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NEW SOUTH WALES RECORDED CRIME STATISTICS QUARTERLY UPDATE: JUNE 1999

This paper presents a brief overview of the current crime trends in NSW. In the annual report *NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 1998* (published in February 1999), the Bureau reported a significant upward trend in seven of the sixteen major offence categories which were tested for trend. The recorded crime figures recently extracted from COPS for the June 1999 quarterly update show that there are now no significant upward trends in NSW crime rates.

OVERVIEW

All of the seven offence categories which showed significant upward trends in the 1998 annual report, namely *assault, robbery with a non-firearm weapon, break and enter (dwelling), break and enter (non-dwelling), steal from motor vehicle, steal from dwelling* and *malicious damage to property*, are now stable.

The significant downward trends in the *sexual offence* categories noted in the annual report are continuing. In addition, the categories of *motor vehicle theft* and *robbery with a firearm*, which were previously stable, are now exhibiting a significant downward trend.

As the quarterly criminal incident data are subject to updating, and some offences traditionally trend upwards in the latter months of the year, these provisional trends should be viewed with some caution. However, it is clear that the pattern of general improvement in NSW recorded crime rates foreshadowed in the 1998 Recorded Crime Statistics annual report has occurred.

A copy of the June quarterly crime statistics report is attached for your information. For further information, please contact the Statistical Services Unit of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

SUMMARY OF TRENDS

The trends reported in this section cover a twenty-four month period from July 1997 to June 1999. A statistical test for an upward or downward trend was applied to the

monthly numbers of recorded criminal incidents over this time period for each of the major offence categories (in the case of murder, the statistical test for trend was applied to the monthly numbers of victims over the same period). In the following summary the bracketed figures denote the percentage change in the total number of recorded criminal incidents between the consecutive twelve-month periods July 1997 to June 1998 and July 1998 to June 1999.

Significant downward trends

There was a statistically significant downward trend in the monthly numbers of recorded criminal incidents for the following offences:

- sexual assault (down by 17.3%)
- indecent assault, act of indecency and other sexual offences (down by 19.7%)
- robbery with a firearm (down by 28.7%)
- motor vehicle theft (down by 13.9%).

Offences where there was no upward or downward trend

There was no statistically significant generally upward or downward trend in the monthly numbers of recorded criminal incidents for any of the following offences:

- murder
- assault
- robbery without a weapon

- robbery with a weapon not a firearm
- break and enter – dwelling
- break and enter – non-dwelling
- steal from motor vehicle
- steal from retail store
- steal from dwelling
- steal from person
- fraud
- malicious damage to property.

Significant upward trends

There were no offences which showed statistically significant upward trends in the monthly numbers of recorded criminal incidents over this period.

TRENDS IN POLICING ACTIVITY

The question arises as to why the trends noted in this brief have occurred. It is not possible to answer this question with any certainty, but it is known that the NSW police have been targeting repeat offenders for arrest in a bid to reduce crime. Although the recorded crime statistics presented in this paper cannot provide direct evidence of this change in policing focus, there is some evidence in the significant upward trend in the recorded number of offences against justice procedures (such as *breach of bail conditions*) in the twenty-four month period to June 1999. In addition,

significant upward trends are noted for some offence categories which are indicative of proactive policing activity. These are detailed below.

Significant upward trends in offences detected by police

- breach bail conditions (up by 33.4%)
- goods in custody (up by 14.9%)
- PCA offences (up by 22.4%)
- drive while disqualified (up by 48.1%)
- possession and/or use of cocaine (up by 48.1%)
- possession and/or use of narcotics (up by 32.0%)
- possession and/or use of cannabis (up by 7.5%).

COMPARISON WITH 1997 AND 1998 ANNUAL REPORTS

Table 1 compares the trends in recorded crime reported in the 1997 and 1998 annual reports, with those reported at the June quarter 1999. The table details the results of statistical tests for a significant upward or downward monthly trend over the twenty-four month periods ending December 1997, December 1998 and June 1999, respectively. Where a statistically significant trend is detected, the annual percentage change between successive twelve-month periods is reported.

Table 1: NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 1997 and 1998 (annual) and June quarter 1999: Comparison of twenty-four month trends and annual percentage changes for selected offence categories

<i>Offence category</i>	<i>NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 1997</i> ¹	<i>NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 1998</i> ²	<i>NSW Recorded Crime Statistics June 1999</i> ³
Murder	No significant trend	No significant trend	No significant trend
Assault	+8.7%	+6.2%	No significant trend
Sexual assault	No significant trend	-14.1%	-17.3%
Indecent assault, act of indecency and other sexual offences	No significant trend	-18.7%	-19.7%
Robbery without a weapon	+29.5%	No significant trend	No significant trend
Robbery with a firearm	+33.4%	No significant trend	-28.7%
Robbery with a weapon not a firearm	+76.8%	+29.7%	No significant trend
Break and enter – dwelling	+6.5%	+7.0%	No significant trend
Break and enter – non-dwelling	+3.4%	+6.8%	No significant trend
Motor vehicle theft	+12.5%	No significant trend	-13.9%
Steal from motor vehicle	+10.9%	+5.9%	No significant trend
Steal from retail store	-5.7%	No significant trend	No significant trend
Steal from dwelling	No significant trend	+7.7%	No significant trend
Steal from person	No significant trend	No significant trend	No significant trend
Fraud	No significant trend	No significant trend	No significant trend
Malicious damage to property	No significant trend	+11.9%	No significant trend

¹ Percentage change from total January-December 1996 to total January-December 1997. Trend test based on 24 month period, January 1996 to December 1997.

² Percentage change from total January-December 1997 to total January-December 1998. Trend test based on 24 month period, January 1997 to December 1998.

³ Percentage change from total July 1997-June 1998 to total July 1998-June 1999. Trend test based on 24 month period, July 1997 to June 1999.