



DR. DON WEATHERBURN
DIRECTOR

In reply please quote:

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MEDIA RELEASE

NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 1997

The annual Recorded Crime Statistics report released today by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research shows that, in the two years to December 1997, eight offences increased, seven remained stable and one fell.

Increases occurred in assault, three types of robbery, break and enter (dwelling and non-dwelling), motor vehicle theft and steal from a motor vehicle. Murder, sexual assault, indecent assault, steal from a dwelling, steal from a person, fraud and malicious damage to property remained stable.

For the first time since the Bureau began compiling crime statistics, the frequency of shopstealing decreased.

This is an improvement on the two years to December 1996, during which 11 offences increased, only four were stable and none decreased.

With the exception of robbery and motor vehicle theft, the increases recorded in the two years to December 1997 were smaller than those recorded in the two years to December 1996.

The rate of increase in assault fell from +22.5 per cent to +8.7 per cent, that for break and enter (dwelling) fell from +20.9 per cent to +6.5 per cent, that for break and enter (non-dwelling) fell from +7.0 per cent to +3.4 per cent and that for steal from a motor vehicle fell from +13.5 per cent to +10.9 per cent.

However the upward trends in motor vehicle theft and robbery evident in the two years to December 1996 accelerated in the two years to December 1997.

The increase in recorded rates of motor vehicle theft rose from +4.1 per cent to +12.5 per cent.

Over the two years to December 1997 the recorded rate of robbery with a firearm also rose by +33.4 per cent, the recorded rate of robbery with a weapon other than a firearm rose by +76.8 per cent and the recorded rate of robbery without a weapon rose by +29.5 per cent.

Commenting on the figures the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that they provided evidence that some of the sharp increase in crime recorded between 1995 and 1996 was now slowing.

“The most obvious exception to this is robbery, the rate of which appears to be accelerating.”

According to Dr Weatherburn, the increases in robbery and break and enter may be linked to growth in the population of heroin users.

“Heroin users very frequently turn to robbery and theft offences to raise money to fund their addiction”, he said.

“Treatment services over the last few years have reported steep increases in the number of heroin users seeking treatment as well as increased numbers of fatal overdoses. These data point to an increase in the population of heroin users.”

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“Whatever the cause, it is important to keep the increase in robbery in some perspective. Although robberies are becoming more common they remain comparatively rare. Victims of robbery last year represented about 0.7 per cent of the NSW population”.

“It’s also worth remembering that the risk of robbery is heavily concentrated in the Inner Sydney and Western Sydney local government areas (LGAs). More than half of the 179 LGAs in New South Wales had less than five incidents of robbery in 1997.”

Further enquiries:

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