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MEDIA RELEASE

Evaluation of Police Operation Vendas

A pilot police operation designed to reduce break and enter and motor vehicle theft by making more effective use of crime scene forensic evidence has not been successful, according to a report released today by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

The aim of the operation was to increase the amount of DNA and fingerprint evidence collected from homes that had been burgled and stolen vehicles that had been recovered.

Through this process it was hoped to increase the arrest rate of repeat offenders and thereby reduce rates of break and enter and motor vehicle theft. The pilot was run in three local area commands (LACs): Brisbane Waters, Lake Illawarra and Miranda.

The rate at which police forensic specialists attended crime scenes increased substantially. However, although rates of break and enter, and motor vehicle theft declined in the pilot patrols, they did not decline any faster than across the State as a whole.

According to the Bureau report, two main factors limited the success of the Vendas operation.

Firstly, although the level of attendance by forensic staff at crime scenes increased substantially, the number of suspected offenders identified through forensic evidence either did not increase at all or only increased slightly. As a result, there was no significant increase in the number of suspected offenders apprehended.

Secondly, one of the pilot LACs (Miranda) already had a high rate of attendance at crime scenes, on the one hand, and quite low rates of motor vehicle theft and break and enter, on the other. This would have made it harder to detect any effect of Vendas on either crime scene attendance rates or rates of motor vehicle theft and break and enter.

Although the operation was unsuccessful, the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, stressed that the lack of impact on crime trends does not mean that forensic crime scene evidence is unimportant in controlling crime.

“Catching repeat offenders is a very important crime control strategy, and the collection and analysis of forensic evidence is an important component of that strategy. It is far from easy converting increased crime scene evidence collection into higher rates of arrest but I would strongly urge police to continue their efforts in this regard.”

“It can take years of evaluated trials and research to develop effective remedies to illness and disease. There is no reason to expect the search for effective remedies to crime to be any different. The Bureau is more than willing to assist police in evaluating any future efforts.”

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