jurisdictions, but in some instances clarification was sought from the individuals responsible for completing the template.

Overall, data quality has improved on the previous year, aided by the greater use of pre-coded responses, which reduced potential ambiguity sometimes associated with free text responses, and promoted interjurisdictional consistency in the data provided. There were few instances of missing data for most variables but information on stolen firearms (particularly make and model, category and action type) tended to be less complete than for other variables. Unknown responses affected all variables, some considerably more than others (for example, deactivation status of stolen firearms). Both missing data and unknown responses could result from a number of factors, including:

- persons reporting the theft choosing not to or being unable to provide specifics regarding the theft
- information being missed or not transcribed when police officers come to file reports on firearms theft
- delayed reporting, where specifics of the theft may have been forgotten or not readily recollected.

As it is not possible to establish the reason(s) behind missing or unknown response data, any presentation of analysis with a high proportion of such responses should always be interpreted with caution.

Some variability also existed in the quality of data between variables. This was particularly the case for multiple response questions regarding storage arrangements for firearms and ammunition, where the level of detail differed between incidents and between jurisdictions. Those factors considered responsible for missing and unknown response data may also affect how much information is reported or recorded on security arrangements. Nonetheless, sufficient detail was provided to allow meaningful analysis of methods used to store and secure firearms.

Incidents of crime are not always reported, and it is therefore likely that this dataset does not capture all incidents of firearms theft that occurred in Australia in 2005–06. Firearm theft may not be reported by persons who are unlicensed or who own unregistered firearms, as police would then be made aware of illegal firearm possession and might prosecute the owner accordingly. Some owners who have not secured their weapons may also choose not to report the theft, so as not to run the risk of being prosecuted for non-compliance. As evidenced by firearms theft data, and other survey research (see Mouzos & Borzycki 2006), not all firearm owners register their weapons or obtain valid licences for the firearms owned, or secure their firearms as legislation requires. Persons who have acquired firearms for illegal purposes represent another group who are unlikely to report the theft of their firearms, but research suggests that this population is relatively small (Mouzos & Borzycki 2006).

Finally, the dataset only captures incidents of theft where firearms were actually stolen and not where firearms were stored at the scene of the theft but not taken. In the latter scenario, firearms may not have been stolen because offenders chose not to take this item, did not locate the item or, for secured firearms, were unable to penetrate storage facilities. Consequently, data are not available to calculate the number of licensed firearm owners who experienced a burglary or break and enter in the reference period, and what proportion had their firearms stolen. Access to this information would enable better understanding of the circumstances conducive to firearms being successfully stolen, and those which could deter their theft.

Characteristics of stolen firearms

Describing the dataset

A total of 634 incidents of firearms theft were reported to police in Australian jurisdictions between 1 July 2005 and 30 June 2006 (Table 1). From those incidents, a total of 1,445 firearms were reported as stolen. Compared with the previous year (2004–05), there was a decline in the number of incidents (665 incidents) and the number of firearms stolen (1,470 firearms).

Table 1: Firearm theft incidents and stolen firearms

	Incidents		Number of firearms		Mean firearms per incident (n)
Jurisdiction	n	%	n	%	
NSW	137	22	401	28	2.9
Vic	104	16	211	15	2.0
Qld	134	21	302	21	2.3
WA	111	18	191	13	1.7
SA	91	14	198	14	2.2
Tas	40	6	114	8	2.9
ACT	4	1	9	1	2.3
NT	13	2	19	1	1.5
Australia	634	100	1,445	100	2.3

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

The largest percentages of incidents of theft were reported in New South Wales (22%) and Queensland (21%). Only two percent of incidents were reported in the Northern Territory and one percent in the Australian Capital Territory. The largest percentages of stolen firearms were recorded in New South Wales (28% of all firearms stolen) and Queensland (21%) and the smallest percentages in the two territories (1% each). Overall, an average of 2.3 firearms were stolen per reported incident, compared with 2.2 in 2004–05. Both New South Wales and Tasmania exceeded the national average with an estimated 2.9 each.

The theft of a single firearm accounted for 54 percent of all reported incidents (Table 2). Single firearm theft was the most common scenario in all but two jurisdictions, ranging from 53 percent of incidents in Tasmania and Queensland to 69 percent of incidents in the Northern Territory. In New South Wales, however, the majority of incidents were characterised by the theft of two or more firearms. This was also the case for the Australian Capital Territory but the number of reported incidents was very small (n=4).

Table 2: Single versus multiple firearm thefts

Jurisdiction	Single firearm theft (n)	Multiple firearm theft (n)	% single firearm theft
NSW	56	81	41
Vic	62	42	60
Qld	71	63	53
WA	74	37	67
SA	50	41	55
Tas	21	19	53
ACT	1	3	25
NT	9	4	69
Australia	345	289	54

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Less than 0.1 percent of all licensed firearm owners in Australia experienced an incident of firearms theft (Figure 1), and less than 0.1 percent of registered firearms were stolen (Figure 2) during the reference period. When comparing jurisdictions, Western Australia had the highest percentage of theft incidents per licence holders (0.13%) and the highest percentage of theft incidents per registered firearms (0.08%). Victoria had the lowest (0.05% and 0.04%).

Figure 1: Firearms theft incidents as a percentage of licence holders[ab]

a: Does not include 40 incidents in which the firearm owner was unlicensed, 29 incidents in which the licence status of the firearm owner was unknown, and 7 incidents in which licence status was recorded as not applicable

b: Reference period for the capture of licence holder information varied by jurisdiction: March 2006 (NT), June 2006 (NSW, Vic, WA, SA, Tas and ACT), July 2006 (Qld)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Figure 2: Firearms stolen as a percentage of registered firearms[ab]

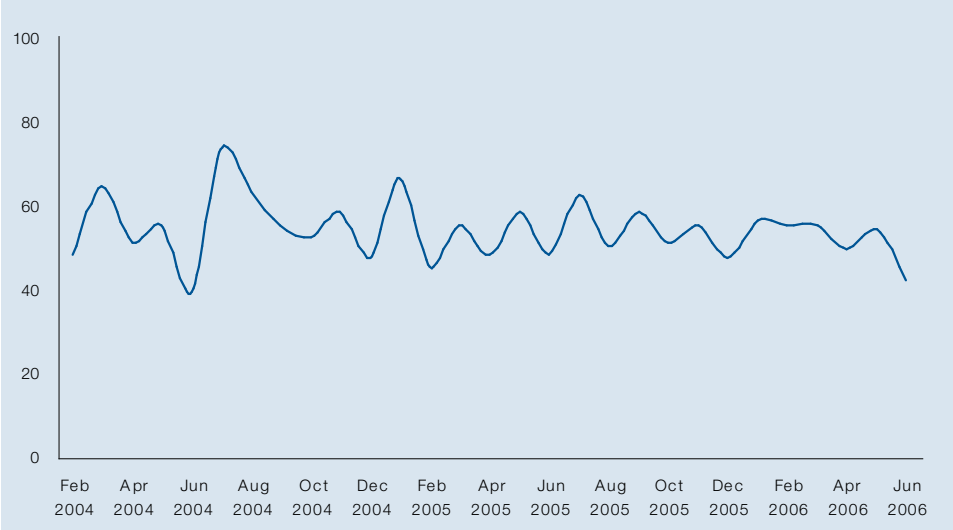
a: Does not include 81 unregistered firearms, 41 firearms for which registration was unknown and 7 firearms which were dealer stock

b: Reference period for the capture of licence holder information varied by jurisdiction: March 2006 (NT), June 2006 (NSW, Vic, WA, SA, Tas and ACT), July 2006 (Qld). NT data include firearms held/used by police and government departments including museums and collectors

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Figure 3 depicts the pattern of firearm thefts over the 29 month period since February 2004. The distribution of theft was relatively uniform, although more so from early 2005 on. In 2005–06, between seven and 10 percent of all incidents were reported each month.

Figure 3: Firearm thefts reported per month, February 2004 – June 2006 (number)



Source: AIC NFTMP February 2004 – June 2006 [computer file]

Describing stolen firearms

Types of firearms stolen

Sixty percent of firearms stolen in 2005–06 were rifles and 26 percent were shotguns (Table 3). Air rifles comprised nine percent of all stolen firearms, and handguns five percent. This mirrors data for 2004–05, with a slight increase in rifle theft (up from 58%) and a decrease in handgun theft (down from 7%). Rifles were stolen in seven out of every 10 theft incidents (71%), shotguns in 42 percent, and handguns in seven percent of incidents. An identical pattern was observed in 2004–05.

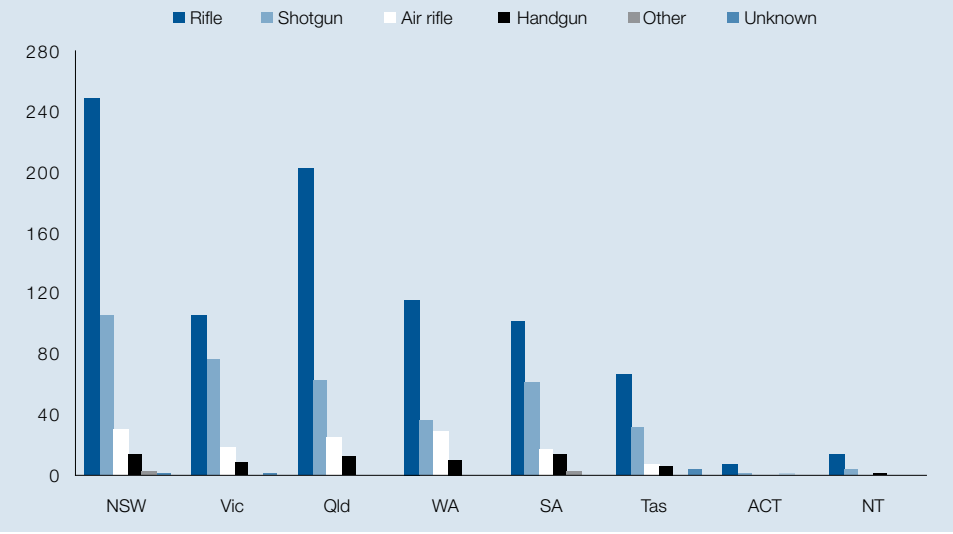
Table 3: Type of firearm stolen		
Type	**n**	**%**
Rifle	861	60
Shotgun	378	26
Air rifle	127	9
Handgun	66	5
Other[a]	8	1
Unknown	5	<1
(Total)	(1,445)	(100)

a: Other includes firearms that can not be classified as a rifle, shotgun, air rifle or handgun

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Rifles were consistently the most common type of firearm stolen in each jurisdiction, ranging from 52 percent of all firearms stolen in South Australia to 78 percent of those stolen in the Australian Capital Territory (see Figure 4 and Table A1 in Appendix A). The next most common firearm stolen was shotguns, ranging from 11 percent of firearm thefts in the ACT to 36 percent in Victoria. Air rifles generally comprised a larger percentage of stolen firearms than handguns, with the exception of the Northern Territory. Only one handgun and no air rifles were stolen in this jurisdiction. The highest proportion of handgun theft was reported in South Australia (7%).

Figure 4: Type of firearms stolen by jurisdiction (number)



Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

The majority of the rifles were bolt action rifles (73%, up from 66% in 2004–05). Lever action rifles were the next most frequently stolen type of rifle (13%), with very few of the other rifle varieties reported stolen in this period. Stolen shotguns were primarily single (28%) or double barrel (25%); over and under shotguns made up 19 percent of stolen shotguns. This pattern is somewhat different from the previous year when single barrel shotguns were more commonly stolen than double barrel shotguns (36% compared to 28%). However, it is important to note that action type for 20 percent of shotguns reported stolen in 2005–06 was recorded as 'unknown' which may account for the disparity. Eight in 10 handguns reported stolen were either semi-automatic pistols or revolvers, comprising 41 percent each of all stolen handguns. In 2004–05, revolvers represented 28 percent of handguns stolen, although the percentage of unknowns in the previous reference period was much higher than for the current period (20% compared with 6%).

Table 4: Action type of rifles stolen

Type	n	%
Bolt action	632	73
Lever action	112	13
Single shot	36	4
Pump action	26	3
Semi-automatic	9	1
Black powder	3	<1
Double barrel	0	0
Unknown	43	5
(Total)	(861)	(100)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Table 5: Action type of shotguns stolen

Type	n	%
Double barrel	105	28
Single barrel	95	25
Over and under	70	19
Bolt action	11	3
Semi-automatic	10	3
Pump action	9	2
Lever action	1	<1
Unknown	77	20
(Total)	(378)	(100)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Table 6: Action type of handguns stolen		
Type	**n**	**%**
Semi-automatic pistol	27	41
Revolver	27	41
Air pistol	6	9
Single shot pistol	1	2
Black powder revolver	1	2
Unknown	4	6
(Total)	(66)	(100)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Categories of firearms stolen

The 1996 National Firearms Agreement resulted in a system of firearm classification based on firing action, calibre and other criteria (see Appendix B). Category A and B firearms are the most commonly owned firearms and accessible for a range of sporting, recreational (for example, hunting) and occupational purposes. Category C and D firearms comprise more restricted types of rifle and shotgun and can only be obtained for a limited range of sporting, occupational (for example, farmers and graziers) or official purposes. Category H firearms are exclusively handguns and represent another restricted category of firearms. These firearms may only be acquired for specific sporting and occupational (for example, security) purposes. As of 30 June 2006, 64 percent of registered firearms in Australia were category A, 27 percent were category B, 1.5 percent were category C, 0.5 percent were category D and seven percent were category H.

Table 7 details the breakdown of stolen firearms by category type, which resembles the overall pattern of registered firearms given above. The pattern for the current year resembles that found in 2004–05 and in the six monthly analysis period (February – July 2004). Category A and B firearms were the most commonly reported stolen firearms (91% of all firearms for which detailed information was available). Five percent of stolen firearms were classed as Category H and two percent as Category C. No Category D firearms were reported stolen in 2005–06.

Table 7: Category of firearm stolen[a]		
Type	**n**	**%**
Category A	953	66
Category B	356	25
Category C	22	2
Category D	0	0
Category H	66	5
Unknown[b]	45	3
(Total)	(1,442)	(100)

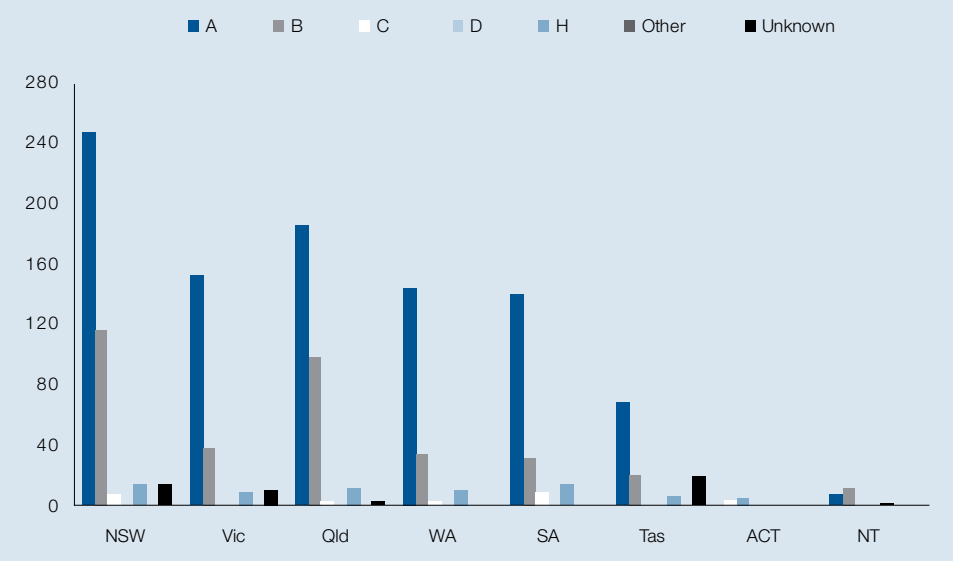
a: Does not include 3 firearms in which the category was recorded as not applicable

b: Includes firearms for which insufficient information was available to definitively ascertain category

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

There was some jurisdictional variation in the categories of firearms stolen (Figure 5; see also Table A2 in Appendix A). Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia experienced higher levels of Category A firearm theft than the national average, with seven out of 10 firearms stolen in these jurisdictions classified as Category A. Higher levels of Category B firearm theft were reported in New South Wales and Queensland (29% and 33% respectively compared with the national average of 25%). The predominant category of firearm stolen in the Northern Territory and the ACT was a Category B firearm, although based on a small number of theft incidents. Few Category C firearms were stolen in 2005–06 and only in four jurisdictions. The theft rate of Category C firearms was higher in South Australia (5% of all stolen firearms) than in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, where it was two percent or less. South Australia also had the highest theft rate for Category H firearms.

