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In reply please quote:

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 1998

There has been a substantial slowing in the rate of growth in recorded crime in NSW over the last two years, with some offences actually falling significantly.

According to figures released today by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, there were falls of 14 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively, in the number of recorded cases of sexual assault and indecent assault.

Unarmed robbery, robbery with a firearm and assault with knife, all of which had risen rapidly in the two years to December 1997, are now stable.

Other stable categories of offence include murder, motor vehicle theft, steal from a retail store, steal from the person and fraud.

Where recorded rates of crime are still rising, the increases in most cases are smaller than those reported by the Bureau last year.

The increase in assault has dropped from nine per cent to six per cent, the increase in steal from a motor vehicle has dropped from 11 per cent to six per cent and the increase in robbery with a weapon other than a firearm has dropped from 77 per cent to 30 per cent.

Despite these encouraging results, in some areas the increase in recorded crime is accelerating.

Break and enter (non-dwelling) offences, which had increased by three per cent in the two years to December 1997, increased by seven per cent in the two years to December 1998.

Steal from a dwelling and malicious damage to property offences, which had been stable in the two years to December 1997, increased by eight per cent and 12 per cent, respectively, in the two years to December 1998.

Commenting on the findings, the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said the apparent slowing in the rate of growth in crime in 1997/98 was quite surprising, given the scale of the increase back in 1996/97.

'While it is impossible to be sure of the precise reason for the improvement, changes in policing policy may have played a part.

'Police have been targeting crime hotspots, increasing the arrest rate of repeat offenders and confiscating dangerous weapons, such as knives.'

'Each of these strategies has been shown in rigorous overseas research to be effective in reducing crime.'

'It is interesting to note that although assaults overall are still increasing, assaults with a knife are no longer rising.'

'Police have given this offence particular attention using the new search powers granted to them under the Summary Offences Act'.

#### Further enquiries:

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