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DIRECTOR

In reply please quote:

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### NSW Criminal Courts Statistics 2000

The NSW District and Supreme Courts have significantly reduced the delays in hearing criminal trials which had been a feature of their operation in previous years.

In the Supreme Court the delay from committal to trial for accused persons on bail fell 13.7 per cent, from 632 days in 1999 to 546 days in 2000. In the District Court, delays for trial cases where the accused was on bail fell by 23 per cent, from 434 days in 1999 to 335 days in 2000.

This is one of the key findings to appear in the annual criminal court statistics report of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

The Bureau's report found slight decreases last year in the number of persons appearing on criminal charges in the Local Court (down 6%) and the Higher Criminal Courts (down 2%).

It also found that 88 per cent of persons appearing in Local Courts and 76 per cent of persons appearing in the Higher Criminal Courts on criminal charges in 2000 either pleaded guilty or were found guilty.

Six per cent of persons convicted in the Local Court and 67 per cent of persons convicted in the Higher Criminal Courts (which hear more serious charges) were imprisoned.

In the Local Courts, however, the percentage of persons imprisoned varied from offence to offence, with 41 per cent of those convicted of break and enter being given a prison sentence.

Eighty-three per cent of those convicted in the Local Court and eighty-nine per cent of those convicted in the Higher Criminal Courts were male. The average age of men and women appearing in both the Local and Higher Criminal Courts was around 31 years.

Commenting on the Bureau's findings the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that the reduction in trial court delay was welcome news.

"The reductions in delay highlighted in our annual report for 2000 have accelerated through 2001. Median delays for trial cases in the Supreme and District Courts are now down below 12 months for the first time in more than a decade", he said.

"The problem of trial court delay first surfaced in NSW more than ten years ago. Numerous attempts to deal with the problem in the past have failed. The present success comes after a very determined but very cooperative effort to reduce delay by Government, the Courts and the Prosecution and Legal Aid services.

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