Figure 5: Category of firearm stolen by jurisdiction (number)[a]



a: Does not include 3 firearms in which the category was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Registration status of stolen firearms

Nine out of 10 firearms reported stolen were registered (91%; see Table 8), similar to the proportion found in 2004–05 (88%). South Australia and Western Australia reported the highest percentages of stolen firearms that were registered (100% and 98% respectively; see Table 9), and Victoria reported the highest percentage of unregistered firearms (17%).

Table 8: Registration status of stolen firearms

Type	n	%
Registered	1,316	91
Unregistered	81	6
Dealer stock	7	1
Unknown	41	3
(Total)	(1,445)	(100)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Table 9: Registration status of stolen firearms by jurisdiction[a]

	Registered		Unregistered		Total	
Jurisdiction	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	379	95	7	2	386	97
Vic	174	83	35	17	209	100
Qld	280	93	21	7	301	100
WA	188	98	0	0	188	98
SA	198	100	0	0	198	100
Tas	77	68	16	14	93	82
ACT	7	78	0	0	7	78
NT	13	68	2	11	15	79

a: Does not include 41 firearms for which registration status was unknown and 7 firearms which were dealer stock. Row percentage is based on total firearms stolen in each jurisdiction, including those with unknown registration status or dealer stock. Percentages may therefore not add to 100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Analysis of firearm category and registration status shows that the breakdown of registered and unregistered Category C and Category H firearms resembles the proportions reported stolen for the 2004–05 period. This was not the case for Category A or Category B firearms, where Category A firearms were more likely to be unregistered (75% of all unregistered firearms compared with 66% of all stolen firearms) and Category B firearms less likely to have been unregistered (18% of all unregistered firearms compared with 25% of all stolen firearms; see Table 10).

Table 10: Category of firearms by registration status[a]

	Registered		Unregistered	
Category of firearms	n	%	n	%
A	889	68	44	75
B	338	26	11	18
C	20	2	1	1
D	0	0	0	0
H	60	5	3	5
(Total)	(1,307)	(100)	(59)	(100)

a: Excludes firearms which were dealer stock, where registration status was unknown, or where category information was unknown or recorded as not applicable (n=79)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Firearm licence holders

The majority of persons who reported missing or stolen firearms in 2005–06 held valid firearms licences (89%; see Table 11). Of the 40 persons who were not licensed, all but a few did not hold a valid licence for any of the firearms they reported stolen. The remaining group held a licence for some of their stolen firearms but not for others. In some incidents there was more than one firearm owner but licensing information was provided only for the primary owner (usually the person reporting the theft incident), hence the results refer to the licence status of the primary firearm owner.

The percentage of licensed firearm owners was similar to the national average in most jurisdictions (Table 12). The highest percentage of licensed firearm owners was in Western Australia (94%), followed by the Northern Territory (92%) and New South Wales (91%). Tasmania had the highest percentage of unlicensed firearm owners, with 13 percent of owners reporting stolen firearms not holding a valid licence.

Table 11: Licence holders[a]

Status	n	%
Licensed	558	89
Not licensed	40	6
Unknown	29	5
(Total)	(627)	(100)

a: Does not include incidents where the licence status of the firearms owners was recorded as not applicable (n=7)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Table 12: Licence holders by jurisdiction[a]

	Licensed		Unlicensed		Total	
Jurisdiction	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	123	91	5	4	128	100
Vic	89	88	8	8	97	100
Qld	121	90	13	10	134	100
WA	103	94	7	6	110	100
SA	75	83	1	1	76	100
Tas	32	80	5	13	37	100
ACT	3	75	0	0	3	100
NT	12	92	1	8	13	100

a: Does not include incidents where the licence status of the firearms owners was recorded as not applicable (n=7). Does not include 29 firearms for which licence status of the firearm owner was unknown, although row percentage is based on total incidents, including those with unknown registration status

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

A total of 997 firearm licences were held by the 634 recorded firearm owners, with an average of 1.6 licences per firearm owner. Eighty percent of firearm owners held a Category A licence and 63 percent held a Category B licence (Table 13). Other licences, which were less commonly owned, included Category C and H licences, each accounting for less than five percent of owners, or Category D licence, with less than one percent. Of the licences held, nine out of 10 were a Category A or B licence.

Table 13: Type of licence held[a]

Licence	n	% of owners[b]	% of licences held
A	505	80	51
B	402	63	40
C	38	6	4
D	3	<1	<1
H	48	8	5
Other	1	<1	<1
(Total)[b]	(997)		(100)

a: Does not include incidents where the licence status of the firearms owners was recorded as not applicable (n=7)

b: Percentages calculated as per total number of firearm owners (n=634). Percentage totals will therefore exceed 100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Reasons for holding a firearm licence

As part of the licensing process, firearms owners are required to state the primary reason(s) for applying to own a particular category of firearm. Firearm owners could provide up to four reasons why they required a particular licence, but one or two reasons were the norm. Recreational hunting and/or vermin control were the most commonly cited reasons for holding a Category A or B licence—six in 10 gave this reason for Category A licences and three-quarters for Category B licences (Table 14). The next most common reasons were sport/target shooting, followed by primary production. Persons holding Category H licences obtained them primarily for sport/target shooting (54%), with a much smaller percentage for use in the security industry (13%). Primary production was the predominant reason for holding a Category C licence (87% of all Category C licence holders).

Table 14: Reasons for owning firearm licence[a]

	A		B		C		D		H	
Reason cited	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Sport/target shooting	179	35	183	46	2	5	0	0	26	54
Recreational hunting	317	63	302	75	4	11	0	0	2	4
Paintball shooting	9	2	1	<1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vertebrate pest control	2	<1	1	<1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Security industry	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	6	13
Primary production	131	26	120	29	33	87	0	0	3	6
Animal welfare	2	<1	2	1	1	3	0	0	2	4
Other business	1	<1	1	<1	0	0	0	0	1	2
Firearms collection	2	<1	2	1	1	3	1	34	2	4
Dealer/armourer	4	1	4	1	2	5	2	67	4	8
Other	1	<1	1	<1	0	0	0	0	1	2
Unknown	108	21	29	7	0	0	0	0	7	15
(Total licence holders)	(505)		(402)		(38)		(3)		(48)	

a: Does not include persons for whom owning a licence was recorded as not applicable (n=7). Percentages calculated as per total number of firearm owners holding a specific licence. Percentage totals will therefore not add up to 100

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

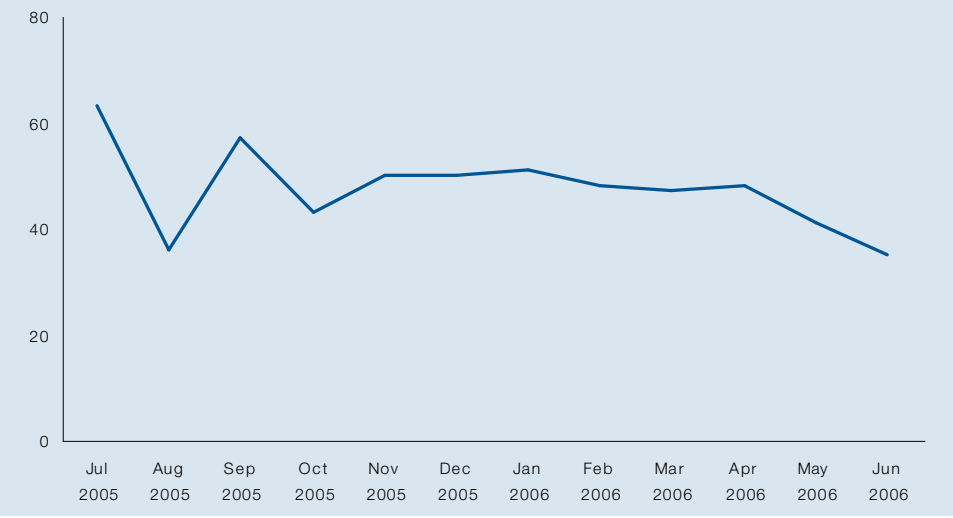
The nature of firearm theft incidents

Reporting of firearm theft incidents

Temporal aspects of firearm theft incident reporting

Owners of registered firearms are required to notify police of lost or stolen firearms as soon as practical or within a specified timeframe. The period of notification varies between 24 hours in Tasmania and Victoria, to 14 days (in writing) in South Australia. In 2005–06, 90 percent of thefts reported during the reference period occurred within the reference period (that is, between 1 July 2005 and 30 June 2006), a drop from 97 percent in 2004–05 (Figure 6). The remaining thefts (n=65) occurred before 1 July 2005, the oldest dating back to 1968 and the most recent to June 2005.

Figure 6: Incidents of firearm theft by month of occurrence[a] (number)



a: Does not include 65 theft incidents reported as occurring before 1 July 2005 (June 1968, December 1974, January 1992, January 1993, January 1995, February 1996 (2 incidents), March 1996, January 1997 (3 incidents), March 1998 (2 incidents), September 1998, August 2000, January 2001 (2 incidents), April 2001, June 2001, October 2001 (2 incidents), June 2002, August 2002, September 2002 (2 incidents), October 2002, March 2003 (2 incidents), April 2003, July 2003 (3 incidents), November 2003, December 2003, February 2004 (2 incidents), July 2004 (2 incidents), November 2004 (3 incidents), December 2004 (4 incidents), January 2005 (4 incidents), March 2005, April 2005 (2 incidents), May 2005 (5 incidents), June 2005 (8 incidents)). One incident did not record an occurrence date

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Unlike 2004–05, where the majority of incidents (63%) were reported on the day they occurred, or the following day, just over half (52%) in 2005–06 were reported within a day of the theft occurring (Table 15). One-fifth were reported within the week the incident occurred, and another fifth more than two weeks after the theft took place. Figure 7 compares the period between incident and reporting date for thefts occurring in each jurisdiction. The percentage of thefts reported within a day of the theft ranged from 41 in Queensland to 58 in Western Australia (Figure 7, Table A3 in Appendix A). All jurisdictions experienced a considerable downturn in reporting of firearm thefts between 8 to 14 days after the theft occurred, with less than 10 percent of thefts reported during this time period.

A considerably higher prevalence of reporting a firearm theft two or more weeks after the theft occurred was apparent for Queensland (40%) and the Northern Territory (31%), and to a lesser extent in Tasmania (25%). For one jurisdiction (Queensland), the high rate of delayed reporting ensued after a period in which firearms owners whose licences had not been renewed were contacted and questioned about unaccounted for firearms. These contacts, which started in 2004–05 but were primarily undertaken in 2005–06, revealed that some of these firearms had in fact been stolen (or gone missing) but not reported as such at the time of the theft.

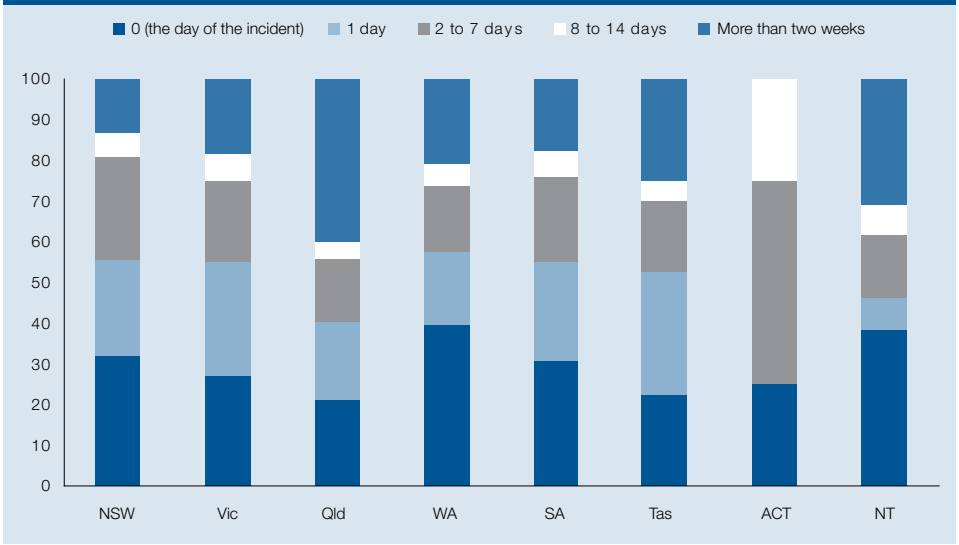
Table 15: Period between incident date and reporting date[a]

Type	n	%
0 (the day of the incident)	187	30
1 day	142	22
2 to 7 days	124	20
8 to 14 days	37	6
More than 2 weeks	143	23
(Total)	(633)	(100)

a: Does not include 1 incident in which the incident date was not recorded

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Figure 7: Period between incident date and reporting date by jurisdiction[a] (percent)



a: Does not include 1 incident in which the incident date was not recorded

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Circumstances of theft

The majority of firearm thefts (86%) were the result of an unlawful entry to premises or vehicles (Table 16). In three percent of incidents, the firearm had been misplaced and presumed stolen and in a further two percent of incidents, the theft occurred during a robbery. For robberies where further detail was provided (n=7), three involved the firearm being removed from the person carrying it, three followed home invasions and one occurred during an incident at a government office.

Table 16: Circumstances of theft[a]		
Type of theft incident	**n**	**%**
Theft, following unlawful entry	546	86
Theft, following robbery	11	2
Misplaced presumed stolen	35	3
Presumed stolen in transit	6	1
Not returned to owner following loan to another person	5	<1
Other[b]	9	1
Unknown	19	2
(Total)	(631)	(100)

a: Does not include 3 incidents in which the circumstances of the theft were recorded as not applicable

b: Other includes theft from retail premises (stealing), theft by persons residing in premises where the firearm was stolen, and incidents where a firearm was known to have gone missing (for example, fell off the back of truck but could not be found)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Persons reporting theft

Firearm thefts were predominantly reported by the registered owner: 75 percent in the current reference period (Table 17), a similar proportion to that found in previous reports. In eight of these incidents, the registered owner reported the theft of both registered and unregistered firearms. Half of these eight incidents resulted in the firearm owner being charged, but in no cases were unregistered firearms charges brought against them.

Reports of stolen firearms by owners of unregistered firearms accounted for three percent of incidents, the same as in 2004–05. Eight of these 17 owners were found to be in breach (although it should be noted that the type of breach of another eight owners was unknown) and seven were known to have been charged or disciplined, three with possession of an unregistered firearm.

A small number of firearm theft reports (n=23) arose from police initiated inquiries, following events such as targeted property or vehicle searches, executing warrants for absconded offenders, and locating firearms from persons whose licences had expired. A similarly small number of thefts were reported by other persons, usually a relative or friend of the firearm owner or an employee. In three incidents, stolen firearms were reported through an executor or deceased estate.

Table 17: Persons who reported firearms theft to police		
Person who reported the theft	**n**	**%**
Registered owner of firearm[a]	477	75
Owner of unregistered firearms	17	3
Owner of premises	33	5
Occupier of premises	29	5
Police initiated inquiry	23	4
Another licensed person	7	1
Unknown	8	1
Other		
Relative or friend of firearm owner	15	2
Neighbour of firearm owner	7	1
Government/business employee	9	2
Executor or deceased estate	3	1
Other no further detail	6	1
Total other	40	6
(Total)	(634)	(100)

a: Includes 8 incidents in which both registered and unregistered firearms were stolen

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Locations where firearms thefts occurred

Three-quarters of reported firearm thefts occurred from private residential premises (76%; see Table 18), 10 percent from stationary vehicles (including motorbikes) and a further nine percent from business premises. In six incidents, or one percent of all thefts, firearms were stolen while being transported from one location to another. In five of these incidents, drivers of commercial vehicles reported the theft. More detailed information regarding the precise location of the firearm at the time of theft is presented in Table 19. The majority of firearms were stolen from rooms in private dwellings (48%) or garages and sheds (26%). Thefts from other locations each represented five percent or less of all firearm theft incidents.

