



Customs Officer Bernard Kelly keeps an eye on the hash-laden Cadillac after it was unloaded from its container.

A two-and-a-quarter-tonne example of American automotive refinement went under the auctioneer's hammer in Sydney, at the end of April. It was a 1947 two-door Cadillac convertible, a Model 62 in Kentucky blue with a cream soft top. It is 5.6 metres long and had 49,000 miles on its odometer. The radio had been taken from it and the missing hubcap will be difficult to replace.

It was sold to a middle-aged gentleman from Sydney for \$13,200 and we, the public, get the benefit of the sale.

The Cadillac was seized in June 1984 by the AFP and was auctioned by the Department of Local Government and Administrative Services (DOLGAS). The proceeds from the sale went into consolidated revenue.

The car was owned by a 44-year-old American man named Dirk Schonder who tried to smuggle 34 kilos of block hashish into Australia in a secret compartment he had built into the car behind the rear seat. The AFP was given a tip off and arrested Schonder shortly after he and the car arrived in Australia in June. The car was seized.

Schonder travelled from his Hawaii home to Bombay, India, in January 1984, and then on to Delhi. In March he bought the Cadillac for 7,000 rupees,

about \$A700, from a Delhi car yard. He bought 37 blocks of hashish in Delhi and then drove to Madras where he made arrangements to ship the car and its hidden hashish to Sydney. Schonder was apparently confident of his concealment technique as driving a convertible Cadillac through India would hardly be travelling incognito.

The car arrived at Darling Harbour Sydney on 18 June 1984, and straight away our Drug Operations Branch officers and Customs officers took it away for an examination. The hashish was removed and a substitute made and the Cadillac was returned to the wharf where it was placed under surveillance. A couple of days later Schonder collected the car from the wharf. He must have been a fatalist because, having joined the NRMA a few days earlier, he called upon their services en route from the wharf when the Cadillac expired in a pool of transmission oil along Park Street in the city. The car was towed to a house in Paddington where Schonder was staying.

When there was no movement of the drugs substitute for a couple of days, Drug Operations officers decided to move and arrested Schonder for the hashish importation.

Schonder pleaded guilty to importing and possessing the hashish and received 14 years hard labour with a six-year non-parole period. The Cadillac was subsequently seized under a section of the Customs Act which allows the AFP to seize and dispose of property which has been used for drug trafficking.

Being subject to the Customs Act, seizure and disposal of the car did not need the provisions of the Proceeds of Crime Bill (see article on Page 5).

Quite a lot of public interest has been shown in the Cadillac since DOLGAS first put the car up for sale through tender. Over 50 tender forms were requested from all parts of Australia and more than 40 people had inspected the car. It had been the subject of a short segment on evening television news.

Interest in the Cadillac had not been enough to generate an offer acceptable to DOLGAS. They then decided to put the Cadillac up for public auction on 30 April in Sydney.

Now if Elvis Presley's much later model Cadillac, which had bullet hole damage, fetched \$99,000 at a recent auction in Sydney, what must a '47 model with this one's history be worth? At \$13,200 it was a steal!