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**CARAVAN**  
WORLD



# PROTECTING *YOUR PRIDE AND JOY*

*Theft is a growing problem for caravanners in Australia. Here we talk to a leading innovator in caravan anti-theft devices about how to secure your van and campsite against opportunists.*

Words Tyler Jefferson Pics Supplied



Caravanners invest a lot into their vans, gear and tow rigs. It may not be pleasant to think about, but when tens of thousands of dollars of hardware are just sitting there, on wheels and ready to move, theft is a massive hazard. Little could be more devastating than returning to your campground to find your pride and joy missing – along with all of the essential gear you had inside it!

Theft of caravans, or from inside of caravans, is a major problem in Australia. We have one of the highest rates of vehicle theft in the western world, and in many ways a caravan is an easier, and often more valuable, target than a car.

However, with a few simple precautions and some of the right gear, you can prevent thieves from bringing your travels to a premature end.

There are many things that you can do to deter or prevent theft. Some are simple,

others more advanced, but everyone should be taking at least some basic precautions.

There are options to suit every budget, but when it comes to your pride and joy, spending a little now could save you an awful lot of money and heartache later.

Chris Michel, Managing Director of Sunseeker Caravans, identified the vulnerability of caravans to theft as a major problem in the early days of the company's existence.

"It came off the back of starting our business," Chris said. "We had put everything into it and, financially, we had everything on the line. It would have been very easy for smash and grab thieves to break open the gates and make off with them. That would have crippled us, right at the start of our business."

He explained that many of us would be surprised just how powerful the tools available to thieves can be.

"I think a lot of people don't understand how much lithium-powered portable angle grinders changed the world. They give thieves incredible power to cut through a lock quickly, and we needed a solution that could protect a caravan from that.

"It's while I was very paranoid about that, that I actually saw an alarmed padlock on a friend's bench. That inspired me to start drawing up my own designs specifically for caravans, and my friend put me in touch with the manufacturer, Kovix, to make them a reality."

The result was 18 months of development and prototyping to produce alarmed locking systems specifically for caravans, and the launch of Chris's accessory business Protrek.

"For the Kovix KTR-18 Alarmed Trailer Lock, we came up with a very versatile solution, which can fit multiple tow couplings so that they suit every type of caravan," Chris said.

"We build them from the best materials available to make them as difficult to cut as possible, of course. We also include an anti-cut sleeve around the pin, which will spin to make it more difficult to cut into the pin beneath."

In their own tests, Chris said that Protrek found angle grinder blades shattered before they could cut through.

The locks are also designed in such a way that a thief would have to cut all the way through in at least two locations to get it off.

However, the biggest innovation is the inclusion of a motion-sensing alarm. While the alarm certainly draws attention, it's also a whole other layer of deterrent. As Chris put it, "With 120 decibels of alarm screaming in your ear, it would be pretty difficult to finish cutting through one of our locks."



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Motors are easy pickings without protection; Protrek collaborate with Kovix; The locks suit Cruisemaster DO35s; Security wherever you pull up



“We’re very fortunate to be able to work with Kovix, who have 10 years’ history manufacturing motion sensor alarmed locks”



**TOP TO BOTTOM** For a family brand with family values, safety and security come first; Loose items may just ‘walk off’; If the power goes, what then?



## MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS

Of course, a lock on your caravan’s hitch isn’t the only anti-theft deterrent you should consider. Most crime is opportunistic, so the more opportunities you remove, the safer you are. This can be as simple as parking your caravan somewhere visible at free camps or caravan parks and becoming acquainted with your campsite neighbours. If they know who owns the van, they’ll be more likely to stop strangers from messing with it. And the visibility alone will deter plenty of thieves.

However, if it’s a bit of isolation that you’re looking for when picking a camp spot – and who could blame you – there are plenty of other options. First, remove temptation by locking up your gear before you leave the RV for any length of time. Fishing gear, tools, even something as simple as camp chairs can be walked away if left out where anyone can grab them. Locking items like that in your caravan’s storage bins will go a long way to keeping thieves from becoming interested in your campsite.

Sadly, no matter how well designed, a caravan will never be as secure as a brick and mortar building, so do the same with high-value, portable items inside. Leaving laptops, phones, tablets and other items lying out on the benches or beds may result in you

returning to camp to find a broken window and your beloved gadgets missing.