Table 18: Location of incidents of firearms theft[a]		
Location type	**n**	**%**
Private residential premises	483	76
Business premises	55	9
Other accommodation	3	1
Vehicle	62	10
In transit	6	1
Other[b]	15	1
Unknown	5	1
(Total)	(629)	100

a: Does not include 5 incidents where location was recorded as not applicable

b: Other location includes boat or fishing vessel, shire office, police station, unoccupied hut on rural property, non producing coal mine, public road, and storage complex

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Table 19: Specific location of incidents of firearms theft[a]		
Location type	**n**	**%**
Room in dwelling	303	48
Caravan	7	1
Rural or bushland	17	3
Warehouse or factory	9	1
Carried on person	3	1
Government premises	2	<1
Retail location[b]	6	1
Garage or shed	166	26
Private driveway	26	4
Public road or carpark	26	4
Administrative office	13	2
Firearms range	1	<1
Club[c]	4	1
Other[d]	16	3
Unknown	29	5
(Total)	(628)	100

a: Does not include 6 incidents where location was recorded as not applicable

b: Retail location includes firearms dealer, general store, camping store, hardware store and weapons store

c: Club includes shooting/rifle club, historical society and community organisation

d: Other includes abattoir, car workshop, boatshed, vineyard, armoury, fishing vessel, and porch/verandah/backyard of private residential premises

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Further analyses of thefts from vehicles revealed that almost three-quarters of these thefts occurred when vehicles were parked in private driveways (40% of all vehicle thefts) or in public car parks (32%). Considerably less theft was attempted when vehicles were parked in garages or sheds (6%).

The majority of shotguns (87%), rifles (85%) and air rifles (85%) were stolen from private residential premises (Table 20), an expected result given that most firearms in general were taken from this location. Handguns were also predominantly stolen from private residential premises but the proportion stolen was smaller than for other firearm types (60%). Business premises featured as a relatively important location for handgun theft (23%), as did vehicles, with a higher proportion of handguns stolen from this location than other firearms. Compared with 2004–05, handgun theft from business premises decreased, while there was an increase in the theft of handguns from vehicles.

Table 20: Location of firearm thefts by type of firearm stolen[a]

	Air rifle		Rifle		Shotgun		Handgun	
Location type	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Private residential premises	108	85	726	85	328	87	39	60
Business premises	9	7	55	6	28	7	15	23
Other accommodation	1	1	5	1	2	1	1	2
Vehicle	4	3	50	6	11	3	8	12
In transit	0	0	10	1	2	1	0	0
Other[b]	4	3	3	<1	2	1	3	5
Unknown	1	1	9	1	3	1	0	0
(Total)	(127)	(100)	(858)	(100)	(376)	(100)	(66)	(100)

a: Does not include 5 firearms where location was recorded as not applicable. Excludes firearms recorded as other firearm type or unknown (n=13)

b: Other location includes boat or fishing vessel, shire office, police station, unoccupied hut on rural property, non producing coal mine, public road, and storage complex

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

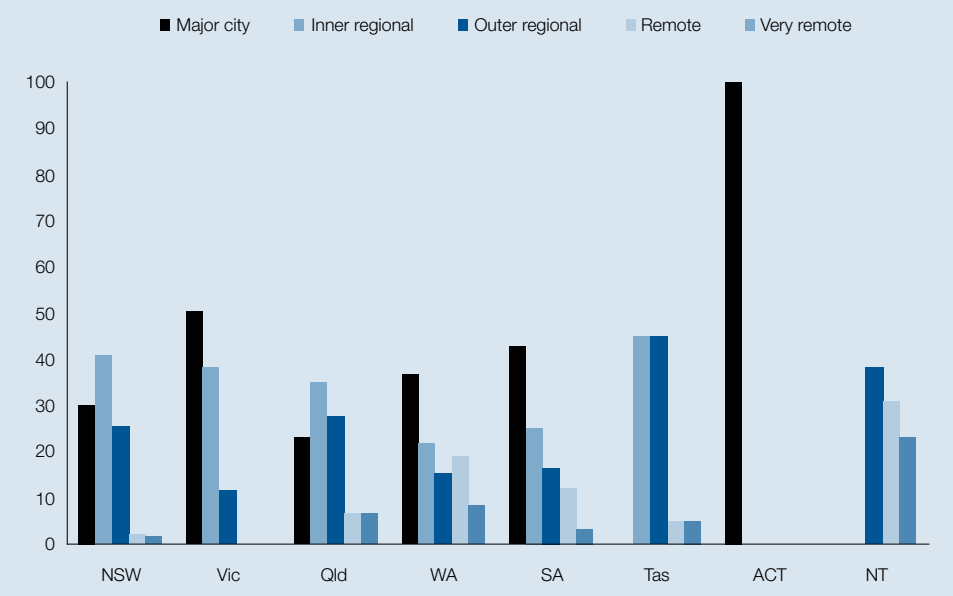
Firearm thefts by remoteness

In the previous report, firearm thefts were examined based on urban and rural location, using the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) urban centre and locality boundary classification (see Borzycki & Mouzos 2007: 25). To provide more refined detail on the location of firearms thefts in Australia, this report examines the location of thefts by remoteness, as classified by the ABS Remoteness Access Index (see ABS 2006). Remoteness is based on the minimum road distance from a specified populated locality to five service centres of differing population size. Remoteness areas are classified as major city, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote. Examples of localities within these classifications in New South Wales are: major city (the suburb of Cabramatta in Sydney); inner regional (Bathurst); outer regional (Coonabarabran); remote (Walgett) and very remote (Bourke).

The majority of firearm thefts in the larger jurisdictions occurred in major cities or inner regional areas (Figure 8 and Table A4). In Queensland, however, thefts tended to be more concentrated in inner and outer regional areas, and in New South Wales, a larger proportion of thefts occurred in inner regional areas than in major city areas.

Ideally, to determine whether the distribution of thefts presented in Figure 8 is actually comparable to the distribution of firearms owners, the distribution of thefts could be compared with the distribution of licence holders by remoteness area (that is, by using postcode data of residence of firearms licence holders). In the absence of such data, a comparison was made using the distribution of thefts against the distribution of the overall population in each of the remoteness area categories. When examining the five large jurisdictions, the distribution of firearm theft incidents is disproportionately lower in major cities and higher in inner and outer regional areas compared with the distribution of the general population (Table 21; and Table A4 in Appendix A). The difference is also marked for remote areas in Western Australia and South Australia, where a much higher proportion of theft incidents occurred than expected based on population size. In Tasmania and the Northern Territory a similar trend was observed, with firearm thefts disproportionately lower in less remote areas (inner regional for Tasmania, outer regional for the Northern Territory) and higher in more remote areas (outer regional and remote respectively).

Figure 8: Firearm thefts by remoteness and jurisdiction (percent)[a]



a: Excludes incidents which occurred in migratory/offshore areas (n=1) or where postcode location of theft was not known (n=1)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Table 21: Distribution of firearm theft[a] incidents and population by remoteness and jurisdiction[b]

	Major city		Inner regional		Outer regional		Remote		Very remote	
	% FT	% pop	% FT	% pop	% FT	% pop	% FT	% pop	% FT	% pop
NSW	30	71	41	21	26	8	2	1	2	<1
Vic	50	74	39	21	12	5	0	0	0	0
Qld	23	52	35	26	28	18	7	3	7	2
WA	37	70	22	12	15	10	19	5	8	3
SA	43	72	25	12	17	12	12	3	3	1
Tas[c]	na	na	45	64	45	34	5	2	5	<1
ACT[c]	100	99	0	<1	na	na	na	na	na	na
NT[c]	na	na	na	na	39	53	31	22	23	25

a: = FT in column heading

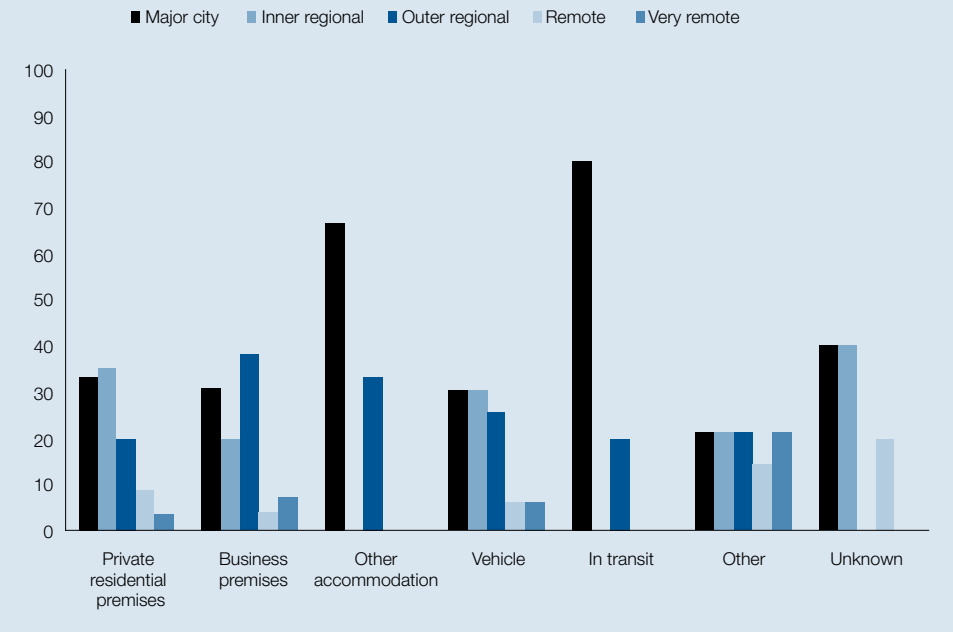
b: Excludes incidents which occurred in migratory/offshore areas (n=1) or where postcode location of theft was not recorded (n=1)

c: na refers to remoteness categories that do no apply to these jurisdictions

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Firearm thefts from private residential premises tended to occur in major cities or inner regional areas (Figure 9), whereas firearms stolen from vehicles were relatively evenly distributed between these centres and outer regional areas. Interestingly, the highest proportion of firearm thefts from business premises took place in outer regional areas (38% of all thefts from business premises). Major cities were the next most common location (31%).

Figure 9: Firearms theft by remoteness area and location type (percent)[a]



a: Excludes incidents which occurred in migratory/offshore areas (n=1) or where postcode location of theft was not known (n=1). Also excludes incidents where location was recorded as not applicable (n=5)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Sixty-five percent of rifles and 69 percent of shotguns were stolen from a location in a major city or inner regional area (Table 22). Air rifles, and particularly handguns, were more likely to have been stolen from locations in major cities (41% and 55% respectively) than other areas. A further one-quarter of handguns (26%) were stolen from outer regional areas.

Table 22: Firearms theft by type of firearm and remoteness area[a]

	Air rifle		Rifle		Shotgun		Handgun	
Location type	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Major city	52	41	277	32	134	35	36	55
Inner regional	41	32	285	33	128	34	8	12
Outer regional	23	18	205	24	91	24	17	26
Remote	10	8	62	7	20	5	2	3
Very remote	1	1	31	4	5	1	3	3
(Total)	(127)	(100)	(860)	(100)	(378)	(100)	(65)	(100)

a: Excludes incidents which occurred in migratory/offshore areas (n=1) or where postcode location of theft was not recorded (n=1). Also excludes firearms recorded as other firearm type or unknown (n=13)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

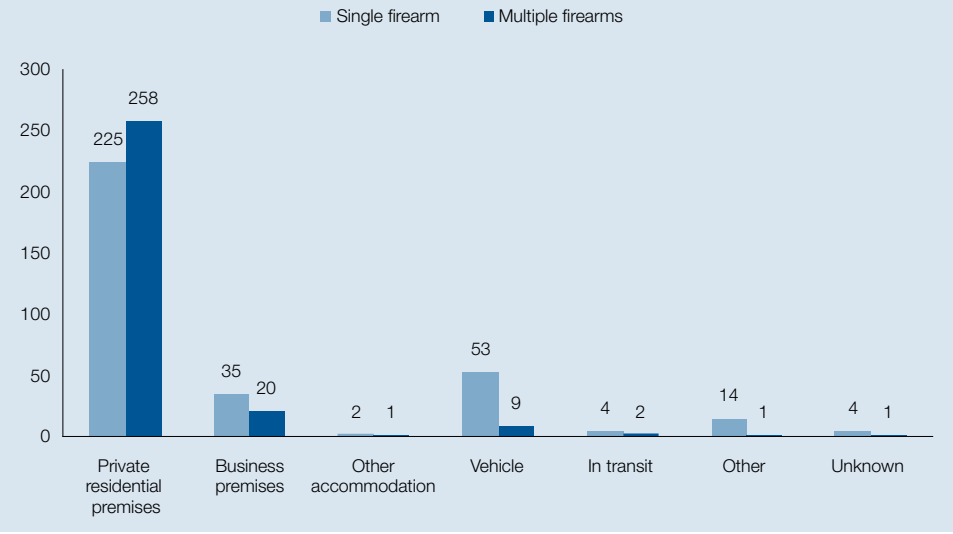
Items stolen in firearm thefts

Number of firearms stolen

In the previous chapter it was noted that an average of 2.3 firearms were stolen per theft incident in 2005–06, with just over half the incidents characterised as a single firearm theft. Two firearms were stolen in just under one in five incidents (18%), and one in 10 incidents (10%) involved the theft of three firearms. The remaining incidents resulted in the theft of between four and 16 firearms (one incident involved the theft of 16 firearms).

In all locations, with the exception of private residential premises, theft incidents usually involved the theft of just one firearm. In private residential premises, 258 incidents (or 52% of all thefts occurring in this location; see Figure 10) resulted in the theft of two or more firearms. Single firearm thefts predominated in incidents where firearms were stolen from vehicles – 85 percent, similar to the 81 percent reported for the previous year.

Figure 10: Single versus multiple firearm theft by location type (number)[a]



a: Does not include 5 incidents where location was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Further analysis of thefts from private residential premises found no proportional difference between the incidence of single and multiple firearm thefts from rooms within the dwelling (48% and 52% respectively). However, multiple thefts were somewhat more common when garages or sheds were broken into, accounting for 55 percent of such thefts.

Firearm thefts in major cities (56%) and remote (64%) and very remote (75%) areas of Australia tended to result in one, rather than multiple, firearm(s) being stolen (Figure 11). For inner and outer regional areas, the incidence of single and multiple firearm thefts was similar, although single firearm thefts were slightly more common in outer regional areas (51%) and multiple firearm thefts in inner regional areas (52%).

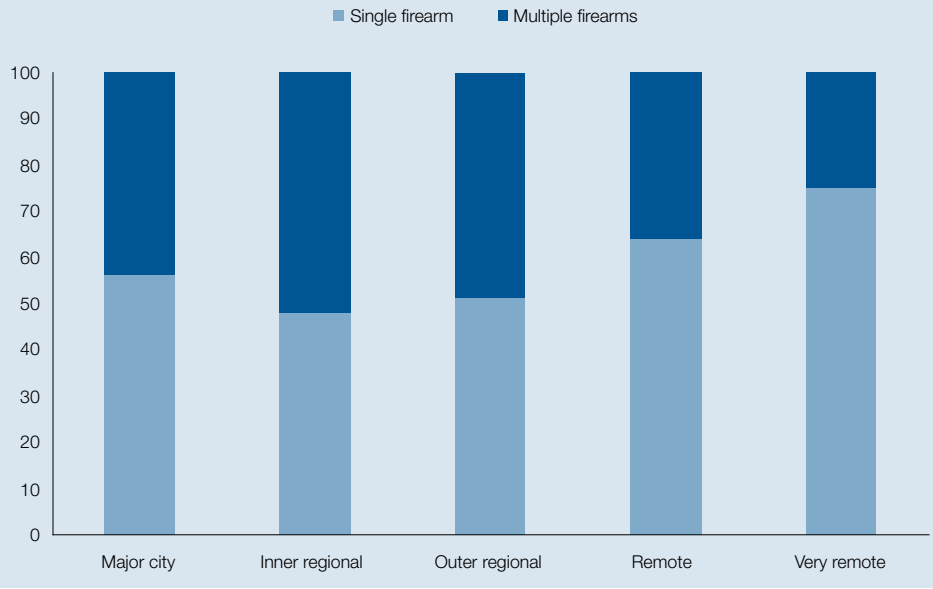
Around 60 percent of incidents in 2005–06 were classified as general burglaries (59%; Table 23), similar to the pattern found in previous analyses (59% in 2004–05; 58% in the six monthly analysis). Two-thirds of the thefts from residential premises (65%) and 56 percent from business premises involved the loss of other goods as well as firearms (Figure 12). Slightly more than half (55%) the thefts from vehicles resulted in only firearms being taken, whereas in 2004–05 it was the opposite.

