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MEDIA RELEASE

ABS National Recorded Crime Statistics - 1999 (BCSR Commentary)

The national crime statistics released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reveal that the improvement in crime observed in New South Wales over the last two years is now Australia-wide.

In the last two years decreases in recorded rates of assault have been observed in the Northern Territory (-15%), South Australia (-7%), Victoria (-7%), Western Australia (-2%), and Queensland (-1%).

Decreases in sexual assault have also been recorded in the Northern Territory (-23%), Tasmania (-10%), Victoria (-8%), New South Wales (-3%), and Queensland (-1%).

Only three States are now showing increases in the recorded rate of robbery (Victoria: +12%, the ACT: +6% and Tasmania: +1%). Only three States (Victoria: +9%, South Australia: +4% and the ACT: +55%) are showing an increase in break and enter (i.e. UEWI).

Motor vehicle theft and 'other' theft are the only offences where the majority of States and Territories continue to show upward trends.

This situation stands in stark contrast to the position in 1998 when every State and Territory recorded an increase in robbery, all States except Victoria and Tasmania recorded an increase in break and enter, six States recorded an increase in assault and four recorded an increase in sexual assault.

According to the ABS, New South Wales recorded increases in the categories of murder/attempted murder, assault, kidnapping/abduction and 'other' theft.

As in past surveys, higher rates of crime were recorded in States and Territories other than New South Wales for all offences except robbery and kidnapping/abduction.

Commenting on the figures the Director of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that the increase in murder/attempted murder is not a cause for concern.

"Although the exact number of homicides in New South Wales (as elsewhere) varies from year to year, the NSW homicide rate has been stable at around two per 100,000 of population for more than twenty years."

"Of somewhat greater concern is the observation by the ABS that the recorded assault rate in New South Wales has increased. This finding is inconsistent with our own observations. We are presently working with the ABS in an attempt to resolve the discrepancy."

Further enquiries:

Dr Don Weatherburn: 02 9231 9190 (wk), 0419 494 408 (mob)