When Chris and his family hitch up their own van and hit the road, they like to take plenty of toys with them. Motorbikes, electric bikes, jet skis, generators and more would provide plenty of value for opportunistic thieves if he didn’t have a way to secure his campsite. That’s why Protrek offers a range of cable locks with the same motion sensor alarms as on the tow hitch locks.

Ease of application is also a priority. Security devices won’t do you any good if they’re so cumbersome that you get into bad habits and cut corners on using them. That’s one of the advantages of an alarmed system; it’s quick and easy to set up but gives greater security than a much heavier lock without an alarm. Chris says it’s a matter of seconds to loop a few of these cable locks through everything, especially as they can be combined together for extra length.

“We had things stolen from our campsites before I started using these locks, but not since,” Chris told *Caravan World*.

As Chris and the team at Sunseeker Caravans are a family business, and caravanners themselves, it was important that their range be custom made for Aussie caravanners’ needs.



“We’re very fortunate to be able to work with Kovix, who have 10 years’ history manufacturing motion sensor alarmed locks,” Chris said.

“But we’re very passionate about designing all our caravans at Sunseeker from the ground up and wanted to do the same with the Protek range. More than half of the Kovix locks that Protek sells in Australia have been invented specifically for us and the Australian market.”

That includes a design that won’t embarrass you in a caravan park. The motion sensors in Protek’s locks are quite sensitive, so the team had to design in a warning and delay before the alarm goes off, so that a dog brushing against the lock won’t wake up the whole caravan park.

After the alarm has started, if the motion stops, the alarm will too. Then it simply resets, so that if anyone continues to try to tamper with it, they’ll continue to be blasted with a very unpleasant, and attention-grabbing, 120 decibels.

It was a different kind of thief who reminded Chris about the importance of campsite security more recently, though.

“I heard a clinking sound one morning, so I stepped out of the caravan, only to find my

10-year old son and his friend sampling their first taste of beer out of my esky!” Chris said.

“That was a laugh, but it also led to my discovering that our cable locks will fit through the zipper of an esky, or tent or anything else that you’d want to secure with an alarmed cable lock.”

Chris is obviously a real believer in the importance of alarmed locks to protect your valuables. He certainly backs his own products to the hilt. Protek offers a 12-month warranty on all of their products, a 100 per cent satisfaction guarantee with refunds offered if you’re unhappy, and a support team to help with any technical issues.

“We’re a small family business on the Sunshine Coast, so we’re very easy to deal with. This isn’t some monolithic corporation that’s tough to get in touch with, and everything we sell is designed to be easy to service, so that we can help you.”

### GETTING YOUR VAN BACK

Once loose items in your campsite are secure and your caravan is protected with a hitch or wheel lock – preferably an alarmed one – the next thing to consider is a solution for if the worst still happens. If all of your deterrents and security devices are still not enough, and

a thief makes off with your palace on wheels, there are a few high-tech solutions to help the police bring it back.

Datadots are a cutting-edge idea from an Aussie company called DataDot Technology. These barely visible dots, the size of a grain of sand, carry ownership information that can help police return a caravan to its rightful owners. Their small size and relative cheapness mean they can be placed in multiple locations all over a caravan, tow rig or anything else, really.

Another high-tech option is a GPS tracker, available from dozens of manufacturers. Most of these work in the same way, with a smartphone-sized device that you position in a hidden spot inside your van. Then, using a smartphone app or a paired device, you can track your caravan’s location at any time.

All of us should be using multiple solutions for our caravan’s security, from deterrence, through to locking devices and onto a tracking or ID solution for if the worst happens. With the amounts we invest into our vans and gear, it would be a tragedy to cut corners on the things that keep them safe. 📍

# YOUR COMPLETE SECURITY SYSTEM



You can now get the latest in alarmed anti-theft maximum security for your caravan.

The Kovix KTR-18 Alarmed Trailer Lock suits the most common caravan hitches including DO35, 50mm ball and Treg. Practically unbreakable, it houses a very loud 120dB motion sensor alarm made to scare off any thief. Discover the full range of Kovix Alarmed Padlocks, Cable Locks and Marine Locks at the website below.