Table 23: Incidents involving the theft of other, non-firearm goods

Were other goods stolen?	n	%
Yes	376	59
No	238	38
Unknown	14	2
Not applicable	6	1
(Total)	(634)	(100)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

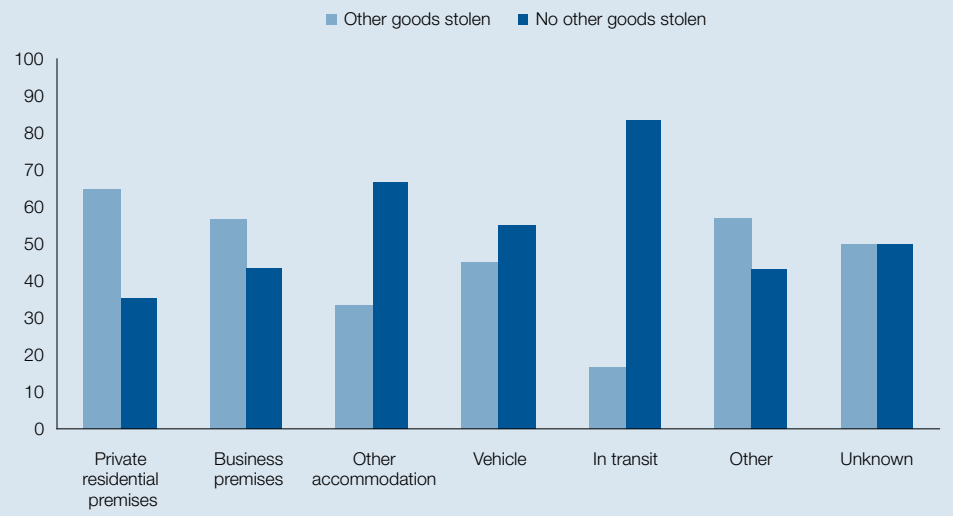
Figure 11: Single versus multiple firearm theft by remoteness area (percent)[a]



a: Excludes incidents which occurred in migratory/offshore areas (n=1) or where postcode location of theft was not recorded (n=1)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Figure 12: Incidents where other goods were stolen by location type[a]



a: Does not include 5 incidents where location was recorded as not applicable. Excludes 14 incidents in which the theft of other goods was unknown or recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Detail regarding the types of goods stolen varied between jurisdictions. While some jurisdictions listed every item stolen in the incident, others aggregated types of goods into groups (for example, jewellery, tools). This precludes an accurate count of the goods stolen over the 376 general burglaries. Instead, one count was made for each goods type per incident, regardless of the number of items of that goods type that were actually stolen. For example, incident 1 and 2 will both have a count of one for tools even if only a spanner was stolen in incident 1 and a chainsaw, angle grinder and power drill were taken in incident 2. Consequently, the results from this analysis can not be compared with results from previous reports.

Tools were the most common item stolen, taken in 114 (30%) of all general burglaries, followed by cash and jewellery/watches (23% each; see Table 24). Since most items were stolen in less than 20 percent of all general burglaries, it is possible that at least some of these thefts were opportunistic, with items stolen based on their availability or accessibility at the theft location, rather than offenders selecting from a 'shopping list' of items.

Table 24: Types of other goods stolen[a]		
Type of goods	**n**	**%**
Tools[b]	114	30
Cash	87	23
Jewellery/watches	86	23
Personal electronic items[c]	72	19
Home entertainment[d]	68	18
Firearm accessories	51	14
Storage items (including luggage)[e]	51	14
Personal items[f]	46	12
Weapons (non-firearms)	42	11
Furniture and other household items	41	11
Recreational items[g]	38	10
Alcohol and other drugs	36	10
Vehicles	28	7
PCs and accessories	25	7
DVDs, CDs, videos, games etc	24	6
Collectible items[h]	21	6
Vehicle accessories[i]	21	6
ID and negotiable documents	21	6
Keys	20	5
Household electric appliances	13	4
Agricultural items	9	2
(Total)	(376)	(100)

a: Indicates the number of incidents in which a specified goods type was stolen, regardless of whether one or multiple items of that goods type were taken in the incident

b: Tools include power and hand tools

c: Personal electronic items include mobile phones, iPODs, digital cameras, Uniden radios etc.

d: Home entertainment includes items such as TVs, DVD players, stereo systems, and video game units (e.g. Sony Playstation)

e: Storage includes receptacles used to secure firearms, bags, suitcases etc.

f: Personal items include clothes, cosmetics, personal papers etc.

g: Recreational items include sport, camping, fishing and equestrian equipment, and non-electronic toys

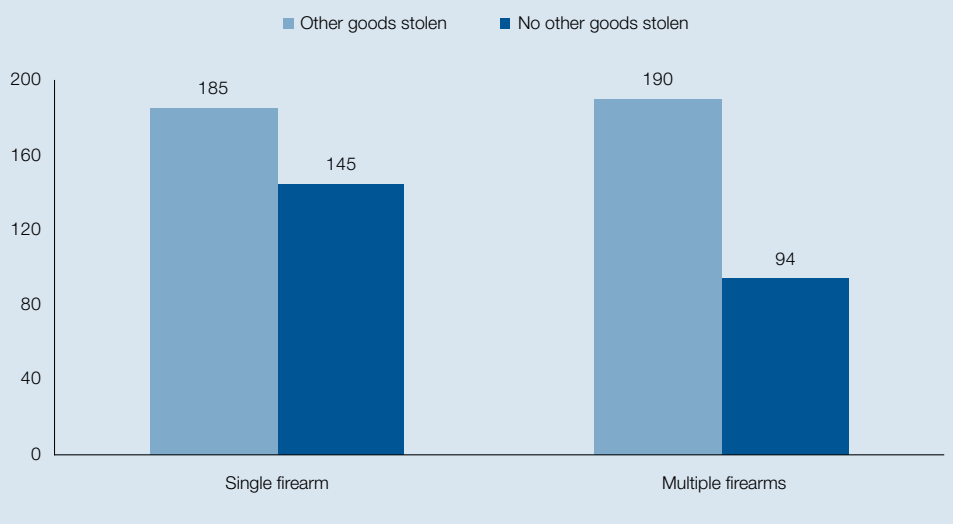
h: Collectible items include coin and stamp collections, antiques, war medals, art work etc.

i: Vehicle accessories include accessories for cars, motorbikes and bicycles

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Analysis using 2004–05 data revealed that when multiple firearms were stolen, a higher proportion of incidents (compared with single firearm thefts) involved the theft of other goods (Figure 13). This was also the case in 2005–06, where 67 percent of multiple firearms thefts involved the theft of other goods, compared with 56 percent of single firearm thefts. While data from the current reference period cannot be used to calculate the average number of goods stolen (in 2004–05 an average of 2.3 goods were stolen in multiple firearm thefts and 1.9 in single firearm thefts), a comparison can be made on whether certain goods were more commonly stolen in either type of theft incident. Six in every 10 theft incidents in which firearm accessories (64%) and ID and negotiable documents (62%) were stolen also involved the theft of multiple firearms, as did one in five incidents in which tools, storage equipment (including receptacles to secure firearms) and alcohol and other drugs were stolen. Other goods tended to be stolen in incidents involving the theft of singe firearms.

Figure 13: Incidents where other goods were stolen by number of firearms stolen (number)[a]



a: Does not include 6 incidents in which theft of goods was recorded as not applicable, and 14 incidents where it was unknown if other goods had been stolen

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

How do offenders gain access to premises?

Information was sought from jurisdictions on how offenders gained access to premises where the firearm theft occurred. Force was used in the largest proportion of incidents of general burglary (47%; see Table 25) and firearms only thefts (26%), with the use of tools accounting for 19 and 13 percent of these thefts respectively. Of note is the high number of incidents for both types of theft in which premises or vehicles were unsecured: 17 percent of general burglaries and 22 percent of firearm only thefts. Further analyses found that failure to secure was more of an issue with vehicles (29% of all firearm thefts from vehicles) than private residential premises (18%) and business premises (18%).

Almost one in three firearms only thefts recorded an unknown method of entry. This suggests that security of the premises could not be verified in some cases, and possibly that an even higher proportion of thefts occurred in part because premises were unsecured.

Table 25: Method of gaining entry to the premises where the firearms were stored[a]

	General burglary		Firearms only theft	
Method of entry	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Using tools	69	19	30	13
Using force	173	47	60	26
Using threat	4	1	4	2
Using stolen key	5	1	3	1
Legitimate access	4	1	13	6
Stole vehicle	1	<1	1	<1
Premises unsecured	63	17	52	22
Other	6	2	6	3
Unknown	47	13	64	27
(Total)	(372)	(100)	(233)	(100)

a: Does not include 6 incidents in which theft of goods was recorded as not applicable, and 14 incidents where it was unknown if other goods had been stolen. Does not include 9 incidents in which method of entry was recorded as not applicable by reporting jurisdictions, or incidents which did not involve theft per se (for example, firearms not returned to owner) or where access to firearms did not require entering a premise or vehicle (for example, in receptacle loaded on tray of ute)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Firearm thefts from private residential premises

As found in previous analyses, private residential premises were generally accessed using tools or force (Table 26). Force was relied on more often by offenders when entering residential premises via a window (66%) than when they gained access through a door (45%). The higher

proportion of doors as points of entry in thefts when the premises were unsecured reveals that in a substantial number of incidents, residents have failed to lock their front or back doors, or their shed door, rather than just forgetting to secure a window.

Force was more often used in incidents when firearms were stolen from the residence itself, than when the theft occurred from a garage or shed (45% compared with 34%). Residences were also less likely to have been accessed when not secured than garages or sheds. Firearms were stolen from a room in an unsecured residential dwelling in 15 percent of relevant incidents whereas unsecured garages or shed represented one-quarter of the thefts from this location.

Table 26: Point of entry for thefts from private residential premises[a]

	Window		Door	
	n	%	n	%
Using tools	23	17	61	25
Using force	88	66	105	45
Other	5	4	6	3
Premises unsecured	17	13	62	25
(Total)	(133)	(100)	(239)	(100)

a: Does not list incidents in which entry was made not using a window or a door (n=4). Excludes incidents occurring in private residential premises where point and/or method of entry was not known, not applicable, or where an offender was admitted to premises using force (robbery) or had legitimate access to premises (n=107)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

There was little difference between single and multiple firearms thefts and whether force was employed to access the premises (53% compared to 50%; see Table 27). Tools, however, were more prominently used in incidents of multiple firearms theft (29%), and unsecured premises were more common in incidents of single firearm theft (28%).

Table 27: Method of gaining access to private residential premises by number of firearms stolen[a]

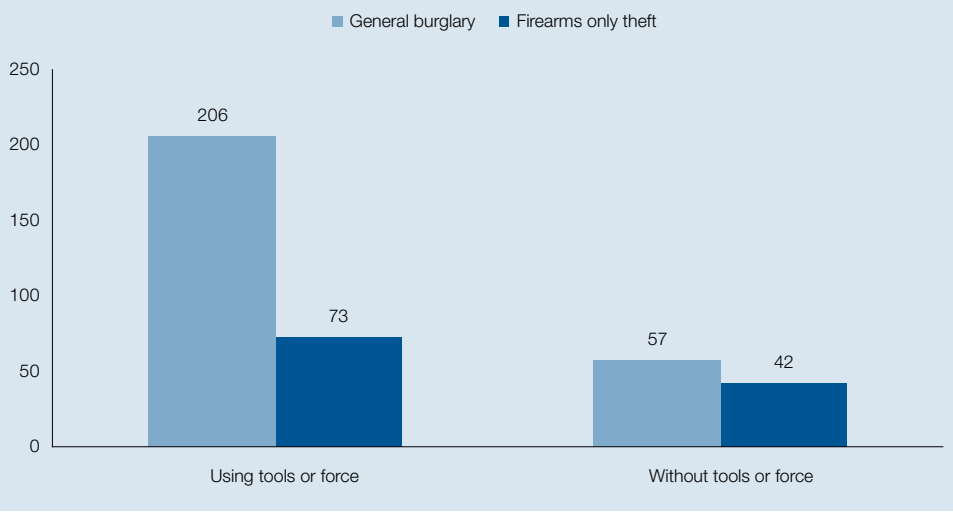
	Single firearm		Multiple firearms	
	n	%	n	%
Using tools	25	15	64	29
Using force	88	53	109	50
Other	7	4	7	3
Premises unsecured	47	28	39	18
(Total)	(167)	(100)	(219)	(100)

a: Excludes incidents occurring in private residential premises where method of entry was not known or recorded as not applicable, or where an offender was admitted to premises using force (robbery) or had legitimate access to premises (n=97)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Firearm theft data from 2004–05 showed that the use of force was significantly associated with general burglaries. This suggested that firearms only thefts were less opportunistic in nature, or conversely more opportunistic, with offenders taking the most valuable goods available. The same was found for the current reference period: 74 percent of thefts characterised by the use of tools or force were general burglaries (Figure 14). Thefts not involving tools or force comprised one in five (26%, n=100) of all thefts from private residential premises, and in the overwhelming majority of these incidents (86%, n=86) the premises were unsecured.

Figure 14: Method of gaining access to private residential premises for general burglary and firearms only theft (number of incidents)[a]



a: Excludes incidents occurring in private residential premises where method of entry was not known or recorded or listed as not applicable, or where an offender was admitted to premises using force (robbery) or had legitimate access to premises (n=92). Does not include 13 incidents in which the theft of other goods was unknown or recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file

Firearm thefts from business premises

The predominant point of entry to business premises was through a door (74%, n=25), with another 18 percent gaining access via a window (Table 28). Method of entry was unknown in 13 incidents from business premises. Administrative offices accounted for 20 percent of theft sites (n=11) and warehouses and factories a further 16 percent (n=9).

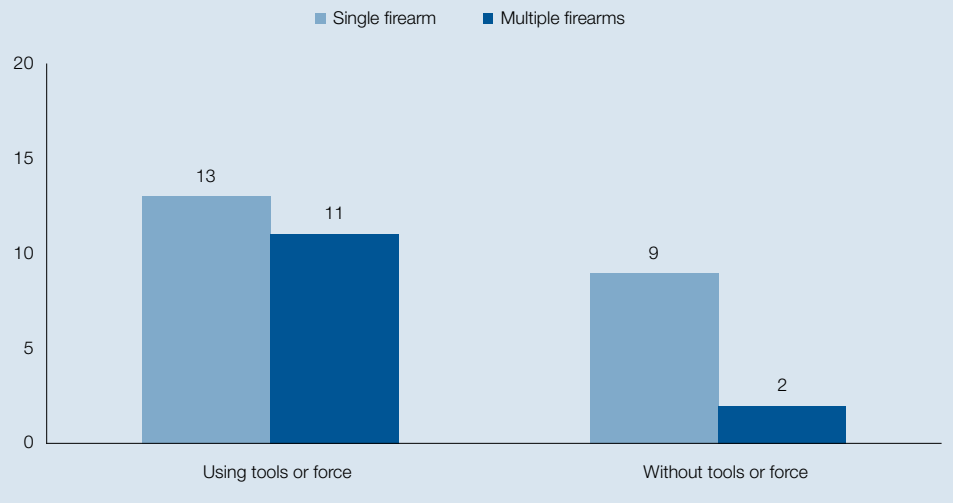
Table 28: Point of entry for thefts from business premises[a]

Point of entry	n	%
Window	6	18
Door	25	74
Other	3	9
(Total)	(34)	(100)

a: Excludes incidents occurring in business premises where point of entry was not known or not applicable, or where an offender was admitted to premises using force (robbery) or had legitimate access to the premises (n=21)
Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Regardless of access method, single firearms were stolen in the majority of thefts from business premises. In both reference periods, around six in 10 theft incidents from business premises resulted in the theft of a single firearm. There was a propensity for single firearms to be stolen regardless of method of entry, although much less so when tools or force were used (Figure 15). This result needs to be treated with some caution, however, as numbers are very small.

