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DIRECTOR

In reply please quote:

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MEDIA RELEASE

ABS Higher Criminal Courts: Australia - 2001 (BCSR Commentary)

Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics today show that, during the period July 1999 to June 2000, delays in bringing matters to trial in NSW averaged around 59 weeks for cases where the accused was acquitted and 79 weeks where the accused was found guilty.

These figures placed NSW at or near the top in terms of the length of time it took to bring a matter to trial among Australian States and Territories during the financial year 1999/2000.

More recent figures compiled by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, however, show substantial reductions in the delay between committal for trial and trial finalisation in the Supreme and District Court between the calendar years 1999 and 2000.

The median delay for Supreme Court trial cases where the accused is on bail fell from 21 months in the calendar year 1999 to 17 months in the calendar year 2000 (i.e. a decrease of 19%). Where the accused is held on remand, the delay fell from 14 months to 12 months (i.e. a decrease of 14%).

In the NSW District Criminal Court, the median delay for trial cases, where the accused is held on remand, remained steady at around 7 months. However, where the accused is on bail, the median delay in finalising trial cases has fallen from 14 months to 11 months (i.e. a drop of 21%).

The Director of the Bureau Dr Don Weatherburn said that the ABS figures reflected the situation in NSW prior to the impact of major administrative and legal reforms in the second half of 2000 which were designed to reduce trial court delay.

'These reforms followed a major investigation into the causes of trial court delay conducted by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research'.

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