

MEDIA RELEASE

David Campbell MP
Minister for Transport and Roads



BAN ON 'REPAIRABLE WRITE-OFFS' TO HIT CAR RE-BIRTHING RACKETEERS

Thursday, 8 April 2010

The NSW Government will introduce legislation to ban the re-registration of all 'repairable written-off' vehicles to clamp down on car rebirthing, Minister for Transport and Roads David Campbell announced today.

Mr Campbell said the legislation will mean that write-offs will no longer be able to be sold at auctions, where the vehicles can then be re-birthed and on-sold to unsuspecting consumers.

"There is a black market for purchasing written-off vehicles at auctions, then using stolen parts to rebirth and register the car, to be sold for a tidy profit," Mr Campbell said.

"This isn't being done by licensed repairers - in most instances it's not financially viable for genuine repairers to repair these cars using legitimate parts.

"In many cases, it's being done by unscrupulous operators in backyards and workshops using stolen parts, who then sell the vehicles to unwary motorists.

"Some consumers are being taken for a ride - motorists might be driving around in what's effectively a stolen vehicle.

"More importantly, many of these vehicles have had dodgy repairs which can mask major structural damage. It's extremely unsafe.

"Car re-birthing is a significant problem which has been known to have links to organised crime syndicates.

"Today's announcement will put a massive dent in these illegal operations.

"It's estimated that as many as six out of ten of the 20,537 repairable written-off vehicles presented for re-registration in 2009 posed serious questions about the origin of the parts used to repair them.

"Around 19,000 vehicles were stolen in NSW in the 2008-09 financial year - of these, around 5,700 have not been recovered.

"Today's announcement means any car which is written off will not be able to be re-registered even if it can be repaired."

Mr Campbell said the NSW Government made the decision to ban repairable write-offs after a discussion paper was released for consultation in August last year.

“What we found was that consumers – as well as legitimate car dealers and repairers – wanted better protections in place,” he said.

“NSW is the first state to introduce this ban on repairable write-offs, and we would encourage other states to follow our lead and implement similar laws.

“There will be very limited exemptions to the new laws – for some vehicles written off because of hail damage, and for some classic antique cars.

“We will also strengthen written-off vehicle notification requirements – for example, vehicles currently being sent to a scrap yard for crushing are not required to be registered on the Written-off Vehicle Register (WOVR) and this presents an additional opportunity for rebirthing.”

Mr Campbell said the new laws are on top of the RTA’s Vehicle History Check service launched last year.

“The RTA’s Vehicle History Check service allows potential buyers to check whether a used car has ever been written-off anywhere in Australia,” he said.

“The service also provides customers with details of a car’s history including the number of previous owners, when it was first registered in NSW and odometer readings.

“All you need is the car’s registration plate details, vehicle type and the last four digits of the VIN/chassis number,

“It’s a simple check you can do on the RTA website for under \$20.”

The new laws will be implemented following stringent legislative change and will take effect in August this year.