Figure 15: Method of gaining entry to business premises by number of firearms stolen[a]



a: Excludes incidents occurring in business premises where method of entry was not known or not applicable, or where an offender was admitted to premises using force (robbery) or had legitimate access to the premises (n=20)
Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Tools and force were more commonly employed in general burglaries than in firearm only thefts (74%, n=20 compared with 50%, n=4), whereas in 2004–05 there was little difference. The very small numbers used in both analyses, and tendency for fluctuation in trends when relying on small numbers, however, may explain the differential result.

Compliance with the law

Security and storage

Firearms stolen in 55 percent of theft incidents were stored in a firearm safe or some other form of secure receptacle (Table 29). In just under one in 10 incidents, the stolen firearm had been stored or left in a vehicle (9%) and in seven percent of incidents, the firearms were stored in a cupboard or wardrobe. No attempt to store or secure firearms characterised 12 percent of incidents. A sizeable proportion of incidents in which firearms were stored in vehicles could arguably be classified as unsecured as well, given the high proportion of unlocked vehicles and the absence of vehicle-based receptacles (see below).

Table 29: Firearm storage[a]

Firearm storage	n	%
Safe/other secure receptacle	346	55
In vehicle	59	9
Strong room or vault	10	2
On display	15	2
Carried on person	5	1
Unsecured/in the open	75	12
Unknown	45	7
Other	73	12
Cupboard/wardrobe	46	7
Metal storage cabinet	8	1
Bag	5	1
Shipping container	3	<1
Box	2	<1
Storeroom	2	<1
Under bed	2	<1
Other, not defined	5	1
(Total)	(628)	(100)

a: Excludes 6 incidents where the type of storage for the firearm was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Compliance status

Over half of all firearm owners (53%) were assessed as having complied with storage requirements, the same as the proportion found in 2004–05 (Table 30). Thirty percent of firearm owners did not comply (34% in 2004–05). Ninety-eight incidents (15%) returned an unknown compliance status. In some incidents this was because the person reporting the theft did not know the storage arrangements of the firearm(s) at the time of the theft. In others, however, information regarding the location of the theft (and security of premises

or vehicle) and where the firearm had been stored was available, but compliance was still recorded as unknown. This was particularly the case for incidents where firearms were stolen from vehicles.

Table 30: Status of compliance with firearm storage requirements[a]

Status	n	%
Complied	335	53
Not complied	187	30
Unknown	98	15
Not applicable	13	2
(Total)	(633)	(100)

a: Excludes 1 incident where information on level of compliance was not provided

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

The level of compliance varied between jurisdictions (see Table 31). The highest level of compliance was in South Australia where 77 percent of owners adhered to storage requirements and the lowest levels were in Western Australia (54%) and the Northern Territory (42%). Four states (Qld, SA, WA and Tas) improved their levels of compliance compared with 2004–05: in South Australia's case, compliance increased by 10 percent. These improvements in compliance can be attributed to a number of factors specific to individual jurisdictions. These include an increase in auditing of firearm owners, the introduction of random firearm storage inspections, and better accuracy in recording of compliance in relevant records.

Table 31: Level of safe storage compliance by jurisdiction[a]

	Complied		Not complied	
Jurisdiction	n	%	n	%
NSW	89	74	32	26
Vic	64	63	37	37
Qld	47	57	36	43
WA	49	54	42	46
SA	62	77	19	24
Tas	19	59	13	41
ACT	0	0	1	100
NT	5	42	7	58
(Total)	(335)		(187)	

a: Excludes 1 incident where information on level of compliance was not provided. Does not include incidents where level of compliance was unknown or not applicable (n=111)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

For the current reference period, jurisdictions were asked to provide as much detail as possible concerning the storage arrangements of the stolen firearms and the location in which they were stored. Data quality varied between incidents and between jurisdictions, and while information was generally available on whether firearms were stored in locked or unlocked receptacles, or left unsecured, more detailed information on securing of receptacles to premises or the presence of alarms, for example, was largely missing. Data presented in Table 32 compare the compliance status for firearm thefts in which firearms were stored in locked receptacles, unlocked receptacles or vehicles, and when they were left unsecured. The table excludes incidents in which only the security arrangements of the premises were known, security arrangements for the premises and firearm were unknown and where security arrangements were recorded as not applicable.

Incidents where firearms were stored in locked receptacles were mostly assessed as compliant, even if the premises were unsecured at the time of the theft, or the receptacle was not secured to the premises. Cases of non-compliance usually targeted owners who had stored their firearms in unapproved receptacles, such as locked wardrobes or cupboards. When receptacles were unlocked, or firearms were unsecured, the majority of incidents were considered non-compliant. The few incidents in this category assessed as compliant involved thefts from secured premises.

Leaving a firearm in an unlocked vehicle was generally recorded as non-compliance, but the picture was less clear with locked vehicles. Of the 32 incidents involving a locked vehicle, 13 were recorded as compliant, 11 non-compliant, seven unknown and one not applicable. Further detail regarding the storage of firearms was provided for half of these incidents, providing some explanation for this variation in compliance status. Where firearms were stored in a locked receptacle in a locked vehicle, two-thirds (4 of 6 incidents) were considered compliant, and when firearms were unsecured in the car, two-thirds (6 of 9 incidents) were considered non-compliant.

Table 32: Type of storage where stolen firearms were kept and level of compliance[a] (number)

Type of storage	Complied	Not complied	Unknown	Not applicable
Locked receptacle				
Locked receptacle (no other information)	27	8	8	1
Locked receptacle, secured premises	241	5	13	1
Locked and secured receptacle, secured premises	113	1	0	0
Locked and unsecured receptacle, secured premises	24	2	0	1
Locked receptacle, unsecured premises	36	10	13	0
Locked and secured receptacle, unsecured premises	18	1	1	0
Locked and unsecured receptacle, unsecured premises	2	5	0	0
Unlocked receptacle				
Unlocked receptacle (no other information)	0	3	2	0
Unlocked receptacle, secured premises	3	28	4	0
Unlocked and secured receptacle, secured premises	0	0	0	0
Unlocked and unsecured receptacle, secured premises	1	4	0	0
Unlocked receptacle, unsecured premises	0	16	0	0
Unlocked and secured receptacle, unsecured premises	0	2	0	0
Unlocked and unsecured receptacle, unsecured premises	0	4	0	0
Vehicle				
Locked vehicle	13	11	7	1
Unlocked vehicle	0	18	4	1
Unsecured				
Firearms unsecured (no other information)	1	26	1	1
Firearms unsecured, secured premises	2	25	1	0
Firearms unsecured, unsecured premises	0	20	1	0
Firearms unsecured, locked vehicle	1	6	1	1
Firearms unsecured, unlocked vehicle	0	4	0	1

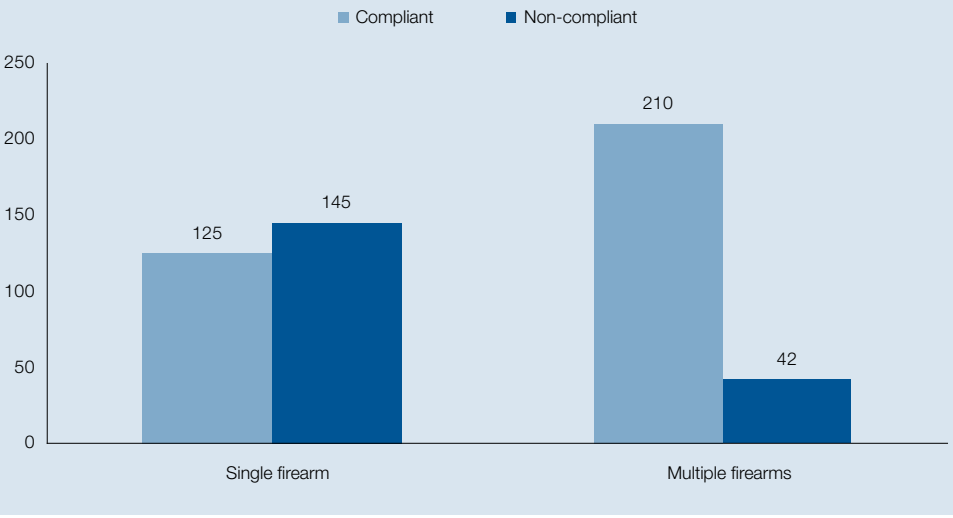
a: Excludes incidents where information on security of firearm was unknown or not applicable (includes incidents where security of premises was known but security arrangements for the firearm was not known, and when it was not known if the receptacle or vehicle was locked at the time of the incident), or other methods of storage were used to secure firearms (n=82)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Analyses of compliance from the previous report were repeated and the results were comparable:

- Level of compliance as a function of location type was similar for private residential premises (64%) and business premises (66%), but was very low when firearms were stored in vehicles (35%).
- In incidents of multiple firearms theft, 83 percent of owners were compliant, but in incidents of single firearm theft, 54 percent of owners were non-compliant (Figure 16): in 2004–05 it was 74 percent and 54 percent respectively.
- General burglaries recorded a 68 percent compliance rate compared with 58 percent for firearm only thefts (Figure 17).

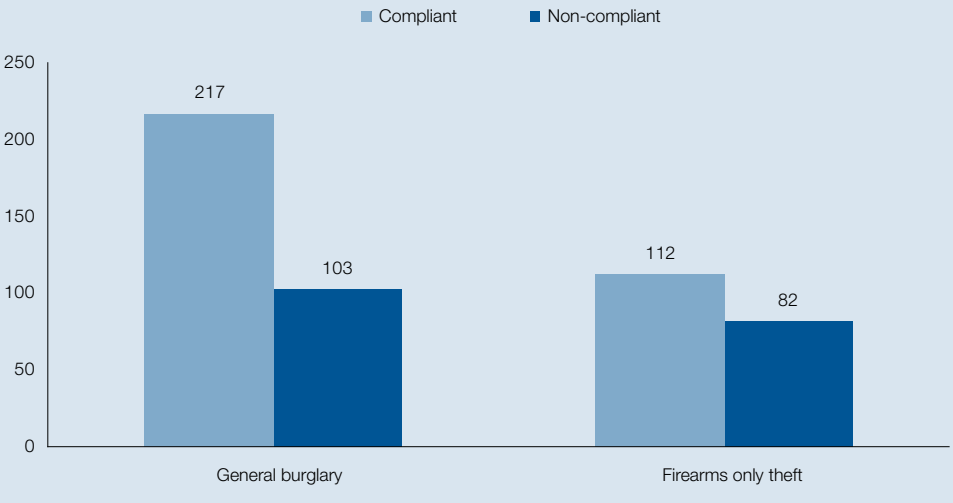
Figure 16: Safe storage compliance for single and multiple firearm thefts (number of incidents)[a]



a: Excludes 1 incident where information on level of compliance was not provided. Excludes incidents for which compliance was unknown or not applicable (n=111)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Figure 17: Safe storage compliance for general burglary and firearms only theft (number of incidents)[a]



a: Excludes 1 incident where information on level of compliance was not provided. Excludes incidents for which compliance was unknown or not applicable or in which the theft of other goods was unknown or recorded as not applicable (n=119)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Method of accessing secured firearms

As discussed earlier, the majority of firearm owners had made some attempt to store their firearms safely, relying on a range of repositories of differing levels of security. More than half the owners stored their firearms in firearm safes or other similar receptacles. In 63 percent of incidents in which the method of access to these receptacles was known, the receptacle was opened using force or tools (Table 33). A key was stolen to open the safe in 18 percent of incidents, and in 12 percent of incidents the entire receptacle was stolen. Unlocked firearm safes accounted for five percent of incidents.

While most of the firearms stolen from safes had been secured in locked receptacles, there was less vigilance when the firearm was stored elsewhere. Firearms stored on display were usually mounted on walls or held in glass cabinets, and in 60 percent of incidents, firearms were stolen either because the receptacle they were secured in was not locked or they could be (easily) detached from their display holding (unsecured). Similarly, a lack of security characterised firearms stolen from other receptacles, either because the receptacle (usually a cupboard or wardrobe) was not locked (45%) or because the firearm had been left unsecured (in a bag or box) (27%). Firearms stolen from vehicles had generally not been secured at the time of theft (74% described as unsecured).

Table 33: Method used to access firearm storage repository[a]

	Strong room		Safe/other receptacle		On display		Vehicle		Other	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Tools	2	22	82	26	2	13	2	4	5	8
Force	6	67	116	37	2	13	3	6	9	15
Threat	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Key located[b]	0	0	55	18	2	13	1	2	2	3
Legitimate access	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stole vehicle	na	na	na	na	na	na	3	6	na	na
Receptacle unsecured	1	11	15	5	3	20	1	2	28	45
Entire receptacle stolen	0	0	38	12	0	0	2	4	1	2
Other	0	0	1	<1	0	0	2	4	0	0
Unsecured	na	na	na	na	6	40	40	74	17	27
(Total)	(9)	(100)	(315)	(100)	(15)	(100)	(54)	(100)	(62)	(100)

a: Excludes incidents where firearms were carried on the person or described as unsecured at the time of theft, or the method of storage was unknown or not applicable (n=131). Excludes incidents where method of access to the firearm was unknown or not applicable for methods of storage included in table (n=48)

b: Includes incidents where lock combination was broken

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

In over half the theft incidents (58%, n=369), firearms were reported as having been stored in a locked receptacle, mostly, but not exclusively, firearm safes and similarly secure storage sites. Force was used in over one-third of incidents (36%; see Table 34) to penetrate the receptacle, and tools in one-quarter (25%). How the firearm was removed from the receptacle was unknown in 11 percent of incidents, suggesting that the receptacle was not locked in a number of these thefts.

Table 35 examines the use of access methods depending on the type of theft. There was a particularly high incidence of whole receptacles being stolen in general burglaries compared with firearm only thefts: around four to one in this reference period and similar to 2004–05. Two possible explanations for this difference were presented in the previous report (see Borzycki & Mouzos 2007). The first suggests that some of the incidents classified as general burglaries were in fact targeted firearm thefts but offenders chose to take other, non-firearm goods because of their accessibility. The second explanation suggests that these incidents were genuine general burglaries and the decision to remove the receptacle was based on a perceived value of the items within. It is also possible in the latter scenario that offenders do not come equipped with the right equipment or knowledge, or they lack the appropriate length of time, to open a firearm safe, whereas in targeted thefts, offenders would assume that firearms are stored in secure receptacles and plan and execute the theft accordingly.

Table 34: Method used to access locked receptacles		
	n	%
Tools	91	25
Force	132	36
Threat	3	1
Key located/broke combination	57	15
Legitimate access	5	1
Entire receptacle stolen	41	11
Other	1	<1
Unknown	39	11
(Total)	(369)	(100)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Table 35: Method used to access locked receptacles in general burglaries and firearm only thefts, as percentage of method[a]			
Type of method	General burglary	Firearm only theft	n
Tools	68	32	88
Force	69	31	129
Key located/broke combination	60	40	57
Entire receptacle stolen	81	20	41

a: Does not include incidents in which locked receptacles were accessed by use of threat, legitimate access or other method, or method of access was unknown or recorded as not applicable (n=47). Excludes incidents in which the theft of other goods was unknown or recorded as not applicable (n=7)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Ammunition theft

Ammunition was stolen in 23 percent of incidents in 2005–06 (Table 36), slightly less than the percentage reported in 2004–05 (27%).

