



DR. DON WEATHERBURN
DIRECTOR

In reply please quote:

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MEDIA RELEASE

NSW Recorded Crime Statistics: Quarterly update - June 1999

For the first time in more than a decade NSW has no rising crime problem. In fact in some cases crime levels have returned to where they were in 1996.

This surprising finding emerged, today, from a special quarterly update of crime figures released by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

Earlier this year the Bureau released figures showing that between January 1997 and December 1998 there had been increases in assault (up 6%), robbery (up 30%), break and enter (up 7%), steal from a motor vehicle (up 6%), steal from a dwelling (up 8%) and malicious damage to property (up 12%).

By June this year none of these offences were increasing. In fact, several categories of offence were falling.

Between July 1997 and June 1999 there were falls in sexual assault (down 17%), indecent assault and related offences (down 20%), robbery with a firearm (down 29%), and motor vehicle theft (down 14%).

Recorded rates of sexual assault, indecent assault, robbery with a firearm, motor vehicle theft and stealing from a retail store are now below their 1996 levels.

Perhaps not surprisingly, measures of law enforcement activity are significantly higher now than they were two years ago.

In the 24 month period to June this year there were increases in arrests for breaching bail conditions (up 33%), for goods in custody (up 15%), for PCA offences (up 22%), for driving while disqualified (up 48%), for possession/use of cocaine (up 48%), for possession/use of narcotics (up 32%) and for possession/use of cannabis (up 8%).

Commenting on the figures, the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn said that they were welcome news after a decade in which rates of many serious offences had increased significantly.

'We can't be certain about the reason for the turnaround but the fact that it is so sudden yet coincides with much higher levels of law enforcement activity suggests that police may have played a key role in stemming the increase in crime.'

'Over the last two years police have engaged in a deliberate policy of targeting repeat offenders for arrest, not just for serious offences but for any offence they commit. This is a clever strategy because overseas research has shown it to be an effective way of bringing crime rates down.'

'What we need to do now in the Bureau is to examine the arrest figures more closely. If the areas of NSW with the biggest increase in arrest rates have the biggest reductions in crime we will be on much firmer ground in crediting police with the drop in crime we see today.'

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