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DIRECTOR

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MEDIA RELEASE

Crime against international tourists

The first-ever representative sample survey of crime against international visitors in Sydney has shown it to be a safe destination.

The survey, carried out by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, examined four offences; intimidation, harassment and abuse, assault, robbery and theft.

Of the 2,480 randomly chosen tourists who were surveyed, nearly 98 per cent said that they had experienced none of these offences during their stay.

Among the 2.3 per cent who said they had experienced one or more incidents, the most common complaint was one of intimidation, harassment and abuse, rather than the more serious crimes of robbery, assault and theft.

In fact only 6 respondents (0.2%) had experienced an actual or threatened assault while the same number (and therefore percentage) had experienced an actual or attempted robbery.

Amongst the small number who had experienced some type of crime, the most common single location of the incident was Kings Cross. Incidents were spread throughout the day, except in the early hours of the morning.

Young people and those here for educational reasons were more at risk than those here on business, a holiday or visiting relatives.

Fifteen of the tourists (25%) who experienced some type of crime reported the incident they experienced to police. Sixteen reported the incident to someone other than the police (e.g. hotel staff).

Eight of the 15 victims (i.e. approximately 50%) who reported the incident to police were satisfied with the way they were treated while 11 of the 14 (i.e. approximately 80%) who reported the incident to someone else were satisfied with the way they were treated.

Commenting on the findings, the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that they showed how misleading official crime figures can be.

'Official police crime figures do not give us a clear picture of the actual risk of becoming a victim of crime. They also create the impression that everyone faces much the same risk of becoming a victim of crime.'

'These figures show that, as a group, people visiting Sydney from overseas actually experience very little serious crime or intimidation, harassment and abuse'.

'This is probably because international visitors on the whole do not engage in the sorts of activities (e.g. heavy drinking in crime hotspots, showing aggression to strangers, wandering the streets in the early hours of the morning) which put many local residents at risk'.

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‘The higher risks faced by international visitors here for educational reasons probably just stem from the fact that they are in Australia longer than those who are just visiting or here for work-related reasons’.

‘The fact that people who do fall victim to crime appear less satisfied with the response of police than with the response of others to whom they report the offence should not be regarded as clear evidence that the police need to lift their game in responding to victims of crime visiting from overseas.

‘The sample on which these judgements were made was very small. The results of the survey on this issue therefore need to be treated with a degree of caution. Further surveys of victims of crime will be needed to gauge satisfaction levels properly’.

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