Table 36: Firearm thefts where ammunition was stolen[a]		
Ammunition	n	%
Stolen	147	23
Not stolen	408	65
Unknown	73	12
(Total)	(628)	(100)

a: Excludes 6 incidents where the theft of ammunition was recorded as not applicable

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Information collected on the type, calibre and amount of ammunition stolen proved highly variable in quality, and in a substantial number of cases was unknown, and hence does not warrant discussion here. Detail on the storage of ammunition at the time of the theft was somewhat better, but still of variable quality.

Ammunition was stored in a locked receptacle in 59 percent of incidents of ammunition theft, in an unlocked receptacle in eight percent of incidents, and in a vehicle in seven percent (Table 37). However, despite the generally good level of securing of ammunition, and contrary to legislative requirements, firearm owners continue to store ammunition with their firearms. In over two-thirds of incidents involving the theft of ammunition (68%), firearm owners reported that the ammunition had been stored in the same location as the stolen firearms. This is a marked increase from the 28 percent found in 2004–05, although the proportion of unknown ammunition storage was much higher then (56%) than for the current reference period (16%).

Table 37: Type of storage where ammunition was kept[a]

Type of storage	n	%
Locked receptacle	87	59
Same location as firearms	41	28
Separate from firearms	21	14
Unlocked receptacle	12	8
Same location as firearms	10	7
Separate from firearms	2	1
Unsecured/in the open	7	5
Same location as firearms	2	1
Separate from firearms	2	1
Vehicle	10	7
Other[b]	7	5
Unknown	23	16
(Total)	(146)	(100)
Total same location as firearm	53	68
Total separate location from firearm	25	32

a: Excludes 1 incident in which ammunition was stored in a receptacle but it was not known whether the receptacle was locked or unlocked at time of incident

b: Other includes locked storeroom (n=1), gun bag (n=1), chest of drawers (n=1) and loaded in stolen firearm (n=4)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Prosecution of non-compliance

During 2005–06, a total of 154 firearm owners (24%) were found to be in breach of firearm laws and/or regulations (Table 38). The highest proportion of breaches were noted in the Northern Territory (69%), although based on a small number of cases (n=9; see Figure 18). In the other jurisdictions, it ranged from 18 percent in NSW to 29 percent in Queensland.

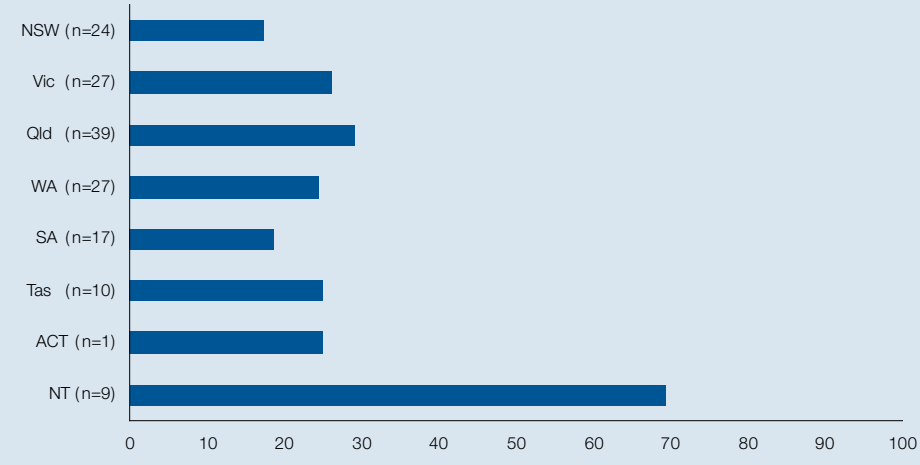
Table 38: Firearm owners found in breach of firearm laws and/or regulations

Status	n	%
In breach	154	24
Not in breach	418	66
Unknown	58	9
Not applicable[a]	4	1
(Total)	(634)	(100)

a: Not applicable coded as such by the reporting jurisdiction

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Figure 18: Firearm owners found in breach of firearm laws and/or regulations by jurisdiction (percent)



Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

In three-quarters of incidents where the firearms owner was found to be in breach of firearms laws and/or regulations, a charge or disciplinary action ensued or was noted as pending (Table 39). Prosecution of firearm owners occurred in 70 percent or more of incidents for most jurisdictions (Table 40). The exception was Queensland where 56 percent of firearm owners found in breach were eventually charged or received disciplinary action.

The most common reasons cited for not pursuing firearm owners with charges were not being in the public interest (35%) and expiry of the statute of limitations (21%). Other reasons given included the firearm owner being deceased or a warning or caution being issued instead. In almost one-third of incidents, the reason for the owner not being charged was not known.

Table 39: Charge/disciplinary action of firearm owners found in breach of firearm laws and regulations

Charged/disciplinary action	n	%
Charged	89	58
Charges pending	22	14
Disciplinary action	3	2
Disciplinary action pending	2	1
No prosecution	34	22
Unknown	4	3
(Total)	(154)	(100)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Table 40: Charge/disciplinary action of firearm owners found in breach of firearm laws and regulations by jurisdiction (number)

Jurisdiction	Charged[a]	Disciplinary action[b]	No prosecution	Unknown
NSW	19	0	4	1
Vic	19	1	7	0
Qld	19	3	15	2
WA	26	0	1	0
SA	15	0	2	0
Tas	7	0	3	0
ACT	1	0	0	0
NT	5	1	2	1
Australia	111	5	34	4

a: Includes charges pending

b: Includes disciplinary action pending

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

The offence of failing to secure or correctly store firearms represented the majority of charges laid (80% of all firearm owners charged, compared with 59% in 2004–05) (Table 41). Other charges were much less commonly laid – seven percent for unlawful or unlicensed possession of a firearm, five percent for incorrectly storing ammunition and four percent each for possession of an unregistered firearm and breach of licence conditions.

Table 41: Types of offences laid against firearm owners[a]

Type of offence	n	%
Unlawful or unlicensed possession of a firearm	8	7
Possessing unregistered firearms	5	4
Failure to secure or correctly store firearms	93	80
Failure to secure or correctly store ammunition	6	5
Breach of licence conditions	5	4
Other[a]	5	4
Unknown	6	6
(Total)[b]	(116)	(100)

a: Multiple charges were laid in 12 incidents so the total number of offences exceeds the total number of incidents in which the firearms owner was charged or received disciplinary action

b: Other includes possession of dangerous article (n=1), possession of restricted weapon (n=1), unlawful supply of a firearm (n=1), expired firearms licence (n=1) and making a false declaration regarding the firearm theft (n=1)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Further analyses examined the type of charges laid in incidents in which the firearm owner did not possess a relevant licence, or where unregistered firearms were stolen. As noted elsewhere, 40 incidents involved the theft of a firearm from an owner who did not hold a valid licence. Breaches were reported in 38 percent of these incidents (n=15), and charges laid or disciplinary action taken in 32 percent (n=13). Around half these charges (46%, n=6) related to unlicensed possession of a firearm, and a further 31 percent to owning an unregistered firearm (n=4).

A similar proportion of breaches (37%, n=17) were found for the 46 persons who had unregistered firearms stolen. Firearm owners were charged in 30 percent of incidents, compared with 33 percent reported for 2004–05. One-quarter of the charges (24%) referred to the possession of unregistered firearms.

The previous report examined prosecution rates slightly differently, and included only those firearm owners found to be non-compliant regarding the storage of their firearms in the final analysis. To retain consistency between the reports, the following describes prosecution of this group of firearm owners.

As stated earlier, 187 firearm owners were found not to have secured or stored their firearms in accordance with legislative requirements. Of this group, two-thirds were found to be in breach (67%, n=125) and half (53%, n=99) were prosecuted or had charges or disciplinary action pending (Table 42). This is a marked increase from the 41 percent of cases of police prosecution following storage non-compliance in 2004–05. The level of police prosecution between reference periods has increase markedly in each jurisdiction. For example, 29 percent of incidents of storage non-compliance in NSW in 2004–05 resulted in charges being laid or pending, while in the current year it has more than doubled, to 78 percent.

Table 42: Police prosecution in incidents where secure storage requirements were not met, by jurisdiction (number)

Jurisdiction	Charged[a]	Disciplinary action[b]	No prosecution	Unknown
NSW	18	0	4	1
Vic	18	0	6	0
Qld	13	3	6	1
WA	22	0	1	0
SA	13	0	2	0
Tas	6	0	3	0
ACT	1	0	0	0
NT	4	1	1	1
Australia	95	4	23	3

a: Includes charges pending

b: Includes disciplinary action pending

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Repeat victimisation

Sixteen incidents in 2005–06 were recorded as repeat victimisations, that is, the location of the current theft incident was the site of a previous burglary in which a firearm was stolen. Another two incidents had been flagged as repeat victimisations but further investigation revealed they had been erroneously coded. This was because the current and supposed previous incident were found to have occurred on the same date and involved the theft of the same firearms, and were thus concluded to be the same incident.

Six previous thefts occurred within 12 months of the most recent theft. Five of these thefts occurred between three to nine months before the incident recorded in the 2005–06 dataset. In the remaining case, the prior theft actually occurred 6 months after the incident recorded in the 2005–06 dataset. Both thefts occurred in 2003, and it is unknown whether the later theft was reported to police.

Interestingly, one of the repeat thefts that occurred within the 12 month period involved the targeting of the same transport company while the firearms were in transit. Two rifles were stolen from a truck in the first incident and six months later, six firearms were taken from another truck (three rifles and three shotguns). While the security arrangements for the six firearms were not known, other than being stored in the truck, the storage was considered to be compliant with legislative requirements and no breach was pursued.

Eleven thefts occurred more than 12 months prior to the current theft. Three incidents occurred between one and two years before the current incident, two incidents between three and five years, two incidents between six and 10 years and three incidents more than 10 years ago (two of which occurred over 20 years ago). (The date for the other incident was unknown). An additional prior theft occurred three years after the incident recorded in the 2005–06 dataset. This theft apparently occurred some time in 2005 but, as there is no record in either the 2005–06 or the 2004–05 dataset of this incident, it is not included in the total of 16.

Two incident locations had experienced two previous thefts – in both cases, one theft had occurred in the previous 12 months and the other some time earlier. Neither owner held or was known to hold a valid licence for some or all of the stolen firearms, but both were found to have complied with storage regulations and not found in breach of firearms laws or regulations.

An examination of the characteristics of the instances of repeat victimisation was undertaken to identify common features. Location did not appear to have any association, nor did the level of storage compliance, with the majority of owners of firearms stolen from these incidents found to be compliant (69%, n=11). Ten of the 16 incidents (63%) were classified as single firearm thefts (higher than the 55% for all firearm thefts) and 10 incidents involved the theft of just firearms. (Note that in two of the general burglary thefts the other goods stolen were a bottle of milk and clothing, suggesting that these thefts were actually firearm

targeted). The opposite picture was found for repeat theft locations in 2004–05: multiple thefts occurred in 60 percent (11 of 18 incidents) of incidents and thefts tended to be general burglaries (78%, n=14).

Focusing on just those thefts occurring within 12 months of the current theft, a similar pattern emerges, with the exception of the number of firearms stolen. For these repeat thefts, multiple, rather than single, firearm thefts were more common. This result is based on a very small number of cases (4 of 6 incidents), and therefore caution should be exercised when interpreting this finding. A more accurate picture of repeat victimisations will be made possible as additional years of data are accumulated in the NFTMP collection.

Information regarding the firearms stolen in repeat thefts was provided, as well as detail on the circumstances and type of theft for incidents occurring within 12 months of the currently reported incident. Firearms were stolen from 14 of the 16 locations (all of which were from unlawful entry to premises or a vehicle) and most thefts were of single firearms. In total, seven rifles, two air rifles, four shotguns and 10 handguns were taken, but as information on stolen firearms was not available for two locations, this list is not complete. The 10 handguns were taken from the same location, 17 months before the currently reported theft. In the most recent theft, a handgun was stolen from an unlocked vehicle; the owner was found not to be compliant and charged with not properly securing the firearm and in breach of licence conditions.

Recovery of stolen firearms

Firearms were recovered in 77 incidents (12%; Table 43), the same proportion reported for previous analyses. However, this rate of recovery is based on only those incidents where firearms were recovered in the jurisdiction in which the theft occurred, and does not include those that have been transported across state/territory borders and recovered in another jurisdiction. Thus the estimate of a 12% recovery rate for firearms stolen in 2005–06 is likely to be an underestimate of the actual recovery rate.

Recovery rates ranged from none recovered in the ACT to 39 percent of incidents in the Northern Territory; of the other jurisdictions Tasmania reported the highest recovery rate, at one-quarter of all reported incidents. Where information was available on the recovery of firearms from multiple firearm thefts, only a subset (one or two firearms) of the collection stolen were reported as being recovered.

Table 43: Recovery rate of firearms by jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	n	%
NSW	9	7
Vic	12	12
Qld	17	13
WA	21	19
SA	3	3
Tas	10	25
ACT	0	0
NT	5	39
Australia	77	12

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

The likelihood of stolen firearms being recovered decreased as the length of time between the date the incident occurred and the date the incident was reported increased. One-third of the stolen firearms were recovered for incidents reported on the day the theft occurred, dropping to 23 percent if reported the next day and 21 percent if reported in the first week. A tendency for firearms to be recovered if stolen during a general burglary rather than a targeted firearm theft was also apparent (65% of all incidents in which firearms were recovered). This was also the case in 2004–05 but may reflect the greater number of general burglaries than a genuine association. No difference emerged between recovery rates and the number of firearms stolen.

A potential relationship between recovery rate and apprehension of the offender was discussed in the previous report but could not be explored because of the absence of offender data. The 2005–06 dataset includes information on whether an offender has been proceeded against (see next chapter), and based on this additional information, it seems that firearms were more likely to have been recovered if an offender had been apprehended (58%, n=44).

Recovered firearms were known to have been returned to owners in just under two out of five cases (38%, n=29; see Table 44). The return rate in 2004–05 was 50 percent. In some cases, additional information was provided regarding the reasons why firearms had not been returned to owners. These reasons included:

- owner was unlicensed or their licence had expired or been suspended
- owner was deceased or could not be located
- firearm had been modified (for example, one stolen shotgun had its barrel shortened)
- firearm was retained as exhibit property.

In one incident, the firearm owner recovered some of his firearms 'through his own means' and in another the stolen firearm was found after the owner's friend bought the firearm from a person of interest.

Table 44: Firearms returned to owners

Firearms returned	n	%
Returned	29	38
Not returned	30	39
Unknown	18	23
(Total)	(77)	(100)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Prosecution of offenders

Police initiated proceedings against offenders who were involved in the theft of firearms in 14 percent of incidents (Table 45), although charges were eventually dropped in two cases. In 13 additional incidents, police were currently investigating persons of interest or a suspect had been identified but no formal proceedings had taken place. Tasmania recorded the highest rate of offender prosecution (35%), followed by Western Australia (23%) and Queensland (19%).

Table 45: Offenders proceeded against

Jurisdiction	n	%
NSW	8	6
Vic	12	12
Qld	26	19
WA	25	23
SA	1	1
Tas	14	35
ACT	0	0
NT	2	15
Australia	88	14

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Almost two-thirds of cases where an offender was proceeded against were general burglaries (65%, n=57). There was no significant difference in offender prosecution rates for single versus multiple firearm thefts (45 and 43 incidents respectively).

The main offences are listed in Table 46. Since jurisdictional data varied in detail regarding the number of offenders, and the number of charges laid per offence and per offender, the actual total number of charges could not be calculated. Instead, a count was made for each general charge category if it was included in the list of charges. For example, if, in one incident it was stated that the offender or offenders had been charged with aggravated burglary but in another it was stated the offender(s) had been charged with four counts of aggravated burglary, both incidents would register a score of 1 for that particular offence category.

Given that the majority of firearm thefts followed an unlawful entry to private residential or business premises or a vehicle, the most frequent charge laid against offenders was break and enter/burglary (68% of all incidents in which an offender was proceeded against). In 60 percent of such incidents, a charge of theft or stealing was laid and in a further 20 percent of incidents the charge related to unlawful possession of a firearm, which included unlicensed possession and possession of an unregistered firearm. Drug-related offences, accounting for 10 percent of incidents where a charge was laid, were mostly possession of illicit substances or tools for administering such substances.

