



**DR. DON WEATHERBURN**  
DIRECTOR

In reply please quote:

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Drug use among police detainees**

People arrested by the police in Bankstown and Parramatta are over 60 times more likely to have used heroin in the last 12 months than the general Australian population. They are also 16 times more likely to have used cocaine and three times more likely to have used cannabis over the same period.

Urine-testing of those arrested also indicates that 53 per cent of those arrested tested positive at the time of arrest for cannabis, 43 per cent tested positive for heroin, nine per cent tested positive for amphetamines or 'speed' and two per cent tested positive for cocaine.

Drug use also varied according to the reason for arrest. Sixty-one per cent of violent offenders tested positive to illegal drug use at the time of their arrest. By contrast 79 per cent of those arrested for property crime tested positive to some illegal drug.

These are some of the first results to emerge from a new pilot program (known as DUMA) designed to monitor levels of illicit drug use among suspected offenders. The program is being funded by the Commonwealth National Illicit Drug Strategy.

In New South Wales the pilot program operates at Bankstown and Parramatta police stations and is being managed in a partnership between the Australian Institute of Criminology and the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics in Research. DUMA is also being trialed by the Australian Institute of Criminology in Western Australia and Queensland.

Under the DUMA program, every three months, for about a month, people arrested by police are asked by independent researchers to participate in the DUMA study. Participation is voluntary and the results are kept completely confidential by the researchers. Most of those approached participate in the study.

Responses to the DUMA survey also shed light on the level of drug market involvement by people arrested by police. Nearly a third reported purchasing cannabis in the last month and slightly over a third reported purchasing heroin.

Of those persons who purchased cannabis in the past month, the most popular way to contact the drug seller was by telephone (56 per cent). Similar results were found for respondents purchasing heroin (58%).

Whereas most of those who reported purchasing the cannabis, purchased the drug in their own suburb (59%), heroin was most often purchased outside the user's own suburb (75%).

The Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, praised the DUMA program, saying that its value was already apparent but would continue to increase over time.

'It provides a valuable early warning system for the uptake of new drugs among that section of the population most inclined to resort to crime in response to drug use.'

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‘As the surveys continue we can begin to assess the effectiveness of police efforts to reduce illicit drug consumption and get drug users into treatment, where their offending rates are much lower.’

‘Police should find the information gleaned from the survey component of the DUMA program useful as a source of intelligence about how and where illegal drug transactions take place’

‘Finally, the information about drug use obtained through DUMA should help police involved in arresting and detaining offenders to plan more effective occupational and health policies’, Dr Weatherburn said.

**Further enquiries:**

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