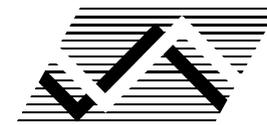


NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

NSW Attorney General's Department



DR. DON WEATHERBURN
DIRECTOR

In reply please quote:

21 May 2008

Media Release: Community Supervision and Rehabilitation

10.30am, 21st May, 2008

Placing offenders on good behaviour bonds under supervision in the community does not reduce the risk of re-offending, according to new research by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

The Bureau tracked 4,432 offenders placed on a supervised bond in 2000 and compared them to 8,406 offenders placed on an unsupervised bond. The study controlled for other factors likely to affect the risk of re-offending (e.g. age, gender, offence type, prior criminal record).

No differences were found between the two groups in the likelihood of reconviction in the ensuing six-year period.

In a second related study, designed to shed light on the first, the Bureau interviewed 155 Probation and Parole Officers to identify impediments to the rehabilitation of offenders in the community.

Officers were first asked to rate the importance of various services to offender rehabilitation. They were then asked a series of questions about access to those services.

The three services most frequently cited as very important or extremely important to offender rehabilitation were:

1. Drug and alcohol treatment (cited by 98 per cent as 'very' or 'extremely' important)
2. Mental health treatment (cited by 94 per cent as 'very' or 'extremely' important)
3. Secure and affordable accommodation (cited by 91 per cent as 'very' or 'extremely' important)

Fifty-seven per cent of those surveyed cited the suitable services for alcohol and other drugs in their area as a 'fairly big' or 'very big' problem. Fifty-nine per cent cited lack of suitable mental health services as a 'fairly big' or 'very big' problem in their geographical area. Seventy-seven per cent cited lack of stable accommodation as a 'very' big problem for their clients.

Commenting on the findings, the director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that they were consistent with the results of other similar overseas studies.

"Overseas research has shown that community supervision can be effective in reducing re-offending but only when it is combined with measures that address the underlying causes of involvement in crime," he said.

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