Table 46: Type of charges laid against offenders[a]

Jurisdiction	n	%
Break and enter/burglary/aggravated burglary	60	68
Theft/stealing	53	60
Unlawful possession of firearm	18	20
Handling/receiving/possession stolen property	13	15
Drug-related	9	10
Assault	7	8
Other[b]	13	15
Unknown	7	8
(Total)	(88)	

a: Percentages calculated as per total number of incidents in which a charge was laid (n=88) and exceed 100

b: Includes weapons offences (n=3) and fraud encumbered goods, wilful damage, possession of ammunition without a licence, suspected proceeds of crime, shoot with intent to murder, maliciously wound a police officer, robbery with wounding, armed robbery, deprivation of liberty, and failure to correctly store firearms (all n=1)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Linking stolen firearms to criminal offences

Information regarding the use of stolen firearms in subsequent crimes was available for 68 percent of incidents (n=456). Firearms stolen in five of these incidents were known to have been used in the course of another crime. This represents one percent of all incidents in which it was known whether the firearms were used in subsequent illegal activity, and 0.8 percent of all incidents reported in 2005–06. The firearms stolen in the original theft incidents were seven rifles, six shotguns, one handgun and one air rifle; three of these incidents were multiple firearm thefts. It was not recorded which of the stolen firearms were used to commit the subsequent offences.

The stolen firearms were used in a range of serious crimes. Firearms stolen from one incident (2 shotguns) were used in two separate crimes; the first a domestic violence dispute and the second in a ram raid involving a stolen vehicle. There was a single case of burglary with assault (with other offences against the person), a single case referring to firearm trafficking offences and another case where a charge of shortening the barrel of a shotgun was brought against the offender. The firearms stolen in the theft incidents preceding these crimes were respectively four rifles and a shotgun; one rifle; and two rifles, two shotguns and an air rifle.

Stolen firearms have also been used in suicide attempts, with two incidents of murder/suicide and one incident of suicide recorded in the previous 18 months data. In 2005–06, a stolen handgun was later used by the offender in an attempted suicide.

Future directions for firearms policy

An emerging picture of firearms theft

This report presents the findings of the analysis of incidents of firearms theft reported in 2005–06. As the third report in a series examining the characteristics of firearms theft, and the second using data from a whole year, results outlined in this report can be compared with previous findings to create a clearer picture of the nature and pattern of firearms thefts in Australia. This picture includes information on the types of firearms stolen in theft incidents and the methods used to steal firearms. The research also assists in monitoring the level of compliance with legislative requirements regarding registration, licensing and storage arrangements. The following summarises the findings from the last 2½ years of data.

Incidence of thefts

The incidence of firearms theft, and the number of firearms stolen, has fallen considerably since the mid 1990s, driven primarily by the introduction of safe storage requirements as part of the 1996 National Firearms Agreement. An estimated 5,170 firearms were stolen in 1995–96, dropping to 3,138 in 1998–99 (Mouzos 2002). During the past 2½ years, this total has halved again with between 1,400 and 1,500 firearms stolen annually.

The firearms

On average, two firearms were stolen per incident, although more than half of the incidents resulted in the theft of a single firearm. Rifles in particular, and shotguns made up the bulk of firearms stolen. Handguns represented less than 10 percent of firearms stolen and there has been a small but noticeable decrease over the three reference periods in the proportion of handguns stolen. The majority of firearms stolen were Category A or B, probably reflecting the greater availability and ownership of these categories of firearm in the community. Most firearms stolen were registered.

The firearm owners

The overwhelming majority of firearm owners held valid licences and had registered their firearms. Category A and B licences were the most common licences held by firearm owners, with an average of one to two licences per owner. Recreational hunting/vermin control, sport/target shooting and primary production were the main reasons cited for firearm acquisition. Most thefts were reported by the firearm owners themselves.

The theft incident

Firearms were largely stolen from private residential premises and, to a lesser extent, business premises. While persons storing firearms in buildings generally made some attempt to secure the premises, the issue of firearms stolen from unsecured premises remains a problem. Of similar concern is the apparent vulnerability of firearms kept in vehicles. In many of these incidents, the vehicle was unlocked and/or the firearm was unsecured at the time of the theft, suggesting that owners do not take as many precautions when transporting their firearms or (when vehicles are locked) cannot secure them as adequately as they can when firearms are stored in buildings.

Offenders relied largely on tools or force to gain access to the building or vehicle and, when they were stored in receptacles (see below), to the firearms themselves. The penetration of receptacles considered compliant with legislative standards suggests that extraneous factors may be affecting the ability of offenders to complete the theft, such as sufficient time to break into the receptacle or improved knowledge of how to do so.

Incidents of targeted firearm theft cannot be definitively identified using the current data but thefts where only firearms were taken could be characterised as such. Four in 10 incidents, regardless of reference period examined, involved the theft of firearms only.

Storage arrangements, compliance and prosecution for non-compliance

While most firearm owners stored their firearms in receptacles, fewer than six in 10 were considered to have complied with legislative requirements regarding storage. Cases of storage non-compliance largely referred to incidents where receptacles were unlocked, firearms were stored in non-approved receptacles (such as cupboards or wardrobes), left in vehicles or were generally unsecured.

Prosecution of non-compliant owners increased over the 2½ year period, following nationwide attention to the prosecution of non-compliance. Charges relating to inadequate storage of firearms comprised the majority of firearm offences laid.

Diversion of stolen firearms

A stolen firearm may be diverted into the illegitimate firearms market, and potentially for employment in illegal activities. Where information is available, it seems that firearms from only a small number of theft incidents were diverted for use in illegal activities, including murder, domestic violence and armed robbery, with stolen firearms also used in incidents of suicide and attempted suicide. These cases, of course, represent diversion only as detected by the police.

The low recovery rate of stolen firearms also promotes the potential entry of firearms into, and their retention within, the illegitimate firearms market. Firearms are usually recovered in just over one in 10 incidents and returned to owners in less than half of those cases. Repeat victimisation as a source of new firearms does not appear to be an emerging issue, with a very low incidence of previous burglary sites being targeted again.

Implications for firearms policy

While the number of firearms reported stolen has decreased considerably over the past 10 years, storage arrangements for firearms remains an issue and arguably has enabled the easy removal of firearms during many theft incidents. Nonetheless, storage compliance has generally improved nationwide, particularly for some jurisdictions. This suggests that recent initiatives to audit firearm owners and to provide education on storage requirements, combined with an increase in the prosecution of non-compliant owners, has had some impact. Many police services have augmented proactive measures such as auditing firearms owners on the firearms they own and how they store them. In one jurisdiction alone, auditing saw an increase in the weapons seized and surrendered, an increase in licence compliance, and pertinent to this discussion, an apparent increase in security compliance as indicated by a rise in the sale of firearms safes. Education programs run by interested parties such as the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia also play a part, such as the ongoing 'Secure your gun – secure your sport' campaign which places regular advertisements in relevant magazines promoting firearm safety and where information can be obtained about storage options.

The effect of increased prosecution of non-compliance is yet to be seen, given its recent occurrence. However, an awareness of the risk of prosecution that firearms owners may face is likely to persuade at least some non-compliant owners to address the security of their firearms. Such a measure could focus on incidents of storage particularly vulnerable to theft, such as the apparent susceptibility of firearms stored or left in vehicles, which were generally either left in an unlocked vehicle or not secured in a locked vehicle.

This report represents the first wave of the National Firearms Theft Monitoring Program. Data from 1 February 2004 to 30 June 2006 are already shaping a relatively consistent picture of firearm theft in Australia and the addition of three more years of data (2006–07, 2007–08 and 2008–09) will help to confirm or refine the pattern of firearms theft already identified. This accumulation of information will provide a solid base from which jurisdictional and nationwide initiatives, strategic planning and legislative reform can be formulated.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Additional tables

Table A1: Type of firearm stolen, by jurisdiction

	Rifle		Shotgun		Air rifle		Handgun		Other		Unknown	
Jurisdiction	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	248	62	105	26	30	7	14	4	3	1	1	<1
Vic	106	50	76	36	19	8	9	4	1	1	0	0
Qld	202	67	63	21	25	8	12	4	0	0	0	0
WA	116	61	36	19	29	14	10	5	0	0	0	0
SA	102	52	62	31	17	9	14	7	3	1	0	0
Tas	66	58	31	27	7	6	6	5	0	0	4	4
ACT	7	78	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
NT	14	74	4	21	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0
Australia	861	60	378	26	127	9	66	5	8	1	5	<1

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Table A2: Category of firearm stolen, by jurisdiction[a]

	A		B		C		H		Unknown	
Jurisdiction	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	248	62	117	29	8	2	14	6	14	4
Vic	153	73	38	18	0	0	9	5	10	5
Qld	186	62	99	33	3	1	12	5	2	1
WA	145	76	34	18	2	1	10	6	0	0
SA	141	72	32	16	9	5	14	7	0	0
Tas	69	61	20	18	0	0	6	5	19	17
ACT	4	44	5	56	0	0	0	0	0	0
NT	7	37	11	58	0	0	1	5	0	0
Australia	953	66	356	25	22	2	65	5	45	3

a: Does not include 3 firearms in which category type was recorded as not applicable. Table excludes Category D as no firearms of this category were stolen in the reference period. Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding. See Appendix B for national firearms classification

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Table A3: Period between incident date and reporting date, by jurisdiction[a]

	Day of incident		1 day		2–7 days		8–14 days		More than 2 weeks	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	44	32	32	23	35	26	8	6	18	13
Vic	28	27	29	28	21	20	7	7	19	18
Qld	28	21	26	20	20	15	6	5	53	40
WA	44	40	20	18	18	16	6	5	23	21
SA	28	31	22	24	19	21	6	7	16	18
Tas	9	23	12	30	7	18	2	5	10	25
ACT	1	25	0	0	2	50	1	25	0	0
NT	5	39	1	8	1	15	1	8	4	31
(Total)	(187)	(30)	(142)	(22)	(124)	(20)	(37)	(6)	(143)	(23)

a: Does not include 1 incident in which incident date was not recorded

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Table A4: Firearm thefts by remoteness and jurisdiction[a]

	Major city		Inner regional		Outer regional		Remote		Very remote	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NSW	41	30	56	41	35	26	3	2	2	2
Vic	52	50	40	39	12	12	0	0	0	0
Qld	31	23	47	35	37	28	9	7	9	7
WA	42	37	22	22	17	15	21	19	9	8
SA	39	43	23	25	15	17	11	12	3	3
Tas	0	0	18	45	18	45	2	5	2	5
ACT	4	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NT	0	0	0	0	5	39	4	31	3	23
Australia	209	33	206	33	139	22	50	8	28	4

a: Excludes incidents which occurred in migratory/offshore areas (n=1) or where postcode location of theft was not known (n=1)

Source: AIC NFTMP 2005–06 [computer file]

Appendix B: Firearms classification, National Firearms Agreement 1996[a]

Category A	air rifles
	rimfire rifles (excluding self-loading)
	single and double barrelled shotguns
Category B	muzzle-loading firearms
	single shot, double barrelled and repeating action centre-fire rifles
	break-action shotguns/rifle combinations
Category C	**Prohibited except for occupational purposes**
	self-loading rimfire rifles with a magazine capacity no greater than 10 rounds
	self-loading shotguns with a magazine capacity no greater than five rounds
	pump action shotguns with a magazine capacity no greater than five rounds
Category D	**Prohibited except for official purposes**
	self-loading centre-fire rifles
	self-loading shotguns and pump action shotguns with a capacity of more than five rounds
	self-loading rimfire rifles with a magazine capacity greater than 10 rounds
Category H	all handguns, including air pistols

a: Firearms categories vary slightly between jurisdictions

Appendix C: Extracts from firearm storage requirements

New South Wales

40 Category A and category B licence requirements

(1) The holder of a category A or category B licence must comply with the following requirements in respect of any firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) when any such firearm is not actually being used or carried, it must be stored in a locked receptacle of a type approved by the Commissioner and that is constructed of hard wood or steel and not easily penetrable,

(b) if such a receptacle weighs less than 150 kilograms when empty, it must be fixed in order to prevent its easy removal,

(c) the locks of such a receptacle must be of solid metal and be of a type approved by the Commissioner,

(d) any ammunition for the firearm must be store in a locked container of a type approved by the Commissioner and that is kept separate from the receptacle containing any such firearm,

(e) such other requirements relating to security and safe storage as may be prescribed by the regulations.

Maximum penalty: 20 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months, or both.

(2) A licensee does not have to comply with the requirements of this section if the licensee satisfies the Commissioner that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements set out in this section.

41 Category C, D and H licence requirements

(1) The holder of a category C, category D or category H licence must comply with the following requirements in respect of any firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) when any such firearm is not actually being used or carried, it must be stored in a locked steel safe of a type approved by the Commissioner and that cannot be easily penetrated,

(b) such a safe must be bolted to the structure of the premises where the firearm is authorised to be kept,

(c) any ammunition for the firearm must be store in a locked container of a type approved by the Commissioner and that is kept separate from the receptacle containing any such firearm,

(d) such other requirements relating to security and safe storage as may be prescribed by the regulations.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units or imprisonment for 2 years, or both.

(2) A licensee does not have to comply with the requirements of this section if the licensee satisfies the Commissioner that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements set out in this section.

Extracted from *Firearms Act 1996* (NSW), ss 40 and 41
From http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/
accessed 16 September 2007

Victoria

Storage requirements

1. Longarm licences for category A and B longarms

(1) The firearm must be stored in a receptacle –

(a) which is constructed of hard wood or steel that is not easily penetrable; and

(b) which, if it weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, must be fixed to the frame of the floor or the wall of the premises where the firearm is kept in such a manner that it is not easily removable; and

(c) which, when any firearm is stored in it, is locked with a lock of sturdy construction.

(2) If more than 15 firearms are stored on the premises where the firearm is stored, the premises must be fitted with an effective alarm system.

(3) Any cartridge ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a locked container separate from the receptacle in which the firearm must be stored.

2. Longarm licences for category C or category D longarms and handgun licences for general category handguns

(1) The firearm must be stored in a steel safe –

(a) which is of a thickness that is not easily penetrable; and

(b) which, if it weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, must be bolted to the structure of the premises where the firearm is authorised to be kept; and

(c) which, when any firearm is stored in it, is locked.

(2) If more than 15 firearms are stored on the premises where the firearm is stored, the premises must be fitted with an effective alarm system.

(2A) The key to the container in which the firearm is stored must –

(a) be carried by the holder of the licence; or

(b) be kept securely in a separate room from the container – when the container is not being accessed.

(3) Any cartridge ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a locked container separate from the safe in which the firearm must be stored.

3. Firearms collectors licences

(1) The firearm must be stored –

(a) on premises or a part of premises which is a permanent building with secure locks on all openings; and

(b) in a room –

(i) the walls of which are solid enough to be a substantial physical barrier to entry; and

(ii) any window of which is covered by security bars; and

(iii) any door to which is –

(A) of a solid material, or is covered by steel sheet or reinforced by firmly fixed steel mesh; and

(B) fitted with a lock of the dead latch type or an extra hasp or barrel bolt and padlock which is of such a nature as to reduce the possibility of the door being sprung from the jamb; and

(C) hinged with concealed hinge pins or with hinge pins which are welded to prevent the pins being removed; and

(c) in a container –

(i) which is made of steel or any other robust material; and

(ii) which must be firmly fixed to the wall or floor of the room; and

(iii) the doors of which are attached with concealed or welded hinges; and

(iv) which, when any firearm is stored in it, is locked with a lock which is so constructed as to prevent the doors of the container being easily sprung.

(2) If –

(a) in the case of an antique handgun, more than 15 antique handguns are stored on the premises where the handgun is stored; or

(b) in any other case, more than 5 firearms are stored on the premises where the firearm is stored –

the premises must be fitted with an effective alarm system of a class approved by the Chief Commissioner.

(2A) The key to the container in which the firearm is stored must –

(a) be carried by the holder of the licence; or

(b) be kept securely in a separate room from the container –

when the container is not being accessed.

(3) The firearm must not be removed from the container except by the holder of the licence.

