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In reply please quote:

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MEDIA RELEASE

ABS National Recorded Crime Statistics - 1998 (BCSR Commentary)

The national crime statistics released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that the increases in violent crime experienced in NSW over the last few years are now occurring in every Australian State and Territory.

In fact, while the growth rate in violent crime in NSW is now slowing, in other parts of Australia it has begun to accelerate.

Over the period between 1997 and 1998, the national crime statistics show that every Australian State and Territory experienced an increase in armed robbery, the largest increases being recorded in South Australia (up 69%) and Tasmania (up 90%).

NSW and Queensland actually recorded the smallest increases in this category (up 14% and 1%, respectively), with increases in the remaining States and Territories ranging from 19 per cent to 90 per cent.

Even Victoria, which normally enjoys relatively low rates of crime compared with other Eastern Australian States, recorded a 29 per cent growth in rates of armed robbery. This is on top of a 38 per cent increase in armed robbery experienced by Victoria between 1996 and 1997.

Increases in *unarmed* robbery were also recorded in every Australian State except NSW, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

The largest increases in *unarmed* robbery occurred in the ACT (up 34%) and South Australia and Western Australia (up 21%).

Most States and Territories also recorded increases in assault, the largest increases having occurred in Western Australia (up 18%) and Tasmania (up 13%).

Whereas the rate of growth in crime in NSW is now slowing, in Western Australia and South Australia it is accelerating.

South Australia and Western Australia had higher rates of growth in assault, armed robbery, break and enter and motor vehicle theft between 1997 and 1998 than they had between 1996 and 1997.

Commenting on the figures the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that they defied partisan political interpretation and highlighted the need for a more informed debate about crime control.

“Here we see the true value of the national uniform crime statistics collected by the ABS.”

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“No Australian Government has been able to curb the increase in armed robbery. It is a national problem almost certainly driven by the national growth in heroin use.”

“There are no magic wands available to any State or Territory Government for dealing with this problem.”

“In the short term all States and Territories will have to rely on some combination of treatment and law enforcement to mitigate it.”

“Getting the right balance between treatment and drug law enforcement is therefore the central problem facing every Australian Government in its efforts to deal with the problem of heroin dependence.”

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