(4) Any bolt or firing pin which is required to be stored separately from the firearm it is apart of, must be stored in the same manner as is required for the storage of a firearm under a longarm licence for a category A or B longarm.

(3A). Firearms collectors licences-section 122 (1A)

The firearm must be stored in a receptacle –

(a) which is constructed or hard wood or steel that is not easily penetrable; and

(b) which, if it weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, must be fixed to the frame of the floor or the wall of the premises where the firearm is kept in such a manner that is not easily removable; and

(c) which when any firearm is stored in it is locked with a lock of sturdy construction.

4. Firearms heirlooms licences

(1) The firearm must be stored in a receptacle –

(a) which is constructed of hard wood or steel that is not easily penetrable; and

(b) which, if it weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, must be fixed to the frame of the floor or the wall of the premises where the firearm is kept in such a manner that is not easily removable; and

(c) which, when any firearm is stored in it, is locked with a lock of sturdy construction.

(2) Despite paragraph (1) of this item, the firearm may be displayed by being fixed to the wall of a room in a manner that makes it unable to be readily removed.

5. Firearms ammunition collectors licences

(1) The ammunition must be stored in a receptacle –

(a) which is constructed of hard wood or steel that is not easily penetrable; and

(b) which, if it weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, must be fixed to the frame of the floor or the wall of the premises where the ammunition is kept in such a manner that is not easily removable; and

(c) which, when any ammunition is stored in it, is locked with a lock made of sturdy construction.

Extracted from *Firearms Act 1996* (Vic), sch 4
From http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au
accessed 16 September 2007

Queensland

60 Storage of weapon not in licensee's physical possession – secure storage facilities

(1) This section does not apply –

(a) to the extent that this regulation otherwise provides; or

(b) to a weapon possessed under an armourer's, collector's, dealer's or theatrical ordnance supplier's licence or a security licence (organisation); or

(c) to a weapon to which section 60A applies; or

(d) if section 60A does not apply to a weapon that is in or on a vehicle and section 61 is complied with.

(2) A person who possesses a weapon must, when the weapon is not in the person's physical possession, store it unloaded in a locked container with the bolt removed or the action broken.

(3) The container must –

(a) for a category D, H or R weapon – be a rigid structure made of solid steel and be bolted to the frame or floor of a permanent building; or

(b) for another weapon –

(i) be a rigid structure made of solid steel or solid timber; and

(ii) if the container weighs less than 150kg – be securely fixed to the frame or floor of a permanent building.

(4) The container must also –

(a) have a sturdy combination lock, keyed lock or keyed padlock; and

(b) always be locked (other than for the time necessary to insert or remove a weapon, or something else, for a proper purpose).

(5) However, a person who possesses a weapon must, when the weapon is not in the person's physical possession, store it in the way provided in sections 39 to 43, if there are, at the premises where the weapon is, more than –

(a) for category A, B, C or D weapons – a total of 30 of any of those weapons; or

(b) 30 category H weapons.

(6) To prevent any doubt, it is declared that subsection (2) does not apply while a weapon is in the physical possession of a body's representative endorsed on the licence, or another individual, under the authority of a licence held by the body.

Extracted from *Weapons Regulation 1996* (Qld), s 60
From http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/W/WeaponsR96.pdf
accessed 16 September 2007

Western Australia

11A Storage security requirements

(1) A person entitled to possess firearms or ammunition of any kind is to ensure that the firearms or ammunition are stored in accordance with this regulation.

(2) Firearms and ammunition are to be stored in a locked cabinet or container that at least meets the specifications described in Schedule 4 or in such other way as is approved.

(3) A cabinet or container that can be unlocked with a key is to be regarded as unlocked if the key is left in the lock or is otherwise accessible where the cabinet or container is located.

[(4)–(6) repealed]

(7) A magazine is not to contain any ammunition when it is stored.

(8) Ammunition is not to be stored in a cabinet or container in which a firearm is stored unless the ammunition is in another locked metal container in which no firearm is stored and which is securely affixed so as to prevent its removal from the cabinet or container.

(9) Despite subregulation (8), propellant that is not incorporated in a cartridge is not to be stored, whether or not it is in another container, in a container or cabinet that contains any ammunition, firearm, or primer.

(10) The requirements of this regulation are in addition to, not instead of, any requirements under the Explosives and Dangerous Goods Act 1961

[Regulation 11A inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p.6801; amended in Gazette 24 Sep 1997 p.5367.]

Schedule 4 – Specifications for storage cabinets or containers

1. Construction

(1) The cabinet or container is to be constructed of mild steel that is 2 mm thick.

(2) A joint between 2 faces that is butt welded is to have a continuous weld along the full length of the joint.

(3) A joint where the edge of one face is folded over the edge of another face is to be stitch welded, with welds of at least 20 mm in length at intervals of not more than 100 mm between welds.

(4) Spot welding is not to be used on the joints between faces.

(5) The cabinet or container is to be so designed that no firearm or ammunition within it can be removed from it when it is locked.

(6) In this clause –

"face" means a side, the top, or the bottom, of the cabinet or container.

[Clause 1 inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p. 6847.]

2. Doors

(1) Doors are to be recessed into the surrounding frame with margins of not more than 4 mm.

(2) Each edge of the door and door frame is to be internally supported and have a return of at least 10 mm.

(3) The cabinet or container is to have an internal stop of at least 10 mm against which each edge of the door, other than the hinged edge, closes.

(4) The supports and stops required by subclauses (2) and (3) are to be welded at the corners.

[Clause 2 inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p. 6847.]

3. Hinging mechanisms

(1) Hinge protection is to be provided in such a way that, if the hinges are removed, the door of the cabinet or container remains in place and locked.

(2) If the hinged edge of the door is not longer than 1 metre, 2 hinges are required on it, and if it is longer than 1 metre, an additional hinge is required for each additional 500 mm or part thereof.

(3) If 2 hinges are required, the distance between them is to be not less than one-third of the length of the hinged edge.

(4) If more than 2 hinges are required the distance between adjacent hinges is to be the same and that is also to be the distance from each of the outermost hinges to the nearest end of the hinged edge.

(5) If a spindle is used instead of hinges, it is to extend the full length of the hinged edge of the door and is to be attached to the door by welds the number and placement of which comply with the requirements of subclauses (2), (3), and (4) for the number and placement of hinges.

(6) If, instead of using hinges, the doors swings on a spindle or on pivots not extending the full length of the hinged edge of the door, the cabinet or container is to incorporate a return protecting the hinged edge, along its full length, against the use of a jemmy.

[Clause 3 inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p. 6847–8.]

4. Locks and locking points

(1) If the swinging edge of the door is not longer than 500 mm, one lock is required with a locking point half way along that edge.

(2) If the swinging edge is longer than 500 mm but not longer than 1.5m –

(a) 2 locks are required each with a separate locking point along the swinging edge; and

(b) the distance between the 2 locking points is to be not less than one-third of the length of the swinging edge.

(3) If the swinging edge is longer than 1.5m –

(a) for each additional 500 mm or part thereof there is to be an additional lock with a separate locking point along the swinging edge; and

(b) the distance between adjacent locking points is to be the same and that is also to be the distance from each of the outermost locking points to the nearest end of the swinging edge.

(4) It is sufficient compliance with subclause (2) if, when the swinging edge is longer than 500 mm but not longer than 1.5 m, there is one lock with at least 3 separate locking points.

(5) Each lock is to have a 5 pin mechanism that deadlocks the bolt in the locked position until it is properly unlocked.

(6) If the locking bolt is designed to be released by a handle or lever, the design is to be such that, if the handle or lever is forcibly removed while the door is locked, the bolt remains in the locked position.

(7) The cabinet or container is to be fitted with a protective structure to guard against the forcible removal of any lock.

(8) In this clause –

"locking point" means the point at which the bolt locks the door to the cabinet or container, preventing the door from opening;

"swinging edge" means the edge of the door opposite the hinged edge.

[Clause 4 inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p. 6848–9.]

5. Anchoring

(1) The cabinet or container is to be securely anchored from the inside at 2 points on each of 2 separate surfaces to 2 immovable structural surfaces by means of 8 mm x 75 mm masonry fixing bolts or coach screws, as is appropriate.

(2) At each anchor point the cabinet or container is to be reinforced with a 40 mm x 40 mm x 2 mm metal plate, or a 40 mm x 2 mm metal washer, fitted between the surface of the cabinet or container and the head of the bolt or coach screw.

[Clause 5 inserted in Gazette 6 Dec 1996 p. 6849.]

Extracted from *Firearms Regulations 1974* (WA), s 11A and sch 4
From http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/statutes/regs.nsf/3c0405a7241b5fe648256810003b1b1d/797abddd48538ed248256ff10002c157?OpenDocument
http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/statutes/regs.nsf/3c0405a7241b5fe648256810003b1b1d/f44f52631794506448256ff10002c11e?OpenDocument
accessed 16 September 2007

South Australia

29 Security of firearms

(1) A person (not being a dealer) who has possession of a class A or B firearm must keep the firearm secured by –

(a) securely attaching and locking it to part of the building in which it is kept; or

(b) keeping it in a locked cabinet made of hardwood or steel that is securely attached to the building in which it is kept; or

(c) keeping it in a locked safe made of steel that is securely attached to the building in which it is kept; or

(d) keeping it in a locked steel and concrete strong room; or

(e) such other method as is approved by the Registrar.

(2) A person (not being a dealer) who has possession of a class C, D or H firearm must keep the firearm secured by –

(a) keeping it in a locked safe made of steel that is securely attached to the building in which it is kept; or

(b) keeping it in a locked steel and concrete strong room; or

(c) such other method as is approved by the Registrar.

(3) A cabinet or safe referred to in subregulation (1) or (2) must –

(a) be fitted with fittings and locks that prevent it from being easily forced open; and

(b) be made of material of sufficient thickness to prevent it being easily broken, open or destroyed.

(4) Despite subregulations (1)(c) and (2)(a), a safe need not be attached to the building if its mass when empty is 150 kilograms or more.

Extracted from *Firearms Regulations 1993* (SA), s29
From http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/R/FIREARMS%20REGULATIONS%201993/CURRENT/1993.68.UN.PDF accessed 16 September 2007

Tasmania

85 Category A and B firearms licence requirements

(1) The holder of a Category A firearms licence or Category B firearms licence must comply with the following requirements in respect of the storage of any firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) if the firearm is not being used, it must be stored in a locked receptacle of an approved type that is –

(i) constructed of hard wood, metal, concrete or any other approved material; and

(ii) not easily penetrable;

(b) a receptacle that weighs less than 150 kg when empty must be fixed to a wall or floor in a manner that prevents easy removal;

(c) the locks of a receptacle must be –

(i) of solid metal; and

(ii) of an approved type;

(d) any ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a locked container of an approved type that is kept separate from the receptacle containing the firearm;

(e) any other prescribed requirement relating to security and safe storage.

Penalty:
Fine not exceeding 20 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or both.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a licensee if the licensee satisfies the Commissioner that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements specified in this section.

86 Category C, D and H firearms licence requirements

(1) The holder of a Category C firearms licence, Category D firearms licence or Category H firearms licence must comply with the following requirements in respect of the storage of any firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) if the firearm is not being used, it must be stored in a locked receptacle of an approved type of metal, concrete or any other approved material that is not easily penetrated;

(b) the receptacle must be bolted to a wall or floor;

(c) any ammunition for the firearm must be stored in a locked container of an approved type that is kept separate from the receptacle containing the firearm;

(d) any other prescribed requirement relating to security and safe storage.

Penalty:
Fine not exceeding 50 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years, or both.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a licensee if the licensee satisfies the Commissioner that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements specified in this section.

Extracted from *Firearms Act 1996* (Tas), ss 85 and 86
From http://www.thelaw.tas.gov.au/
accessed 16 September 2007

Northern Territory

Schedule 2

Regulation 21: Storage and safekeeping requirements for Category A and B firearms

1. The sides and doors are to be constructed of solid steel –

   (a) that has a minimum thickness of 3 mm; or

   (b) that has a minimum thickness of 2 mm if the method of construction ensures rigidity or additional reinforcing to prevent distortion has been included.

2. All edges are to be rolled or folded.

3. The door is to be recessed or flush fitted and is to be sized to prevent leverage points.

4. All hinges are to secured so that the door cannot be detached by removing the pins, internal or trap-type hinges being preferred.

5. There are at least 2 bolt-down points.

6. There is to be one locking point.

7. There is to be sufficient reinforcing to prevent distortion of the door if a forced entry were to be attempted.

8. If a padlock is used, it is to be covered so as to prevent the lock being cut or broken off.

Schedule 3

Regulation 22: Storage and safekeeping requirements for category C, D and H firearms

1. The safe or other receptacles is to be constructed of solid steel –
   (a) that has a minimum thickness of 6 mm in the sides and the door; or
   (b) that, subject to inspection and approval by the Commissioner, has minimum thicknesses of 3 mm in the sides and 6 mm in the door.
2. All hinges are to be non-removable and are to be constructed in the same manner as safe-style hinges.
3. Locks are to be internal and may be combination locks, key locks or electronic locks or a mixture of 2 or more of those kinds of locks.
4. A safe or other receptacle for the storage of category C or D firearms is to have at least 2 locks.
5. A safe or other receptacle for the storage of category H firearms is to have –
   (a) at least one lock; or
   (b) if the swinging edge is greater than 500 mm – at least 2 locks.
6. Alternatively, category H firearms may be stored in a compartment inside a receptacle that complies the requirements specified in Schedule 2 (a "Schedule 2 receptacle") if the compartment –
   (a) is a separate box inside the Schedule 2 receptacle;
   (b) has a thickness of solid steel that is at least equal to the thickness of the steel in the Schedule 2 receptacle;
   (c) can only be accessed if the door to the Schedule 2 receptacle is opened first;
   (d) is designed so that, in combination with the Schedule 2 receptacle, it provides a double thickness of steel on all sides.

Extracted from *Firearms Regulations* (NT), ss 21 and 22
From http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/legislation/current.html
accessed 16 September 2007

Australian Capital Territory

63 Category A and B firearms licence requirements

(1) The holder of a category A or category B licence shall comply with the following requirements in respect of a firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) when the firearm is not being used or carried, it shall be stored in a locked receptacle–

(i) of a type approved by the registrar; and

(ii) that is constructed of hard wood or steel so as not to be easily penetrable; and

(iii) if the receptacle weighs less than 150kg when empty – fixed in position to prevent its easy removal; and

(iv) secured by locks of solid metal of a type approved by the registrar;

(b) any ammunition for the firearm shall be stored in a locked container of a type approved by the registrar and that is kept separate from the receptacle containing the firearm;

(c) the other requirements relating to security and safe storage that are prescribed.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units.

(2) A licensee need not comply with the requirements of this section if the licensee satisfies the registrar that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements set out in this section.

64 Category C, D and H firearms licence requirements

(1) The holder of a category C, category D or category H licence shall comply with the following requirements in respect of a firearm to which the licence applies:

(a) when the firearm is not being used or carried, it shall be stored in a locked steel safe –

(i) of a type approved by the registrar that can not be easily penetrated; and

(ii) bolted to the structure of the premises where the firearm is authorised to be kept;

(b) any ammunition for the firearm shall be stored in a locked container of a type approved by the registrar and that is kept separate from the receptacle containing the firearm;

(c) the other requirements relating to security and safe storage that are prescribed.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units.

(2) A licensee need not comply with the requirements of this section if the licensee satisfies the registrar that the licensee has provided alternative arrangements for the storage of firearms in the licensee's possession that are of a standard not less than the requirements set out in this section.

Extracted from *Firearms Act 1996* (ACT), ss 63 and 64
From http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/1996-74/default.asp
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The National Firearms Theft Monitoring Program (NFTMP) has been established as an annual monitoring and reporting program, administered by the Australian Institute of Criminology. This is the first of the annual monitoring reports, reporting on thefts recorded by police in 2005–06. In this period, 1,445 firearms were reported stolen, a slight decrease from the previous year. Most of the owners were licensed appropriately, and their stolen firearms were registered, but a substantial proportion were not stored securely. Stolen firearms present a risk for movement into the illegitimate market and use in other criminal activities.